



BATTLE BABIES

BATTLE BABIES



The Story of
The 99th Infantry Division
in
World War II

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MAJ. GEN. WALTER E. LAUER, U.S.A. (RETIRED)

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Acknowledgments

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT is made for the many contributions of intimate experiences in combat and of photographs taken from their own collections, which were furnished me by the men and officers of the 99th Division. I have endeavored to show the source and give credit throughout the history to the individual contributor. Should I have failed to do so in any case, it has been unintentional. The thousands of newspaper items published in the press of our country—for our men came from every state in the Union—and in the *Stars and Stripes* of the E.T.O., is a source which I have only lightly touched on in compiling the story. Once the Division was taken off the "secret list," in January, 1945, our people back home were flooded with the story of the heroic stand made by the 99th in the "Bulge." Thereafter the Division received its full share of news for which we have such outstanding war correspondents to thank as Hal Boyle of the A.P.; John McDermott, father of the sobriquet "Battle Babies," and Chris Cunningham of the U.P.; Winston Burdett of C.B.S.; Cy Peterman of the Philadelphia *Inquirer*; Gault MacGowan and W. C. Heinz of the New York *Sun*; Thomas R. Henry, Washington *Star*; Lee McCardell, Baltimore *Sun*; Ed Cunningham and Reg Kenny of *Yank*; Pierre S. Huss of I.N.S. and *Cosmopolitan* magazine; Harold Siegman, Acme Newspictures, Inc., and the host of others including Stephen Campbell of O.W.I. and those from the London, England, papers as Edward Connolly of the *Exchange Telegraph* and W. H. Troughton of the *Daily Express*. There were many, many more whose names I do not have but who too furnished the folks back home with first hand stories of the exploits of the "Battle Babies." The effect of a good *press* on fighting men is just as important as the effect of good food—one for the mind and morale, the other for the inner man. For awhile our Division suffered for the lack of a good press—once that changed, the 99th Division went twice as strong. When men fight hard and face death continuously, they want the world to know about it and particularly, they want their friends and neighbors back home to hear of their exploits. This is and forever has been a part of a soldier's just due. To all those men, and women too, of the press who so nobly performed this task goes the sincere thanks of the men of the 99th Infantry Division.

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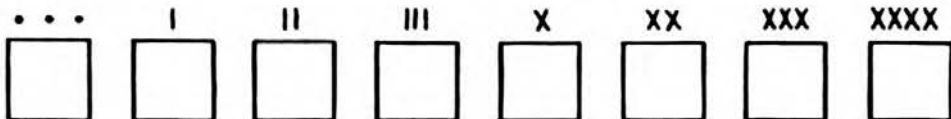
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THE FOLLOWING TACTICAL SYMBOLS ARE USED ON ALL THE MAPS:



CAV. INF. AIRBORNE ARTILLERY ARMORED



PLAT. CO. BN. REGT. BRIG. DIV. CORPS ARMY

Upper Row—The Kind of Unit Lower Row—The Size of Unit
 The Same Symbols Designate Boundary Lines for a Unit



WALTER E. LAUER
Major General, U.S.A. (Retd.)



Foreword

THIS IS THE HISTORY of the 99th Infantry Division in World War II.

It was a well trained organization as it entered combat—thoroughly trained as far as technique, knowledge of arms and maneuvers could make it.

Its baptism in combat came with the German winter offensive of December, 1944—the roughest, toughest kind of fighting. It received the full shock of the German 15th and 6th Panzer Armies while scattered thinly on a ridiculously wide front (twenty-two miles) stretching through dense woods and over many short, steep hills in the Ardennes. Added to this, the German offensive came as a complete surprise and caught the Division with half of its troops conducting an attack into the Siegfried Line defensive fortifications. To top all that the friendly troops (106th Division) on the right (south) flank of the 99th were cut off and that entire flank was suddenly opened to unimpeded enemy action.

Here under the most adverse conditions of fighting, when not only tactical dispositions and terrain were against them but also the

weather, these soldiers of the 99th Infantry Division proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were real American citizen soldiers—Minute Men reborn—the greatest fighting men 'on earth.

The relatively few persons who have had first hand dealings with actual large-unit combat command (in World War II we had only eighty-nine combat divisions of all types—airborne, armored, cavalry, mountain and infantry) know that so many events happen simultaneously in combat that to be able to discover the whole truth about any operation is more difficult than trying to find a needle in a haystack. It is still more than difficult to put it down on paper in logical sequence. This has been attempted here!

As the one who commanded on the ground throughout these operations, my personal knowledge of the events, plus a conscientious compilation of records and reports by various commanders of all grades, has been used throughout this history. The truth has been adhered to religiously—as I saw it, as I lived it, as I remember it.

Events are permitted to stream across the pages as they happened. Many of the actions which occurred are not told in detail and some are not even mentioned. To bring out all the actions and heroic exploits which took place would make this history too voluminous and would deny the "old soldier" his prize story.

General Eisenhower in his book, *Crusade in Europe*, referred to the glorious action of the 99th Infantry Division at the opening phase of the "Battle of the Bulge" in a disparaging manner; *Dark December*, written by Capt. Merriam, has the part played by the 99th Division wrong; the official history of the First Army even charts areas and events incorrectly.

One can readily understand that at the beginning of the German winter offensive reports arriving at higher headquarters could be initially contradictory and confusing, but later, as calmness prevailed, surely historical sections could *carefully* review events and determine and record the correct series of actions. That was all for which these sections existed. They failed in this instance.

The thousands of men who served in the 99th Infantry Division know the heroic part they played in that action and in the further actions which ensued, and as a result I have been flooded by letters from these men to set the record straight.

Mark Twain's remark when referring to New England weather that "everybody talks about it but no one does anything about it" is what has induced me to write the real story.

The men of the 99th Infantry Division helped make ' history.

Their blood wrote a few pages of the most glowing kind of history in the annals of American fighting men.

In its relatively short time in combat, the Division probably established the finest record in the army. Caught in the "Bulge," it extricated itself and then held the "hot corner" on the north shoulder of the "Bulge" throughout that period until it went on the offensive and helped flatten out the "Bulge." It was the *first* infantry division in the First Army to reach the Rhine. It was the *first* complete division *over* the Rhine at Remagen and established the *initial* bridgehead on *Festung Germania*. It captured the pivotal city of Giessen, around which the First Army swung to create the Ruhr pocket, and *then* this Division turned around to lash out and puncture that pocket. Thereafter, it joined the Third Army and drove down toward the Austrian border. V.E. Day found its leading elements on the Inn River. No other infantry division took part in so many important events in so short a time.

It earned and lived up to its sobriquet of "*Battle Babies*," for no finer division existed in the United States Army.

To its men I dedicate this book.

W.E.L.

Monterey, California

29 June 1949

CHAPTER I

The Battle of the Bulge—The Beginning

16 DECEMBER 1944

BELGIUM! The Ardennes! Winter 1944! Leaden skies, cold, deep snow, dense woods, hills and more hills. Clammy wet fox-holes to live in, daily patrols, the attack into the Siegfried Line, the German Westwall defenses. December 16th! The German surprise assault! That last gasp all-out winter offensive of the Nazi war machine. The unexpected crash of this immense German force against the woefully thin American line. Our inspired defense! The heroic stand made by the 99th Infantry Division! Who in the 99th will ever forget those days?

Outnumbered five to one all along its line and in many places better than fifteen to one, the gallant soldiers of the 99th Infantry Division fought the fanatical German hordes to a standstill. At the end of the first day of this ferocious German onslaught, these staunch soldiers still held their original lines. During the next two days, while beating back wave after wave of frenzied head-on charges, a German column which had broken through the area held by the 106th Infantry Division of the VIII American Corps, came driving up from the south to slice deep behind their lines. Without reserves to meet this new threat, the right flank of the Division was withdrawn by degrees to Elsenborn Ridge. There it established the "North Shoulder of the Bulge." There it clung tenaciously for six weeks, repelling attack after attack until the "Bulge" was finally flattened out and the Germans driven back behind the defenses of the Siegfried Line.

This superb action was the 99th Infantry Division's baptism in real combat. It was the action in which the Division gained for itself the sobriquet of "Battle Babies." Ours was a ferocious action, but tragic; it was a glorious action, but fantastic; it was an impossible action, but it is true!

Here is how it came about.

Four American divisions held a seventy-five mile line which extended south from the town of Hofen near Monschau on the German-Belgium border to the town of Echternach near Trier on the German-Luxemburg border. The 99th Infantry Division, which I



WHERE THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE TOOK PLACE

Four American Divisions held the 75 mile front from Hofen to Trier. The 99th Division held the first 22 miles from Hofen south.

Quoting from General Marshall's Biennial Report of Chief of Staff 1943-1945, "The shoulders of the penetration at Monschau* and Echternach were stubbornly held by Infantry Divisions—outstanding among which were the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 99th Divisions."

* Monschau and Hofen are close together; the 99th Division's north flank ran between the two towns. Echternach is close to and opposite Trier.

commanded, held the first 22 miles of this front, from the town of Hofen south. Next came the 106th Infantry Division (which had but a few days previously replaced the 2nd Infantry Division) holding about 20 miles, in turn followed by the 28th Infantry Division and finally the 4th Infantry Division.

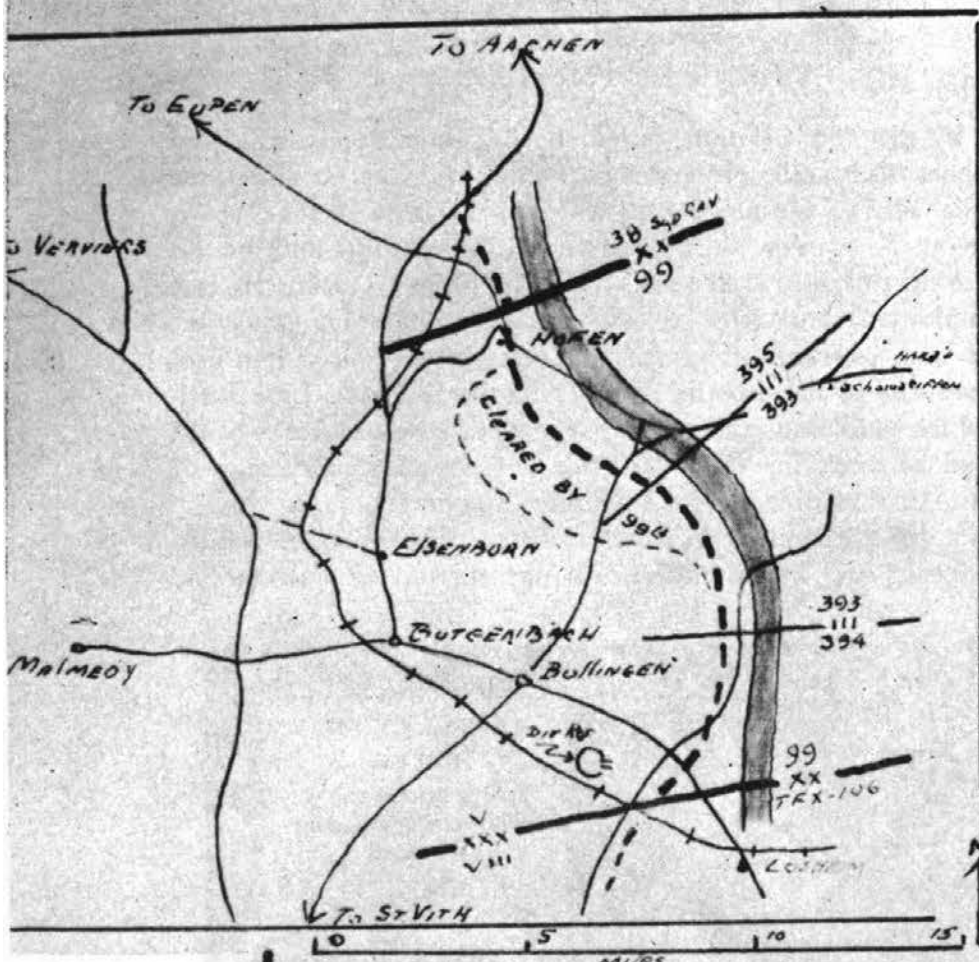
This strip of terrain is variously referred to as the Ardennes or the Ardennes Forests and consists of low, rolling, wooded hills—a lovely vacation land in peacetime. That portion of the line, how-

ever, held by the 99th Division, called the Buchholz Forest, consisted of many short, steep hills covered by a dense, heavy forest and thick underbrush. There were no roads leading to the front in that sector, except one on the extreme south flank, one in the middle and one on the extreme north flank, each about ten miles apart. The forests had been man-planted, and with typical German precision, firebreaks which had been provided at prescribed intervals were placed in geometrical patterns to fit into the defenses of the Siegfried Line fortifications which had been erected in that area. These firebreaks could not be used as roads for they were not only dangerous avenues of approach but at that time of year were also quagmires.

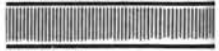
It was a difficult country in which to fight. The short, steep hills, the dense forests and heavy underbrush immediately in front of the



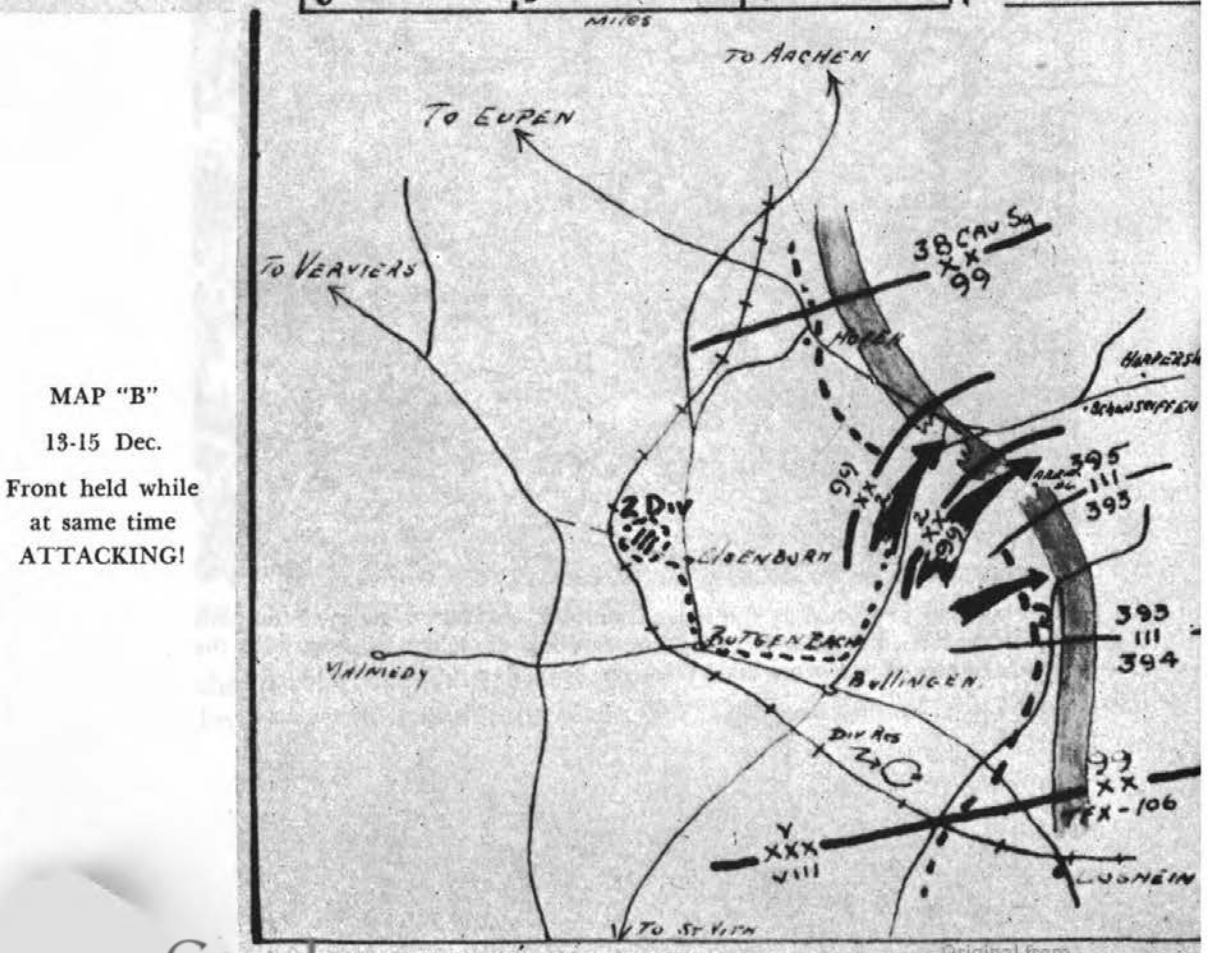
This map published by the Belgo-American Association indicates the path of the German offensive and its high water mark. The 99th Division held the north shoulder of this penetration from the beginning to the end.



MAP "A"
99th front prior to
13 Dec. '44.



First belt of
Siegfried Line.



MAP "B"
13-15 Dec.

Front held while
at same time
ATTACKING!

Siegfried defenses, which was the position held by our men, did not permit the establishment of tactically sound defense lines. In addition, the full value of our fire power, of our rapid-firing rifles, of our automatic weapons, of our mortars and anti-tank guns was lost to us, for ground visibility and fields of fire were limited by the dense woods to fifteen or twenty yards in most places. Add to this the physical strain and discomfort our men endured of living, always on the alert, in the damp woods and in snow-covered and wet fox-holes and of having to hand-carry for miles, over trails they constructed through these woods, their every need in food, ammunition and supplies of every nature, and it becomes evident why this was difficult terrain in which to fight. The German Westwall defenses, the Siegfried Line, had indeed been well planned and sited by experts.

The Division¹ had moved up and taken over this front between the 9th and 14th of November 1944.² (See Map A.) Our men were scattered out in a thin line along its twenty-two miles in what at best could be called a weak outpost position. The entire Divisional position was weak, woefully weak. All three regiments of the division were on line. The 395th Infantry Regiment covered the northern sector of the Divisional front with its three battalions abreast and each spread out fully with all companies on the front line. In the

¹ Composition of the 99th Infantry Division:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 393rd Inf. Regt. | 99th Signal Co. |
| 394th Inf. Regt. | 99th Quartermaster Co. |
| 395th Inf. Regt. | 799th Ordnance Co. |
| Hq. and Hq. Btry. 99th Div. Arty. | 324th Medical Bn. |
| 370th F.A. (105s) Bn. | Attached: |
| 371st F.A. (105s) Bn. | 801st Tank Destroyer Bn. |
| 372nd F.A. (155s) Bn. | 400th F.A. (Armd.) Bn. |
| 924th F.A. (105s) Bn. | 987th F.A. (less Btry. A) ret. to V |
| 324th Engineer Bn. | Corps 20th Nov. |
| Hq. and Hq. Co. 99th Inf. Div. | 776th F.A. (105s) Bn. |
| 99th Reconnaissance Trp. | |

An Infantry Regiment consisted of:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 3 Infantry Battalions | Cannon Co. |
| Regimental Hq. and Hq. Co. | Anti-Tank Co. |
| Service Co. | Medical Detach. |

Each Infantry Battalion consisted of (35 officers and 825 men):

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3 Rifle Cos. | Bn. Hq. and Hq. Co. |
| 1 Heavy Weapons Co. | |

Companies were lettered:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st Bn.—Cos. A-B-C-D | (Cos. D, H and M were Heavy |
| 2nd Bn.—Cos. E-F-G-H | Weapons Cos.) |
| 3rd Bn.—Cos. I-K-L-M | |

² For details of this operation see Chapter IV.

center of the Divisional front, the 393rd Infantry was similarly disposed with all troops on the front line. In the southern sector, covered by the 394th Infantry Regiment, only two battalions of that regiment were available to cover its frontage of about six miles. The remaining battalion of the 394th was held out as a reserve for the entire twenty-two miles of front, but, in addition it was emplaced in rear of the 394th Infantry and occupied a position covering the southern flank of the Division to a depth of several miles. Each battalion of infantry which normally would have held about 800 yards or less of frontage in terrain of this sort was spread out, holding between 2500 and 3000 yards. As a result, they had no reserves worth mentioning.

It was a relatively quiet sector at the time but one which boded no good for troops spread out as thin as were our units, for it was realized, that even a small force of the enemy, could attack and penetrate our position at will. To offset this danger, I selected a series of positions back of our front lines where we *did* have open ground and good fields of fire and on which we *could* organize real defensive positions with machine gun emplacements, trenches, support and reserve lines, etc.³ Our troops constructed these positions which were sited to cross the most likely avenues of enemy advance and prepared them ready for occupancy in case of emergency. They were of course not occupied at that time—but more about that later.

Our men were well trained and their morale was high. Living under the arduous conditions imposed by the situation was not simple. They took this rough duty in their stride. They were determined, however, to drive the Germans into their defenses of the Siegfried Line and keep them there. Each unit every day sent combat patrols of from four to fifty men across "No Man's Land" into the Siegfried defenses to reconnoiter and to capture prisoners for identification purposes, so that my own and higher headquarters would have definite knowledge of any changes in the German tactical units which we faced. It was a tricky and dangerous task of conducting these combat patrols into the enemy's position and around his heavily mined and strongly defended cement emplacements and forts where he lived in comparative comfort and security. Every soldier and officer partici-

³ V Corps was somewhat disturbed at the time this series of defensive positions was first proposed, since they felt it indicated a lack of the offensive spirit on the part of the division commander and his staff. Good tactical sense prevailed and corps headquarters not only permitted the construction of these defenses but also prescribed a similar series for their other units.

pated in these patrols at one time or another. Each battalion pushed patrols into the German lines every day and kept things stirred up. We were aggressive and we finally controlled the area. We bragged that we were the *bosses* of No Man's Land, as that area between the two lines is known. No German could wander out of his cement pill-box without running a good chance of being captured or becoming a casualty. German patrols became fewer and fewer and seldom if ever were they able to approach our lines without a disastrous fight. Our operations had been running along smoothly and gotten down to a sort of routine—rough at times but not too bad. The cold and bitter weather, the deep snow and the physical discomforts encountered were the worst factors.⁴ We were proud of our accomplishments. We kept the Jerries more than worried.

This situation continued for about a month. Then I was called to V Corps headquarters and acquainted with a plan First Army headquarters had evolved of launching an attack over the front held by the 99th Division. We were to break through the Siegfried Line and capture the Urfttalspere dam of the Roer River dams, capturing en route the little towns of Arensburg, Schonseiffen, Harpersheid, etc. (See Map B, p. 4.)

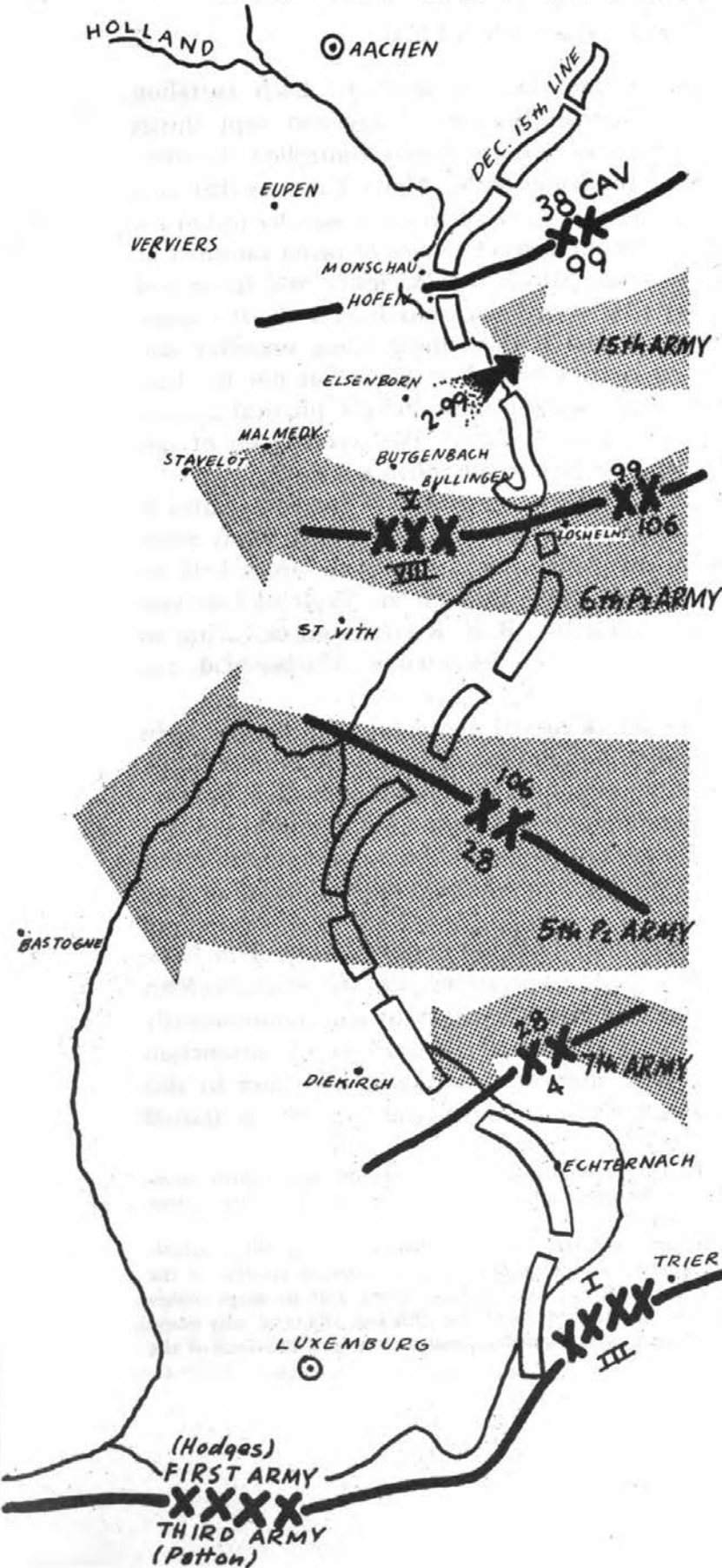
Preparations for this attack moved ahead rapidly. On the right (south) flank of the division and in the sector of the VIII Corps, the 106th Infantry Division moved in and relieved the 2nd Infantry Division from the Schnee Eifel area. The 2nd Division was brought up and assembled at Camp Elsenborn, in the middle of the 99th's area, and the 99th scraped together a reinforced regimental combat team.

It was decided to attack through the *middle* of the 99th Division's sector. Under the scheme of operations put into effect, the 99th Division held all along its extended original front and simultaneously attacked, using one reinforced regimental combat team in conjunction with the 2nd Division. The story of that attack, told later in this history,⁵ is one of great ingenuity, hardship and bravery. It started

⁴ Trench foot caused by damp shoes and socks (overshoes and rubber boots were not available at the time) brought about many more casualties than enemy action.

⁵ For an account of this fight see Chapter V. *The change in the point of attack, from originally the north flank of the 99th Div. to the center of its line is the probable reason why the Official History of the First Army and its maps assign wrong boundaries between the 2nd Inf. Div. and the 99th Inf. Div. and why many false conclusions have been drawn as to the subsequent actions and locations of the 99th Inf. Div.*

THE ALL OUT OFFENSIVE



15th German Army
67th Corps
277th V.G. Div.
246th V.G. Div.
326th V.G. Div.

6th Panzer Army
II S.S. Panzer Corps
2nd S.S. Pz. Div.
9th S.S. Pz. Div.
I S.S. Panzer Corps
1st S.S. Pz. Div.
12th S.S. Pz. Div.
3rd Para. Div.
12th V.G. Div.
El. 3rd P.G. Div.
150th Pz. Brig.

5th Panzer Army
66th Corps
18th Div.
62nd Div.
58th Panzer Corps
11th Pz. Div.
116th Pz. Div.
560th Div.
47th Panzer Corps
2nd Pz. Div.
26th Div.
Pz. Lehr Div.

7th German Army
5th Para. Div.
212th V.G. Div.
276th V.G. Div.
352nd V.G. Div.

Average Strengths:
American Division,
13,000-15,000
German Division,
8,000-10,000

THE ALL-OUT OFFENSIVE

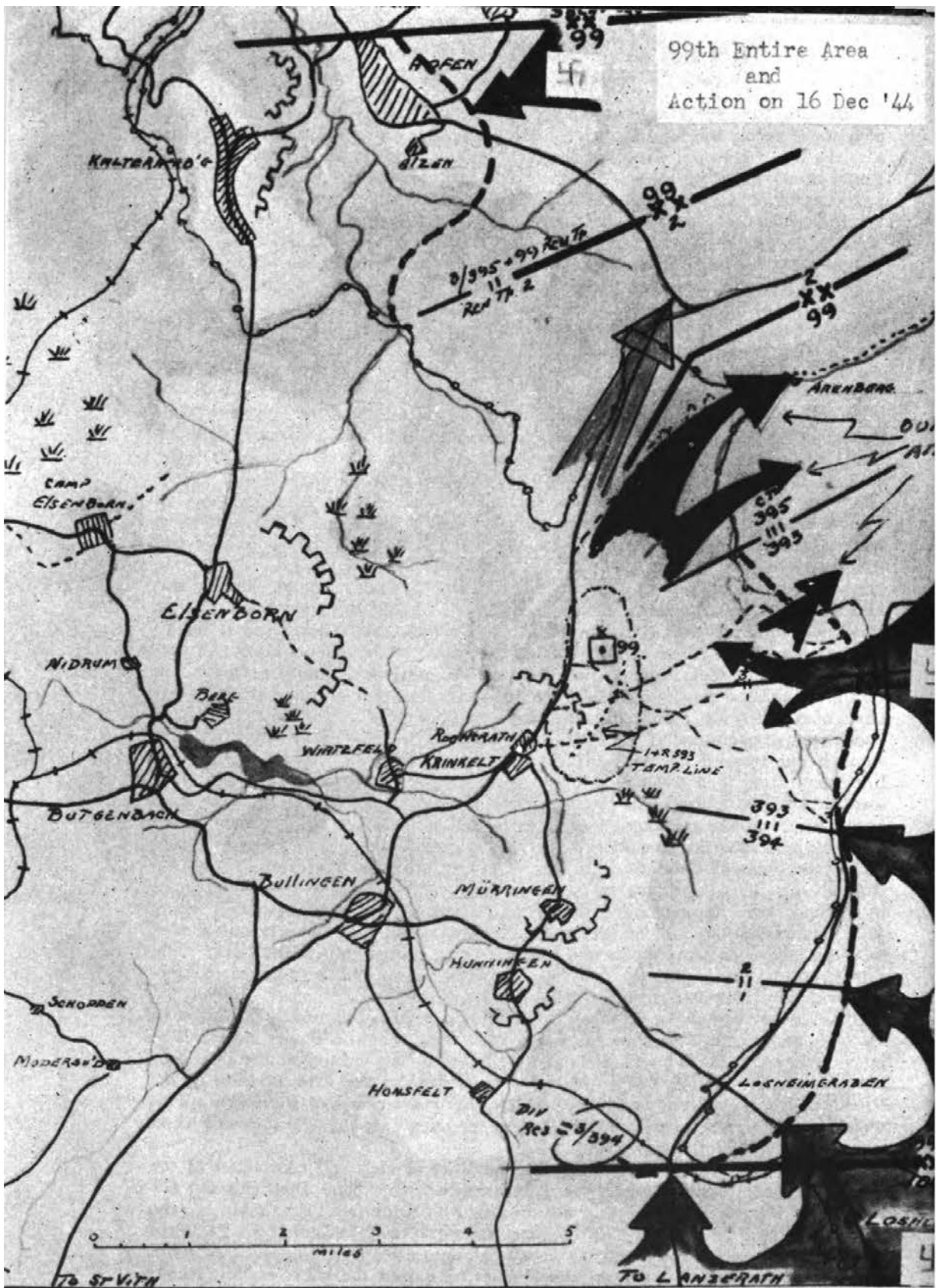
Quoting from the First Army Official Report for December 1944: "The broad plan of the enemy was to strike toward the Meuse and on to Brussels and Antwerp with the 6th S.S. Panzer Army on the right driving through to Liege and the 5th Panzer Army thrusting toward Namur. [The 15th Army, assisted by a divisionary attack north of Aachen, was to break through near Monschau and drive north toward Aachen and the Dutch border.—Auth.] A divisionary attack was also to be made by the 7th Army with Luxemburg as the objective. The area of attack was the 60 mile front between the Ardennés and the Eifel. The first mission of the 6th S.S. Army was to thrust westward, seizing Malmedy; I S.S. Pz. Corps with the 1st S.S. Pz. Div. leading, 3rd Para. Div. and 12th V.G. Div. echeloned to the rear to guard the northern flank and the 12th S.S. Pz. Div. closely following up also on the north. II S.S. Pz. Corps was held in rear of I S.S. Pz. Corps initially to exploit the break-through and swing north on the east flank of the I S.S. Pz. Corps along the axis Malmedy-Eupen. To the south 5th Pz. Army launched the attack with the 18th and 62nd V.G. Divs. disposed on the east side of the Schnee Eifel and the 116th Pz., 560th V.G., 2nd Pz. and 130th Pz. Lehr Divs. to the south. The plan of attack called for the 116th Pz. Div. to work northwest by way of St. Vith, thus coming in south of the I S.S. Pz. Corps. The 2nd Pz. and 130th Pz. Lehr Divs. were to drive due west toward Houffalize and Bastogne.

"In connection with the attack a special operation known as 'Greif' was to be undertaken using American equipment, American weapons, American insignia and American uniforms. Its purpose was to seize the American supply installations—the enemy intended to keep its armored vehicles rolling with captured gasoline and his soldiers fed with American rations. Furthermore he had organized a tank brigade which was equipped with American tanks and German tanks camouflaged to resemble U.S. Mark IVs. These vehicles carried the Allied white star markings and personnel operating them were dressed in American uniforms, complete to the last detail, including dog-tags obtained from American dead and prisoners of war. The tanks of this brigade, numbering approximately 70, were divided into three groups which were to operate with the 6th S.S. Panzer Army. Their mission was to infiltrate through our forward positions and then cause confusion and disorder within our lines, permitting their following units to break through and exploit with minimum losses. Later, once the break-through had been made, these tanks were to dash ahead to the Meuse crossings, where they would join units of a long-range reconnaissance and sabotage formation known as 'Einheit Stielau.' The latter consisted of 30 Jeep loads of Germans dressed in American uniforms who were to infiltrate through our lines at various points. A certain number were to engage in signal intelligence work, tapping our telephone lines, intercepting messengers and acting as a communication link for the others. Another group was to carry out acts of sabotage against reinforcements and supplies being brought up to the front, while a third was to reconnoiter the crossing sites of the Meuse and be prepared to function with the 150th Pz. Brigade when they broke through.

"On either side of the Schnee Eifel there are avenues of approach, northwest of St. Vith and Camp Elsenborn. It was toward these that the enemy struck. The heaviest blow of the day was made at 0730 hours in the vicinity of the boundary between the V and VIII Corps. *Here the right flank of the 99th Division in the Buchholz Forest was bent back and a penetration made nearly to Bullingen.* [This statement is in error. Bullingen was lost to the enemy on the 17th December and not on the 16th December.—Auth.]

"Despite the highly vaunted fighting qualities of men and equipment of the 6th S.S. Panzer Army, it was clear (22 December) that Sepp Dietrich's 6th S.S. troops had bogged down and were not meeting Von Rundstedt's time table . . . the failure . . . could be attributed to three factors: *First:* the failure of II S.S. Pz. Corps to break through into the Monschau Forest and onto Elsenborn Ridge. . . . In retrospect it can be said that almost from the second day of the offensive Von Rundstedt's plan began to go wrong. . . . He sacrificed the best part of four divisions—12th S.S. Pz., 3rd Para., 12th V.G. and 277th V.G.—in his repeated attempts to assault Elsenborn Ridge and the Monschau area.

99th Entire Area
and
Action on 16 Dec '44



International Bdry - - - Woods [hatched box] Enemy assaults [solid black box]

Note: First Army official maps plot the boundaries for the 99th Division wrong, assigning the entire northern part of the sector to the 2nd Division, whereas the 2nd Division actually was responsible for only its narrow attack zone indicated above. The 99th held the entire front and attacked at the same time.

on the 13th December and by the 15th had broken through the outer crust of the Westwall and was going strong. It continued in its attack on the morning of the 16th December when the big German winter offensive suddenly hit us. That was the start of the Battle of the Bulge. That is when all hell broke loose!

The Germans had assembled two Panzer armies⁶ with great speed and secrecy. Early on the morning of the 16th December they launched their all-out offensive (see pp. 8-9) which eventually broke through on a thirty-five mile front and drove about sixty miles into the American position. The Germans actually made four main drives, each spearheaded by Panzers and followed by infantry divisions. In our case, on the front of the 99th Division, the attack was accompanied in addition by dropping parachutists ahead of the Panzers.

The Germans hurled two drives on the front of the 99th Division, one through Hofen and Monschau toward Aachen and the other from Losheim through the middle of the 99th Division's sector to Verviers, Liege, and on to Antwerp. These were the planned drives for the German 15th and 6th Panzer Armies.⁷ They did not work as planned! The northern spearhead, the 15th German Army, was stopped in the Hofen-Elsenborn area by the center and left flanks of *the 99th Division front*; the second spearhead from Losheim through Bullingen toward Stavelot, the Meuse River and Antwerp, that of the 6th Panzer Army, was checked between the Orth and the Meuse Rivers—but—*the 99th Division's right flank* caught the full initial onslaughts of this army, stopped it the first day, slowed it down and diverted it the second and third days, and thereby disrupted its time schedule. (The third drive, that of the 5th Panzer Army, was checked at Bastogne, and the fourth drive, that of the 7th German Army, was almost still-born at Echternach and Diekirch in Luxembourg.) Because their schedule was disrupted and they could not overrun our position at Elsenborn the Germans changed their plans later⁸ to skirt around our position and then drive northward, but that plan failed too.

In the early morning dark, at 5:25 A.M. on the morning of the 16th December, an intense saturating barrage of all calibres of artillery

⁶ See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 127.

⁷ See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 103, and map p. 104.

⁸ See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 120, Change in German Plans 24 Dec. '44.

and mortars dropped on every location of our troops. It lasted for about two hours.⁹

The ground shook and trembled. Branches of trees and whole trees came tumbling down around the positions of our men. Some have questioned the intensity of this barrage. It is claimed to have been the heaviest ever delivered in World War II, and records support this contention; for example, the 47th Panzer Corps alone was supported by twenty-three battalions of artillery.¹⁰

Then followed strong probing activity by the enemy. Jerry patrols which had dared show themselves in the past only in scattered places were reported all over the area in sizes of thirty to one hundred men. They plowed into our thinly held lines. Bull-headedly, blindly, they plunged in repeatedly to storm our positions in steam-roller massed tactics—a form of tactics which had gone out with the advent of automatic weapons.

In the center of our line, opposite the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry which was in position facing the Siegfried Line along the International Highway, the dark night sky lit up with searchlights and spotlights which the enemy focused on our snow-covered positions to point out targets for their crazed hordes of attackers. It was weird—it was fantastic—it was crazy. Waves of shouting Krauts, madly firing their burp guns, wildly whooped and yelled as they charged headlong at our men, only to be mowed down by our small-arms fire. Others slithered across the snow-covered fields in white cloaks in their vain endeavor to get behind our lines. If this was an attempt at German *Schrecklichkeit* to over-awe our men—to scare them—to make them flee, it failed miserably. The charging hordes were chopped down in horrible slaughter.

On the front of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 394th Infantry,¹¹ south and east of the town of Losheimgraben, the enemy plowed into our lines in a similar attempt by sheer strength of numbers to roll over our positions. They were piled up like cordwood. Even the little I. and R. platoon (intelligence and reconnaissance platoon—thirty men and a few Jeeps) of the 394th Infantry which was in contact with elements of Task Force X several miles south of the 99th Divi-

⁹ The enemy had very accurate information as to the locations of our troops even down to individual machine guns. In the case of our artillery, every battalion was plastered except one which had changed its position during the night 15-16 December.

¹⁰ See Official Report First Army, Artillery Annex, p. 12.

¹¹ Commanded by Col. Don Riley, Inf., U.S.A.

Extract, *Stars and Stripes*, 24 March '45

Captured 'Brass' Likes 99th Div.

WITH 99TH INF. DIV.—A German lieutenant-colonel, described as a divisional chief of staff, is reported by the headquarters of the 99th Inf. Div. to have referred to infantrymen of the 99th as "well-trained soldiers and excellent scouts." The statement is said to have been made by the German after his capture by a unit of the Third U.S. Army.

"At one time," the German was quoted as saying, "I saw ten German soldiers shot through the head by a single sniper."

Elements of the 99th were termed "elite" by another German officer, a lieutenant in command of a Wehrmacht Volksgrenadier company, according to M/Sgt. Henry Wolf, of New York.

Reports from the headquarters of this division indicated that the 395th Inf. Regt., of the 99th, had been in contact previously with the German's outfit during the defense of Hofen.

Men of this regiment, it was reported, had allowed the enemy company "to come within ten feet of their line" before opening up with small and machine gun fire, forcing the Germans "to abandon all their dead and injured in the haste of retreat."

Extract, *Chicago Tribune*, 14 Feb. '45
From Article Headed as Follows:

99th Divisions Heroism Is Told By Tribune Man

(By John Thompson)
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)
WITH THE 99th DIVISION IN
GERMANY, Feb. 13.—

It was the first day of Field Marshal Von Rundstedt's offensive—

German tanks and Infantry were overrunning Company "I" 393rd Infantry, when Tech. Sgt. Kenneth N. Juhl, Harlan, Ia., withdrew his platoon to a good defensive position. Then Juhl went back, found an abandoned heavy machine gun and opened fire almost point-blank on enemy troops moving up beside their tanks.

Juhl's gun made it so hot for the enemy soldiers that they tried to encircle him, but the sergeant dismounted the gun, laid it on the edge of his fox-hole and began shooting again. For 30 minutes he battled the Germans while 88mm and mortar shells exploded around him.

Juhl emptied 8 boxes of ammunition. By that time the Germans had had enough. When their Infantry withdrew the tanks also about faced and pulled around a hill. Sixteen dead Germans were found in front of Juhl's gun.

sion's southern boundary and near the town of Lanzerath¹² reported that it, the platoon, had been heavily shelled that morning and was being attacked by two tanks and a group of infantry; later, that it had knocked out the two tanks and driven off the infantry; still later, that it had set up an artillery observation post in the town of Lanze-

¹² Task Force X was the name applied to the 14th Cav. Group attached to the 106th Div., VIII Corps, and responsible for the security of the area immediately south of the 99th Div.'s boundary and between that boundary and the troops of the 106th Div. in position on the Schnee Eifel. The I. and R. platoon was sent out to maintain contact with elements of Task Force X in that area.

ONE OF THE EXCEPTIONALLY FEW BAYONET CHARGES
ON RECORD IN WORLD WAR II

Stars and Stripes, 12 Feb. '45

40 Men, 40 Bayonets . . .



. . . a Charge That Ran Out Three German Companies

WITH 99th DIV.—Lt. Harry Parker, of Johnson, Vt., and his mine platoon of Anti-tank Co., 393rd Inf. Reg., were sent forward to make contact with C Co. His total force was about 40 men. C Co. was surrounded by about three companies of enemy infantry.

Formed into a line of skirmishers the men moved into the snowy forest. They couldn't move for about 20 minutes and the tree bursts had already wounded three men. "Hell," said Parker, "I figured we would all get it sooner or later if we stayed there." So he ordered bayonets fixed.

Under the bursting shells they moved on a dead run, bayonets leveled, and they yelled like Indians as they came pounding down through the woods on to the surrounded CP. This was too much for the three German companies, and after a brief skirmish they broke and ran.

C Co. was relieved, and the men dug in for the night. They didn't lose a man.

Stars and Stripes, 22 March '45

★ ★ ★

Doughboy Knocks Out 3 MGs in Two Days

WITH 99th INF. DIV.—Knocking out two enemy machine guns one day and another the following day, Pfc. Robert J. Smith, of Dundalk, Md., squad first scout with Co. L, 393rd Regt. has established himself as something of a Nemesis for the Boche.

Smith silenced the first gun with a well-aimed grenade then rushed into the hole and knocked off three

remaining Jerries with a volley of bullets from his M1.

Since his buddies were still pinned down by another machine gun, Smith crawled on and repeated his performance. The platoon moved on and recaptured their CP.

Next day, a Kraut machine gun opened up from the woods across the road from Smith's position. He straightway left his foxhole, crept around the emplacement, and reversing his usual procedure, first picked off five of the gunners with rifle shots and then threw his gun-silencing grenade.

★ ★ ★

rath, from which place the tank destroyer detachment of Task Force X had withdrawn, and that the platoon had been able to shell with disastrous effect a battalion of German infantry caught in march formation—further that it had dug in its position in compliance with orders to hold and was now being attacked by an entire battalion of infantry, and then—silence!¹³

As the morning wore on, the initial conclusion¹⁴ that this action

¹³ This action of the platoon was later verified by Lieut. Lyle J. Bouch, Jr., the platoon leader, who was captured at that time with his men, but toward the end of the war was recaptured by the 99th Div. when the great German P.O.W. camp at Moosburg in southern Bavaria was overrun. Lieut. Bouch informed me that his men had dug in a position on a small hill and forced an entire battalion to deploy, shell his position and then attack. Paratroopers were dropped in behind him. Surrounded and out of ammunition, his platoon was captured. This little platoon had more hard luck later—moved from place to place as P.O.W.'s, they were at the P.O.W. camp at Lager Hamelburg and released from that place by the exploits of the 4th Armd. Div. column but were recaptured and moved to Moosburg where their own buddies of the 99th released them.

¹⁴ Maj. Gen. (now Lieut. Gen.) Clarence Huebner, who at the time was in the

was purely local to offset our successful attack into the Siegfried Line rapidly changed color. It became clear that the Germans, after making a reconnaissance in force, had launched an *all-out* effort on a large scale. This was definitely confirmed later during the day when a copy of the "Von Rundstedt Order" was captured by Company A 394th Infantry which sat astride the Losheim-Bullingen Road. The order read:

"Soldiers of the west front: Your great hour has struck! Strong attacking armies are advancing today against the Anglo-Americans. I don't need to say more to you. You all feel it, everything is at stake. You bear in yourselves a holy duty to give everything and to achieve the superhuman for OUR FATHERLAND AND OUR FUEHRER!"

That morning Combat Team 395 had, as planned, launched another of its attacks into the Siegfried Line defenses to break through to the Roer River dams. Its 2nd Battalion 395th had by 2:00 o'clock that afternoon captured the last pill-box on its objective for the day and made contact with the 38th Infantry 2nd Division on its left flank which had also continued in its attacks. It held up then waiting for the 2nd Division to come abreast before pressing the attack further. By that time, however, it was evident that we were in for a knock-down, drag-out fight. I called off all further attacks into the Westwall defenses and started to concentrate the troops.

Up on the extreme north flank of the 99th's twenty-two mile front, around Hofen, where the 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry and the 99th Reconnaissance Troop were in position,¹⁵ a strong enemy attack of infantry and tanks was received. It was definitely repulsed. Throughout the entire Battle of the Bulge that small group held the Hofen-Alzen area unassisted and without giving an inch of ground.

Near the center of the line the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry, which had participated initially in the attack into the Siegfried Line, primarily as a demonstration and secondarily to better its position by

process of taking over command of the V Corps from Gen. Leonard Gerow, visited my headquarters that morning at about 8:30 A.M. We discussed the situation and even at that time believed that this was purely a local action. I changed my mind later during the morning as more detailed reports came in.

Marlene Dietrich and her assistant, Miss Mayberry, with their U.S.O. troop, arrived at about the same time. They had come to put on a show for the 99th boys. She was greeted but hurried out of the area—our men never did see her show!

¹⁵ This battalion had a position which provided it with good fields of fire. All battalions were armed and equipped alike. In this case the good fields of fire proved the effectiveness of our fire power.

the capture of "Rath Hill" and "Purple Heart Corner," named that because of the many casualties suffered by our patrols whenever they crossed that area, was struck with repeated heavy attacks. The assaults struck hardest into its right flank and enemy began pouring into its rear areas. It kept beating off these assaults. Companies found themselves surrounded but kept fighting in an all-around defense. In the first fanatical German charge part of Company K 393rd Infantry was wiped out, killed or captured.¹⁶

Here our troops could deal with the hostile infantry but found themselves powerless against the enemy armor which was being slipped into the area and in juggernaut style crashed ahead and crushed our men in their fox-holes. Our few anti-tank guns were of little value, being immobilized in the deep snow and mud. Our men crawled close to these tanks with bazookas, dragged daisy-chains¹⁷ in front of moving tanks, and some of our men actually threw mortar shells by hand against the sides of the tanks. Others, using gasoline from their demolished vehicles, made gasoline pits in the few woods trails, covered the pits with rifle fire, and as a moving tank approached too close to stop, rushed out and set fire to the pit with a flaming torch.¹⁸

This battalion reported that it was running out of ammunition, had collected hundreds of prisoners, but in turn was being surrounded. Company I 394th Infantry of the Division reserve battalion, located near the town of Hunsfeld on the extreme south flank of the Division, was hurriedly dispatched to it with ammunition and supplies. It fought its way in and joined the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry at about 6:00 P.M. that day.¹⁸

The front of the 3rd Battalion 393rd still looked as though it would be penetrated. Regimental headquarters¹⁹ placed the only reserve it had, the I. and R. and mine platoon of the regiment, in position behind the battalion and about 2500 yards east of the town of Krinkelt, to gather in any infiltrating enemy groups. The platoons were too weak to stop the large size patrols breaking through.

The 3rd Battalion 23rd Infantry, which regiment was at that

¹⁶ A list furnishd by S/Sgt. R. M. Fasold, Co. K (P.O.W.) (Burbank, Calif.) indicated thirty-two men K.I.A. or W.I.A. Fifty-nine others joined him later in the German P.O.W. camp at Nuremburg.

¹⁷ A daisy-chain is a series of tank mines tied together like a chain of daisies.

¹⁸ Reported by Col. Jack G. Allen (Los Angeles, Calif.), the then battalion commander.

¹⁹ Lieut. Col. Jean D. Scott, Inf., U.S.A., was in command of the 393rd Inf.

time in 2nd Division reserve, was released to the 99th Division, and with one company of the 741st Tank Battalion attached, was hurriedly dispatched to the 393rd Infantry. The regiment promptly committed this battalion to back up the position of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry. Late that afternoon this battalion of the 23rd Infantry established itself on the same line being held by the I. and R. and mine platoon. It stopped the large hostile patrols.

Our artillery battalions which were in firing positions north and northeast of Rocherath-Krinkelt again came under intense hostile artillery fires. Starting at about 5:00 P.M., the barrage grew in intensity and lasted until about 8:00 P.M. It was large calibre artillery which did this shelling. The enemy had our positions accurately surveyed-in, for every firing battery was bracketed by this fire.²⁰

The 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry, in position along the International Highway, received two more heavy attacks. One ferocious assault struck its left flank and overran part of its front line, wiping out most of its Company B. The heroic defense put up by the remnants of this company finally stopped this assault. Rallying around its company command post, it rushed every cook, K.P., driver and everyone who could man a rifle into the fight—it even called for our own artillery fire to fall right on its positions. It stopped the onslaught. Another attack struck the right flank of the battalion. Here Company C stopped the assault in its tracks. Not satisfied, this battalion then counterattacked with its Company A and drove the enemy back and out of its area. It held the enemy out of its area for the time.

Down south on the front of the 394th Infantry, the 1st Battalion²¹ 394th, which sat astride the Losheim-Bullingen Road, was hit simultaneously by a two-pronged attack of infantry and tanks. The tanks attempted to drive straight down the road. It was a relentless attack, consistently reinforced, which during that day of fighting practically wiped out all of Company B. Time and time again these doughboys fought off the hordes of fanatical S.S. men. These so-called supermen

²⁰ The C.O., 924th F.A. Bn. (Lieut. Col. Logan Clarke, F.A., U.S.A.) states: "I visited each battery as soon as I could. Each of my firing batteries had been bracketed. All our lines were shot out. We did not get a casualty during this phase, as all our men took to their entrenchments and no direct hit was made on a shelter. We were all nervous and a little punch-drunk from the concussions. It was our first experience in being on the business end of a heavy trajectory. I estimate that about fifteen or twenty-five batteries of 105 M.M. and 170 M.M. fired at us."

²¹ 1st Bn. 394th Inf. was commanded by Lieut. Col. Robert N. Douglas, Inf., U.S.A.

Combat Spotlight

99th Div.



The Aid-Station of the 3rd Bn 393rd Inf was overflowing late afternoon 16th December. The Main supply route, a woods trail to the rear, was over-run by large bands of the enemy killing drivers and blowing up vehicles. The last vehicles to get out were in a convoy, all loaded with wounded Chaplain Truesdale in charge. With a large Chaplain's flag on his Jeep and Red Cross flags on several of the vehicles the convoy got through. The Jerries apparently respected the flags.



89 DEGREES !

A mortarman of D Co. shoves the bipod legs of his mortar into the side of his foxhole and fires his gun at an angle of 89 degree, helping to repel a powerful German assault force 25 feet away. The fire was called for by 1/Lt. John Vaughan, Co. D. on Dec. 16, the first day of the Germans' Ardennes Offensive, in the 1st Bn sector near Losheimergraben, Belgium.

Other mortars in the platoon fired supporting missions and many of the mortar-men used their pistols and carbines to beat off the enemy.

followed behind their Volksgrenadier soldiers whom they drove ahead as so many cattle to slaughter, to force the disclosure of our doughboy positions and machine gun locations before they came on the scene in their superglory! They miscalculated—not only were these first waves of Volksgrenadiers mowed down but so were these supermen. They then became fanatical; they used every trick in the book and many not in the book—all to no avail. When things looked blackest for our side, our staunch defenders would counterattack to drive the enemy back.

To prevent infiltrating groups of hostile troops from penetrating west along the road toward Bullingen or north toward Krinkelt,

the critical point in the concentration of our troops, the 1st Battalion 23rd Infantry with a company of the 741st Tank Battalion and a company of the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion, all from the 2nd Division, were released at about 4:00 P.M. that day to the 99th Division and emplaced south of the town of Murringen in the dug-in positions previously prepared in case of just this sort of an eventuality.

On the front of Combat Team 395²² in the middle of our twenty-two mile line our attack had been called off at just about the same time that they had seized their objectives for the day. They had been fighting offensively, were on the attack, while all around them, right and left, our troops were beating off assaults by two German armies. It was fantastic. They stopped their drive, pulled back and began to withdraw toward Krinkelt.

There was only one road south out of the pocket into which our attack into the Siegfried Line had placed the 2nd Division, our Combat Team 395, all the 99th Division artillery and the entire 324th Engineer Battalion of the 99th. That road had to be held open! The Germans had to be held south and east of Krinkelt, the little town at the mouth of this road, or—all these troops would be lost!

The word was sent to all our front line troops: "HOLD AT ALL COSTS!" It was a do-or-die job—a MUST!

We had to hold the enemy out of the Krinkelt area until the troops in the pocket could pull back and establish a position around Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld. It was a herculean job, this order—but it was done—done by bravery and courage. It was courage, plain, unadulterated guts, the crowning glory of the American fighting soldier, which always comes to the front whenever he is faced with great odds or an impossible task. Here again it stepped in to replace our meager strength and over-extended frontages.

Along the Division right (south) boundary the Boche attacks plowed in, ran into resistance and bounced off, only to come in again, each time probing deeper and deeper westward along that flank, looking for a soft spot through which to penetrate.

²² C.T. 395, Col. Alexander J. MacKensie, U.S.A. (Retd.). (Los Altos, Calif.), commanding, at this time consisted of the following units:

Entire 395th Inf. Regt. (less 3rd Bn.)

2nd Bn. 393rd Inf.

924th F.A. Bn.

Co. C 324th Engineer Bn.

Co. C 324th Medical Bn.

Co. D 86th Chemical Bn.

Co. B 801st Tank Destroyer Bn. (T.D.)

The 3rd Battalion 394th Infantry,²³ which was the division reserve, was located on that flank and about 2500 yards back of our front lines. It was struck—it counterattacked and drove the Boche back 1000 yards.²⁴ Areas which were rest areas the day before became battlefields.

As the day wore on and the few local reserves we had were used up, cooks, K.P.s, vehicle drivers, clerks and everyone who could use a weapon was gathered up and put on the firing line. Still more troops were needed to block the continuing probing action of the enemy to find a soft spot along the right flank of the Division. Late that afternoon, one company, Company C of the attached 801st Tank Destroyer Battalion, towed guns at the time, the only available unit we had, was rushed to the right flank to cover the road from the town of Hunsfeld to Bullingen. It got there before the enemy and reported, "All clear."

The first day's attack by Von Rundstedt had expended itself. At dark, reports started coming in from all the units along the front line that the local penetrations had been driven out and that our front line positions were practically re-established, although some unorganized groups of the enemy were known to be wandering around in the woods in rear of the front lines.

The mighty *Wehrmacht* which thought they could plaster green doughboys with artillery fire, scare them to death by yelling and shooting off burp guns and then walk over their positions, encountered their first surprise. They didn't walk—they tripped, stumbled

²³ The 3rd Bn. 394th Inf. was less its Co. I, which at this time was fighting with the 3rd Bn. 393rd Inf.

²⁴ Lieut. Col. Norman Moore, Inf., U.S.A., the battalion commander, reports as follows: "At 0500 an enemy patrol of the strength of a platoon (fifty-sixty men) managed to work their way up a railroad cut through the front lines and were fired on by my outposts. This was the start of our part in the now famous 'Battle of the Bulge.' The patrol took refuge in four box cars which we quickly demolished with bazooka fire. . . . The battalion at this time consisted of two rifle companies, Co. K under Capt. W. Simmons and Co. L under Lieut. Neal Brown. Co. M heavy weapons company less one platoon was commanded by Capt. Joe Shank. Co. I plus one platoon of M.G.s under Capt. J. J. Morris had been sent to the 393rd Inf. . . . The regimental commander, Col. Don Riley, Inf., U.S.A., was notified of this infiltration and I was reminded by him that my battalion was the division reserve and that I should break contact. At this time a company of Krauts was observed entering a draw that led to positions occupied by Co. L. As my battalion was the only unit between the enemy and the regimental command post it was not feasible to break contact. The regimental commander was so notified and Lieut. Brown, Co. L, was ordered to block the head of the draw and Co. K to hit the Krauts in flank. This maneuver succeeded and the enemy was driven back. Sporadic fighting continued throughout the afternoon with the night of the 16th fairly calm and peaceful."

and fell. Their precise "according to plan" schedule was knocked akilter. They had encountered the American Soldier! That was an element their precise science of warfare had not properly evaluated. They had surprised the higher command, they had concentrated a superiority of troops at the critical point, they had launched an unexpected attack which they had planned to the last detail, *but*, they failed to take into account the indomitable spirit of the American Soldier—green or veteran.

The unperturbed and adamant spirit of our men,²⁵ our soldiers, holding their positions that day against overpowering avalanches of the *Wehrmacht's* finest, should forever remain an inspiration to American fighting men. Many deeds of heroism, too many to recount, occurred that day.

It was exemplified by deeds such as that of Sergeant Murray of Company B 394th Infantry, whose company sat astride the Losheim-Bullingen Road. His entire squad destroyed, Murray seized the weapon of a mortally wounded automatic rifleman and with his last magazine of ammunition charged headlong into the oncoming Germans to fall less than ten feet from the enemy. He stopped them momentarily, but, I am sure, more than that, he caused the little icy finger of doubt of their superman ability to be born in their minds. There is the experience of 1st Sergeant Lyle O. Frank,²⁶ who at the time was returning to his company (A 394th Infantry) which was under attack: hearing the firing, he ordered the three men with him to take up "marching fire" and advanced into the flank of the enemy force of about 150 men who were attacking his command post. Knocked off balance by this assault fire from an unexpected flank and apparently thinking Sergeant Frank's force larger than it was, the enemy quickly withdrew.

Another example is that of the fight put up by the anti-tank squad of the 394th Infantry in position across the road out of Losheim. At about 11:30 that morning a column of Germans headed by a Tiger tank came charging up the road. The A.T. gunner knocked a track off the tank and stopped it with his first shot. Not waiting for the

²⁵ An interesting note extracted from a report by Sgt. H. C. Ashburner (Miami, Fla.) of the Service Co. 394th Inf., located at Murringen at that time, expresses the attitude of the men: "16 Dec.—Heavy artillery raised the company at 5:30 A.M. The fox-holes were filled for about an hour. Two of our trucks were damaged, no one injured. *Normal duties throughout the day.*"

²⁶ Sgt. Frank was given a battlefield appointment as second lieutenant and later was seriously wounded.

smoke of the explosion to clear so he could sight again, he opened the breech, blew the smoke out of the barrel, sighted through it and fired again. This time his shot penetrated the hull of the tank and it burst into flames. Then the ammunition bearers of the squad knocked off the tankers with rifle fire as they tried to crawl out.

There occurred the exploit of Staff Sergeant Vernon McGarity, a squad leader with Company L 393rd Infantry, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for the part he played that day. Wounded in the initial artillery barrage that morning, he made his way to an aid station, received treatment, refused to be evacuated and returned to his hard-pressed men. So tenaciously did his men fight, on orders to stand firm at all costs, that they could not be dislodged despite murderous enemy fire and the breakdown of their communications. During the day he rescued one of his friends who had been wounded in a forward position, and throughout the night he exhorted his comrades to repulse the enemy's attempts at infiltration. When morning came and the Germans attacked with tanks and infantry he braved heavy fire to run to an advantageous position where he immobilized the enemy's lead tank with a round from a rocket launcher. Fire from his squad drove the attacking infantrymen back, and three supporting tanks withdrew. He rescued under fire another wounded American and then directed devastating fire on a light cannon which had been brought up by the hostile troops to clear resistance from the area. When ammunition began to run low, remembering an old ammunition hole about 100 yards distant in the general direction of the enemy, he braved a concentration of hostile fire to replenish his unit's supply. By circuitous route the enemy managed to emplace a machine gun to the rear and flank of the squad's position, cutting off their only escape route. Unhesitatingly, the gallant soldier took it upon himself to destroy this menace single-handedly. He left cover and while under steady fire from the enemy, killed or wounded all of the hostile gunners with deadly accurate fire and then prevented all attempts by the Germans to re-man the gun. Only when the squad's last round had been fired was the enemy able to advance and capture this intrepid leader and his men.²⁷

That same determined spirit of "hold or die" was duplicated many, many times all along our front. I know it was—it had to be—or our thin lines would never have been able to stop the greatly

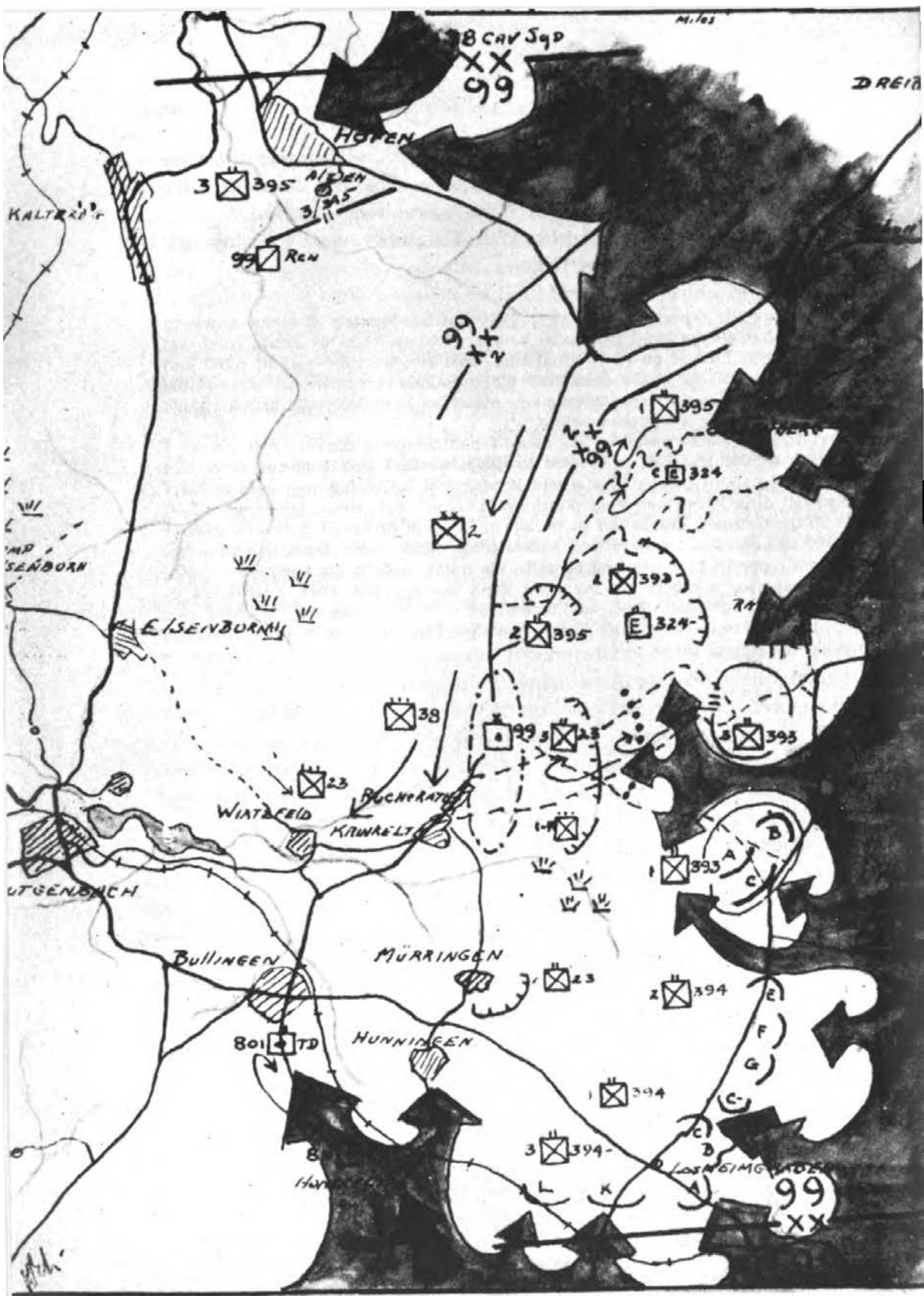
²⁷ Sgt. McGarity was recaptured by the 99th Div. and released from a P.O.W. camp at Moosburg, Bavaria, later during the war.

superior numbers of Germans that first day,²⁸ and provide the time necessary to withdraw the troops in the pocket and form the line against which later the German striking power was shattered.²⁹

The next day, Sunday, the 17th December, was the day hell really opened its doors—but wide!

²⁸ I personally reported by phone to V Corps headquarters at about midnight 15-16 Dec. that all my front line units had reported in, that my entire front was practically reestablished on its original line—that the situation was in hand and all quiet—but that my right flank had me considerably worried. I was assured help. The all quiet was only temporary! About an hour later the attack started again, only this time worse than before.

²⁹ I was extremely proud of my men. I had complete confidence in them. I knew they were entrenched in covered fox-holes which I had inspected at various times. They had, as I knew they would if necessary, called for their own artillery fires to fall directly on their own positions. This was dangerous, but it was disastrous to the Germans caught out in the open. We had plenty of forward observers and our concentrated artillery fire, which could reach every front line position, could be dropped where required on call. We could outfight the Germans in spite of their superior numbers but my right flank was exposed when Task Force X withdrew and the 106th Div. was surrounded. Without reserves to cover this exposed flank I was more than slightly worried, but could do nothing about it until aid came from Corps.



SITUATION 17 DECEMBER PRIOR TO 10:00 A.M.

After intense artillery barrages the enemy continued his smash westward in overwhelming force of infantry and tanks.

CHAPTER II

The Battle of the Bulge — Inferno!

17 DECEMBER 1944

THE DAY HAD HARDLY begun when at 1:00 A.M. down came another heavy barrage of artillery fire and every type of mortar fire, shelling all the known locations of our troops along our eastern and southern fronts. It pounded and shook the ground! Reports came in at the same time that the sounds of many motors and armor moving could be heard coming from the general vicinity of the towns of Lanzerath and Losheim in the south.

This was the beginning of a day which truly tried the souls of men. Boche headquarters apparently was determined to break through our lines no matter what the cost! Every conceivable dirty trick they could think up was dug out of the bottom of the barrel and flung at our men. American-speaking soldiers in American uniforms complete with identification tags, tanks with American and Allied markings, white surrender flags falsely used only to get closer to our positions to open fire, American-speaking Krauts cutting into our radio nets issuing fake orders—those and many others were used. Yes, indeed, they tried hard, they played dirty, but they didn't get away with it.

We had all our Division artillery pushed well forward to the vicinity of Krinkelt and Rocherath in order to give close support to our attack through the Siegfried Line; even our 155 howitzers of the 372nd F.A. Battalion were in position near Krinkelt. The attack into the Siegfried Line having been called off, this battalion of medium artillery was pulled out of its position near Krinkelt at 1:30 A.M. on the 17th December and moved to Wirtzfeld where it arrived at about 2:20 A.M.¹ The other three battalions plus the attached 776th F.A. Battalion, all 105 mm howitzers, remained in their forward locations from which they could better support our infantry. As the day wore on, however, they too had to pull out but under fire.²

¹ Shown in itinerary 372nd F.A. Bn.

² The 370th F.A. Bn. (105s) reported that while in position near Krinkelt it was shelled almost continuously that day from midnight to 5:00 P.M. when it with-

At 5:30 o'clock that morning the German assault along our entire front resumed. German infantry and Panzers struck with terrific force east of Krinkelt and spearheaded up the Losheim-Bullingen Road. The five battalions³ of ours holding that front caught this attack. It was being made by what turned out to be five or more German divisions—two Volksgrenadier, two Panzer and one or two S.S. divisions.

While this took place on our middle and southern front, our northern front, held by our lone 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry and the 99th Reconnaissance Troop, was hit by a force estimated at a regiment of Volksgrenadiers reinforced by tanks. Our men stopped that force before it could get to their lines.

In the area where our troops had been attacking into the Siegfried Line, the enemy went on the offensive and attacked with infantry and armor. He was stopped cold and our units continued to withdraw slowly and carefully.

In the south it was a different story. With our right flank wide open and no troops available to plug the holes, the Germans kept probing farther and farther westward until they found a soft spot—the road running north from Hunsfeld toward Bullingen. Motorized German infantry and armor sped up that road to be stopped temporarily near Hunsfeld by the action of Company C 801st Tank Destroyer Battalion which had taken up positions in that vicinity. A rear guard action ensued. That lone company, without infantry support and handicapped with towed guns, was soon pushed out of Hunsfeld. Slowly it fell back toward Bullingen, taking up repeated delaying positions along that road and forcing the Germans to deploy to drive them out of position after position before falling back again and again.

Meanwhile the enemy drove headlong into our lines across the Losheim-Bullingen Road. He was determined to seize Losheimgraben, the name for the little group of buildings at that important crossroad. He dive-bombed and shelled the buildings, then threw in another force of infantrymen. It was stopped in its tracks. Exasperated by the stubborn defense these exhausted men of the 1st Battalion

drew under small arms fire and tank attack. It had to abandon some of its vehicles while pulling through Krinkelt which was being heavily shelled. (M. E. Gibel, S/Sgt. Btry. A 370th F.A., Lakewood, Calif.)

³ The five battalions along the front, center to south flank, were 3rd Bn. and 1st Bn. 393rd Inf., then the 2nd Bn., 1st Bn. and 3rd Bn. 394th Inf. At full strength each battalion had 825 men. A German division averaged 8000 men; roughly, we had 4000 men and the Germans 40,000 men along that part of our front—about ten to one.

394th Infantry put up, the enemy pulled back and contented himself with just shelling the buildings in which the defenders had taken up their position.

Attacks from the south, through the area previously held by the 106th Division of the VIII Corps, to capture Losheimgraben, ran smack into the depleted 3rd Battalion 394th Infantry which was in position there, and could not be budged.⁴ It was here, in the area southeast of Bullingen and in front of the 3rd Battalion 394th Infantry, that the sky opened up for a few minutes at about noon and our air-ground liaison group was able to bring in thirty-two of our fighter-bombers for the first time. They caught and bombed a concentration of about fifty enemy tanks and armored vehicles. Before a second air run could be made the sky closed in again. It was, however, effective. It was cheered! It knocked out at least five tanks and helped slow the Germans, but what was more important, it helped raise the morale of the troops fighting in the heavy forest, in deep snow and lowering dark clouds, and without effective anti-tank defense or sufficient artillery support. Our air support had come through—it let all our men along that front know that they were not being forgotten.⁵

It was at this time, too, that German armor overran our airstrip. Our artillery liaison pilots and ground crews, grounded by bad weather, suddenly found themselves under fire from enemy tanks. Heroically they ran out on the field, started up their planes and took off directly into the hostile fire! The pilot of one plane was absent but the liaison sergeant (Sergeant Pierick, 371st Field Artillery) jumped into the plane and followed the others off the field. One plane in repair was abandoned. All planes were safely landed on the Corps air field at Mercedes.⁶

The 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry, which was still holding its

⁴ Lieut. Col. Norman Moore, Inf., U.S.A., commanding 3rd Bn. 394th Inf., reports: "On the 17th Jerry really gave us the works. Artillery, tanks and infantry were dumped on us in ever increasing numbers. Jerry battered away at our open flank. Co. K was sent to plug a hole in the line held by the 1st Bn. and the remainder of the 3rd Bn. was used on the open flank to protect the command post of the 1st and 3rd Bns. and the road to Murringen. The Krauts came on in mass formation showing an utter disregard for losses which were enormous. Our mortars were firing at a high angle, the shells dropping within fifty feet of our front lines. My old C.P. at F. Buckholtz was threatened by tanks and we withdrew to the C.P. of the 1st Bn."

⁵ The German air force was able to have planes over us almost all the time. Our own came in only when the sky opened up and the fog lifted. Why this was so has never been satisfactorily explained to me.

⁶ All pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the sergeant

original position along the International Highway, facing east, had repelled every attempt by the enemy to cut around its left flank. On its right flank a part of Company C had become separated from its 1st Battalion 394th Infantry, as the enemy drove into that flank, and joined the 2nd Battalion.

Farther north on the front of the two battalions (1st and 3rd) of the 393rd Infantry the enemy threw in wave upon wave of assaulting troops. They were cut down in unbelievable slaughter, but nevertheless succeeded in infiltrating some of their men through our positions and completely surrounding the battalions.

The 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry with Company I 394th Infantry attached actually counterattacked early that morning—in the pre-dawn dark at 5:30 A.M., to be exact. It counterattacked to regain a small hill on their only trail out. The enemy had seized it and was organizing it as a strong point. Over this trail the enemy was bringing in his armor. Our attack was successful but at daylight enemy tanks again swept in and drove off our men.⁷

By noon this battalion was completely cut off, but it had received its orders to fall back on the new line being established in its rear. That afternoon at about 3:30 o'clock it fought its way through to the rear and finally established itself on the left of the 3rd Battalion 23rd Infantry and the I. and R. platoon of the 393rd infantry which were at this time in position east of Krinkelt.

Colonel Jack G. Allen, commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry, in recounting the events of this action to me shortly after it happened, roundly condemned this battalion of the 23rd Infantry. It appears that as planned he withdrew his men through their position which was on a low ridge, then promptly assembled his men on the reverse slope of this ridge and began reorganizing. While they were in this process the Germans attacked and the battalion of

received the Silver Star. It is said that the 99th is the only combat division which can claim this distinction for its air men.

⁷ Capt. J. J. Morris (C.O. Co. I 394th Inf.) (San Francisco, Calif.) tells this story about this action. It shows the spirit and dauntless courage not only of our soldiers but of our chaplains: "It was not until the following morning (17th Dec.) when we did attack, that we discovered we were opposing elements of a German Panzer division. . . . Upon learning this it was decided that the only sensible thing to do was to withdraw—if we could get out! We were under small arms, mortar and artillery fire, and the German tanks with 88s were so close that we were receiving direct fire in the woods. It was a hot spot, and while all of this was taking place, to bolster morale, amidst the bursting shells, the chaplain of the 3rd Bn. 393rd Inf. was running around distributing Nestle's candy bars from a box he held in his hand! This was the most humorous thing I ever saw in all my combat."

the 23rd withdrew, uncovering his men, who, caught out in the open, had to charge up the ridge, repel the German assault and re-seize the ridge line. Here they remained, repelling repeated assaults until they were ordered to withdraw to Elsenborn Ridge.⁸

Starting at dawn, wave after wave of charging Germans was hurled at the defenders in the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry area. Our companies in this battalion, which had blasted the initial assaults of the Germans on the 16th December had nevertheless suffered heavy casualties. During the night they had reorganized and consolidated their positions once more. Again that morning the ceaseless attacks continued. The Germans—Boche, they must be called—forced some of our men whom they had captured the day before to precede them in these attacks.⁹ It was a holocaust! Survivors of this close-in, bloody battle state¹⁰ that the killed Krauts were piled up like cordwood and that the snow-covered ground in front of the battalion was gray with their fallen dead. Every fox-hole and machine gun pit of ours had dead Germans piled high around it. In spite of the superhuman efforts of the defenders, groups of the enemy slipped by into the rear areas and the battalion was gradually pushed out of its position and toward the south.

Meanwhile Combat Team 395 had broken off its attack as ordered and was disengaging and falling back under pressure. The bad terrain and worse roads aided them in this controlled withdrawal. On the right flank of this regiment a strong enemy attack from the direction of "Rath Hill" had rolled back the north flank of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry and threatened to penetrate straight to the west, cutting the road over which the 395th Team had to withdraw. To partially fill this gap and to protect this exposed flank of

⁸ This is an illustration of the "confusion of battle." What probably happened here, I believe, is that the 3rd Bn. 23rd Inf. in taking up its position, sent out a line of scouts as a covering force. Our men passed through that line, which was denser than any our troops had been able to use on our original front lines because of the extended fronts we had been holding. Believing they had passed through the new position, our men thought themselves safe. When the Germans attacked, the line of scouts gave the signal and withdrew, as is normal, with the results as stated.

⁹ Reported by Lieut. Col. Matthew Legler, Retd. (Buffalo, N.Y.), C.O. of the 1st Bn. 393rd at that time.

¹⁰ Reported by 1st Sgt. Bernard Nawrocki, Co. B 393rd (South Bend, Ind.). He added: "During the night 16-17 Dec. it was fairly quiet as far as combat was concerned. The German aid-men, unmolested by us, worked constantly removing their wounded who were especially numerous along the International Highway. Their dead they left in position—we removed truck loads of them in February when we again took over that same front."

Combat Team 395, two companies of the 324th Engineers (Companies A and B) which had been maintaining the roads in rear of C.T. 395 and assisting our infantry in demolishing captured pill-boxes hurriedly took up a position late on the evening of the 16th December. Here on the 17th December as *infantry* they faced the enemy. Their position was on the flank of the advancing Germans. They forced the Germans to remain on "Rath Hill" and sideslip to the south. The road out for C.T. 395 was secure.

This is when I really discovered that I had ten and not nine¹¹ fighting infantry battalions. This tenth battalion was our 324th Engineer Combat Battalion—iron men who could double in cold steel!

Soon the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry, part of Combat Team 395 at this time, disengaged and fell back to join the line established by the engineers while the 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry dropped back considerably farther to the rear to take up a break-through position.

The 1st Battalion 395th Infantry with Company C 324th Engineers attached fought a slow rear-guard action. Using every tactical trick which the terrain and the winding Hellenthal Road permitted, they fought the enemy to a standstill. The engineer company, using its bulldozers, destroyed bridges and culverts, and concealed charges of explosives under hurriedly created obstacles which were blown as the enemy armor was atop of them. The battalion continued to withdraw slowly at its own dictation.

Many of our men fighting in the dense woods, with the enemy all around them, had to sacrifice their heavy equipment and vehicles which they had during the past weeks tediously brought forward over the narrow woods trails to their front line positions. They could not get them out. This heavy equipment was destroyed in place so that it would not fall into the hands of the enemy. Vehicles were demolished, radios smashed, and all equipment which the men themselves could not carry out as they withdrew fighting was rendered useless.

Enemy parachutists had been dropped in our rear areas, and Jerry troops wearing G.I. O.D.s and in American Jeeps sneaked into our rear areas. One such too-nattily-dressed second lieutenant was stopped by an M.P.

"What's your name . . . outfit . . . commanding officer . . . ?" the M.P. asked.

¹¹ There are three infantry regiments in a division; each has three battalions—total nine.

The spiffy shavetail answered all these questions quickly and convincingly. Then the M.P. became a little more casual.

"Where did you get your commission?"

"Fort Benning."

"Fort Benning what?"

"Fort Benning, Texas."

—And another G.I.-Jerry went into the P.O.W. cage.

Something had to be done and done quickly to round up these enemy parachutists of the von der Heydte group. They were scattered through the woods and bogland west of Camp Elsenborn. No troops were available—not even a squad. All my men were on the firing line. At the time (near dark) my provost marshal¹² with two military policemen in a Jeep came to my headquarters. They and a couple of runners waiting nearby were assigned this mission and started out at once. They rounded up about fifteen of the Jerries that day. They were all corralled eventually by our troops and Corps troops.

During a battle, the behind the scenes actions of the service troops are seldom mentioned. The 99th Quartermaster Company and the 799th Ordnance Company, both of the 99th Division, were faced with the gigantic task of removing their supply dumps of gasoline, rations, spare parts, ammunition, etc., out of the path of the advancing enemy.¹³ One such dump in particular was located between the towns of Bullingen and Butgenbach. Using every truck, trailer and vehicle they could lay their hands on, these men heroically moved these supplies to Elsenborn, out of reach of the enemy. Throughout this operation these men were under hostile artillery fire, air attack and imminent capture by the advancing hostile spearheads. These operations continued even while the heavy fighting was going on in and beyond the town of Bullingen.¹⁴

Throughout that day and the next day many Corps units, operating in the area, reported to my headquarters for assignment. Anti-aircraft batteries, engineer battalions, small detachments of all types, reported in,¹⁵ all ready to take their places on the fighting front. The

¹² Maj. John C. Crouse (Williamsport, Pa.).

¹³ By this time we had discovered the German plan of operating on American supplies and therefore did all in our power to deny them these supplies, even destroying them in place.

¹⁴ That day my rolling command truck finally arrived. It was a new vehicle, beautifully white enameled inside. It was promptly initiated hauling gas, oil and supplies on its first job with the division. It sported two wound chevrons after that.

¹⁵ The only combat unit, an armored cavalry troop from the VIII Corps—14th

readiness of these normally rear area troops to take up front line positions and participate in the fight to repel the enemy marked the high morale and wonderful spirit of the American fighting citizen soldier—it was an inspiration to all commanders.¹⁶

The fighting in the south continued at an increased tempo. Bullingen was attacked and the east section of the town was overrun at about 8:50 A.M., but only after a knock-down, drag-out fight put up by the 254th Engineer Battalion, a Corps unit, attached early that morning to the 99th Division. The battalion had but the day before been repairing roads and bridges in the rear area. Aided by a company of light tanks and elements of the 99th Division service and headquarters troops located there, they forced the attacking troops to stop, deploy, shell their line south and east of the town and then attack with infantry and heavy tanks. The light arms with which these troops were equipped were no match for the heavy tanks which rolled over their positions. Our troops then defended the west end of Bullingen. The enemy finally overran Bullingen, and some of his tanks later penetrated even as far as Wirtzfeld, where they met hastily established anti-tank defenses of the 2nd Division. They bounced off and approached Dom Butgenbach and Butgenbach. There on high ground overlooking the road from Bullingen, a position had been taken up by a handful of 99th Division headquarters clerks with the nucleus of the defense the Division Headquarters Company anti-tank platoon (three 57 mm guns and thirty men). They were reinforced later by some men from the 254th Engineer Battalion who had been driven out of Bullingen. They put up a brave show.¹⁷

The spearhead of the attacking enemy column had apparently

Cav.—checked in and was promptly attached to the 394th Inf., fighting on the south flank. It had been cut off from its own outfit. Later it was released and got back to its own unit.

¹⁶ To reconnoiter positions for some of these units, the division inspector general, Lieut. Col. Louis Charbonneau (Detroit, Mich.) and 1st Lt. Willard (Tulsa, Okla.), A.D.C. to the assistant division commander, were the only personnel available at the command post. They were sent out. The inspector general was a former W.W.#1 doughboy. They did a fine job, selecting positions on the north side of the Butgenbach-Malmedy Road and getting troops there. To do this they had to dodge several German motorized units spearheading the German advance.

¹⁷ The C.O. of the 254th Engr. Bn. reported to me in person on the action which took place in Bullingen that morning. He believed his battalion had been destroyed. Later it was discovered that the separate companies managed to extricate themselves and fall back toward Butgenbach and Wirtzfeld. It was a dramatic moment at my C.P. at about noon that day when the details of the action were reported. I awarded the battalion commander then and there the Bronze Star Medal, and gave him my lunch to eat.

99th GIs Burn Valued Papers Before Escape

By A. C. Gordon
Stars and Stripes Unit
Correspondent

WITH 99th DIV.—For two hours M/Sgt. Robert L. Carty and four of his battery-mates played hide and seek with a German burp gun while they destroyed valuable documents to keep them from falling into enemy hands during the height of the Wehrmacht's Belgian breakthrough.

Waking one morning to find his outfit's town full of Helnies, Carty, sergeant major of the 371st FA Bn., rounded up Sgt. Charles J. Thompson, Washington, D. C.; T/4 James L. Butler, Providence, R. I.; Pvt. Tom Osborne, Hite, Ky.; and Pvt. John Molinick, McKees Rocks, Pa. While a German gunner covered their battery area from a nearby barn, the five artymen gathered up all their outfit's classified papers and burned them.

Starter Falls

Then, finding that both their own battalion and the infantry had pulled out of the town, Carty and his men worked their way along the hedgerows to an abandoned GI vehicle. Thompson reached up, turned the switch, held the starter down by hand, and sweated as the motor failed to turn over. The German gunner stood by at the barn without firing a shot.

Finally the motor caught and the men vaulted into the vehicle. Now the burp-gun opened up at them. But, with Thompson at the wheel and Carty manning a .50-cal. machine gun, they were off across country to safety.

★ ★ ★

GI Improvises Grenade Bullet

WITH 99th INF. DIV.—It was a long chance, but Sgt. Thornton E. Piersall, of Catesby, Okla., was willing to risk it. His ammunition was exhausted, but he spotted some dead Germans a few yards in front of his position with grenades and grenade launchers. If he had them he might be able to hold 'em off a few minutes longer.

He crawled forward and then back with the grenades. The grenades couldn't be launched without the proper cartridges. He had none. But he didn't worry too long—he improvised. He crimped the end of bullets in his teeth, fired two grenades at the advancing enemy. That was enough.

One shot cleared out a German bazooka team, and the other wiped out a machine-gun and its crew.

How many Jerries he had picked off before this action took place, was not reported. But his buddies said it looked like Piersall had "a private shooting gallery out there."

Practically single-handed, he prevented a German breakthrough when the position was important to the 395th Regt.

★ ★ ★

lost its ardor to attack. It had encountered ever increasing resistance as it drove up through the 99th Division's rear area. The soft spot it had found was not so soft! It hesitated in its further advance to the north. It carefully examined this new position, hesitated and delayed and lost its golden opportunity. It sat there in observation while

other of its spearheads probed farther west, circling around to the south of Butgenbach to finally cut across the road from Butgenbach to Malmedy.¹⁸

Here again at about noon that day the sky opened for a few minutes and our fighter-bombers were able to come in and bomb and strafe the enemy infantry and tanks. This too aided in turning the enemy advance to the south. The sky, which had been "ceiling zero," suddenly cleared. About fifty of our P-38s came in and drove off the German Luftwaffe, which had been bombing our troops and opening the way for their attacking tanks. For about forty-five minutes our air got in its telling licks on the German air and ground forces. Then again the sky clouded up to close the show.

We lost a number of our service installations when Bullingen was overrun. Among the units lost was the Service Battery of the 924th Field Artillery Battalion, the guns of which were in firing position north of the town of Krinkelt.¹⁹

Around Losheimgraben the fight still continued. Every effort, every attempt of the enemy to dislodge the troops in that location failed. Our units were, however, being gradually cut off. Hunningen, in their rear, which was also the site of the 394th regimental head-

¹⁸ It was at this time that my headquarters in Butgenbach split up. I left my C.P. with an aide, an assistant G-3 (operations) and a communications group from the signal company in an armored car equipped with a command radio, to establish a new C.P. at Camp Elsenborn. My staff felt at the time, and so did I, that it was dangerous for our division headquarters to remain on this exposed flank which we expected would be overrun momentarily. The remainder of the staff split up and followed me. When I was established in Elsenborn that part of the staff left at Butgenbach closed out and joined me. I went via the town of Nidrum where our clearing station of the 324th Medical Bn. was located and ordered those troops out.

¹⁹ Lieut. Col. Logan Clarke, U.S.A., the C.O., 924th F.A. Bn., writes: "My service battery commander came into my C.P. at about 7:30 A.M. to see if there was anything we needed. His battery of sixty-nine men—battalion motor maintenance section, personnel section, ammunition train, etc.—was set up in Bullingen. We talked things over and he returned to his battery rather hurriedly at about 8:15, for at about 8:00 A.M. someone brought in a rumor that a tank-destroyer unit near Bullingen had been overrun by German tanks. (Completely incredible, we thought.) About 9:00 A.M. I received a radio from him, now in Bullingen, that a number of German tanks were in the town, etc. I told him to get out and go to Elsenborn. They did not make it. Almost all were captured along with six forward observers who were there for a rest. One officer and six men, ammunition handlers, escaped. One of these men was credited with killing two German tank commanders and three other Germans. These six came back to Elsenborn about the 19th Dec., completely shell-shocked. We had T.O.T.d Bullingen time after time with seven to ten battalions of artillery. How they lived through it is a wonder. Those captured we picked up again at Moosburg in April.

quarters, was under attack and could be expected to be washed out momentarily.²⁰

Contact with the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry was lost and the troops near Murringen were being engaged by more-than-heavy enemy patrols which had slipped through our lines.

At 3:30 that afternoon three large enemy tanks labored into Losheimgraben. Two were knocked out by bazooka teams. The third fired point-blank into the houses, even sticking its snout into cellar windows. Still our men fought on—what was left of them. Outflanked and hard pressed, these companies had had to give ground during the day. The position near Losheimgraben to which Company A 1st Battalion 394th had fallen back never was penetrated despite repeated attacks. Just before dusk this company counterattacked the enemy attempting to mop up Losheimgraben again—but the Germans were too strong. The remnants of the 1st Battalion 394th joined with the depleted 3rd Battalion 394th and under cover of darkness withdrew four miles, through what was now enemy infested territory, to the positions it had weeks before prepared around Murringen. There it fell in on the flank of the 1st Battalion 23rd Infantry which had been emplaced there the day before. No enemy pushed through that position.

No word could be gotten to or received from the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry or the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry. They were cut off and surrounded. Faint hope was held out for their survival. They had received the order to "hold at all costs," and the fact that the enemy was not pouring through from their locations was the only feeble indication that they had not been destroyed. How these two battalions were able to survive and later to rejoin their regiments is an epic in itself.

On the front of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry the consistently reinforced attacks of the enemy had finally overrun its front line

²⁰ Extract from Sgt. Ashburner, Serv. Co. 394th, notes: "17 Dec.—Hunningen: At 0030 we started receiving shelling intermittently again and it continued all day. Capt. Peterson and truck drivers Trulock and Ragland left for the ammunition supply point. They were cut off from returning after Bullingen was captured. The order to load trucks was given at 10:30. All personnel were placed on the outskirts of town in defensive positions. There was plenty of air activity, both ours and enemy planes were bombing and strafing the troops. At about 2:00 P.M. Cpl. Serkedakis received a head injury from a flying mortar shell. At 3:00 P.M. some of Danzig (regimental headquarters) were captured. At 3:30 the field train began moving out—passed through K. . . . later stopping en route to clean out enemy snipers. . . ."

positions, but were stopped on the new line established east of Krinkelt-Rocherath. The position was still woefully weak to stem the tide of this ever increasing pressure. It needed reinforcement and it received it.

Combat Team 395 continued to fall back slowly from the pocket into which its attack had carried it, and as the day rolled on, the 1st Battalion 395th, dropping back from position to position along the Hellenthal Road, approached the break-through position which had been taken up by the 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry. This battalion as it was released hurried to the support of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry.

Here the Germans at the close of day made two frantic attacks to break through to Krinkelt. Both failed.²¹

Meanwhile the 2nd Division was also withdrawing from the gooseneck pocket into which its attack had carried it and was forming a strong defensive line in front of and facing south of the towns of Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld—a narrow front with fair fields of fire.

During that day, too, the 26th Infantry of the 1st Division had been released by V Corps to the 99th Division to help plug the extreme right flank gap through which the Germans were flowing.

I met the advance element of this regiment and its lieutenant colonel who was in command at the time, in Camp Elsenborn late that morning as I arrived there to establish my new command post. The regiment, motorized, was traveling in three echelons. The men had been up all night and were tired and hungry. Even though they were needed in Butgenbach immediately, it was deemed best to await the arrival of all the echelons of the column before moving down on Butgenbach. At that time I was not sure if Butgenbach had as yet been overrun by the Germans. A plan of rapid advance, by leap-frogging the motorized battalions down the road from critical terrain feature to critical terrain feature was decided upon and the regiment moved out within twenty minutes after the last echelon arrived. They met no opposition on this jump and moved into Butgenbach.

The news had come in that the 106th Infantry Division, sitting out on the fingers of the Schnee Eifel, on our immediate south (right) flank, had been cut off and surrounded. A large scale break, through

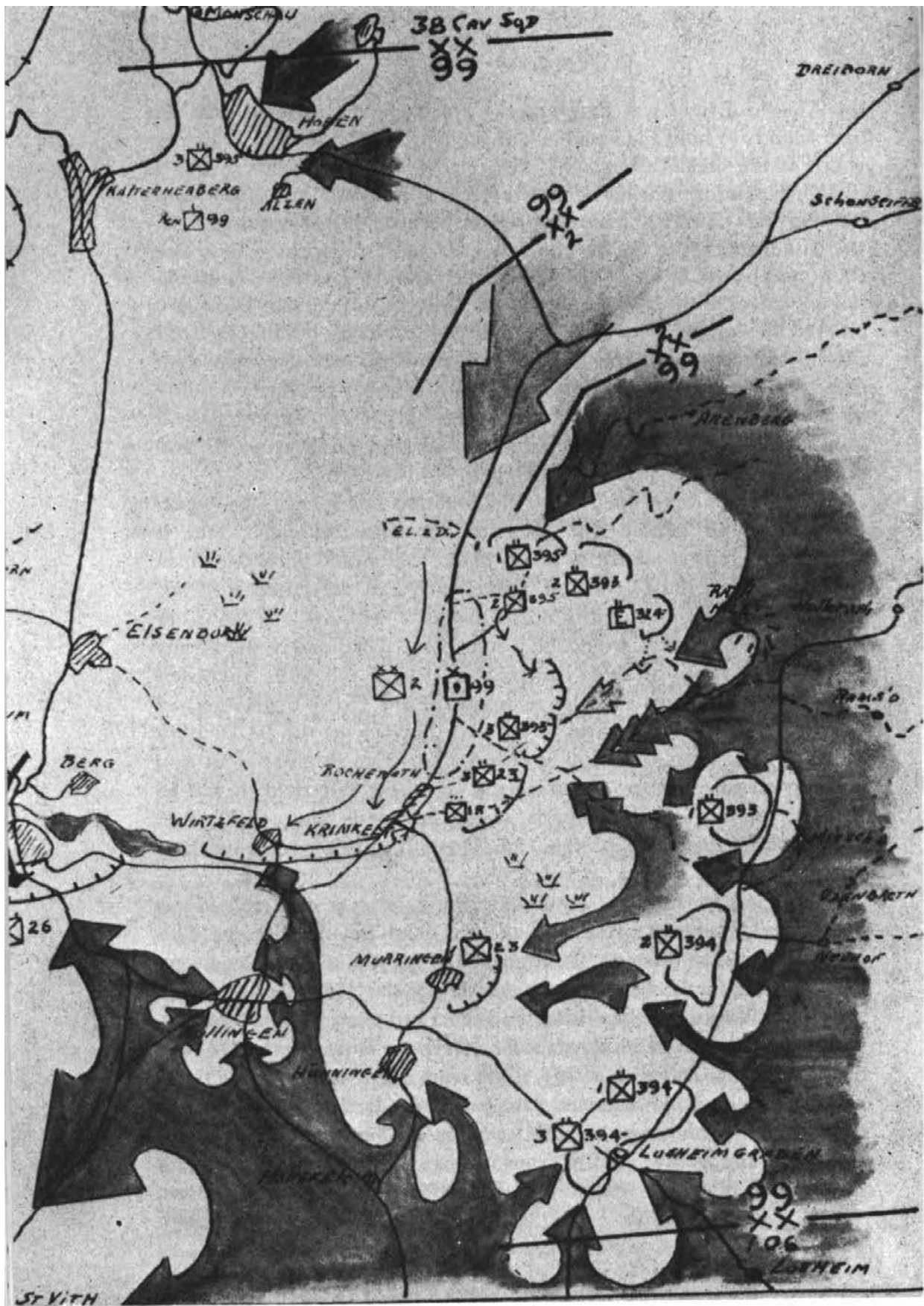
²¹ It was during these attacks that Lieut. Col. Thomas E. Griffin, U.S.A., executive officer 393rd, drove his command car to a small knoll to relay radio messages to the battling units, after all communications had been disrupted by artillery shelling. Heroically he continued this mission with shells bursting all around him until he was finally driven off by a hostile tank."

the American lines was in progress. The tactical answer to such an operation is to hold the shoulders of the penetration so as to limit the width of the break-through.

Our extreme northern flank of our twenty-two mile front was holding well. Every enemy assault had been definitely repulsed. On the east front, while our troops had been pushed back, the new line they established east of Krinkelt-Rocherath was holding. A strong hostile patrol with a tank had nevertheless penetrated that front and entered the town of Krinkelt where it built a huge bonfire in front of the church at the town square. That tank, however, was soon driven out. Farther to the south the 394th Infantry had been holding off all attempts to overrun its position, but as the enemy pushed around its flanks it had to fall back to its previously prepared and organized positions around Murringen.

On our southern open flank the situation was fluid. The enemy had pushed in behind our lines and overrun Bullingen, and it appeared as only a matter of hours before the attack on Butgenbach could be expected. The loss of Butgenbach and the junction of the two main roads, one running north toward Elsenborn and the other west toward Malmedy, would be a sore blow. Fortunately the enemy hesitated in front of Dom Butgenbach where the 99th Division's little defense platoon and the remnants of the 254th Engineers had valiantly dug in. The arrival of the 26th Infantry of the 1st Division at this critical time solved the problem. The 26th Infantry went into position on the high ground from the lake near Wirtzfeld to and in front of the town of Butgenbach, across the hostile route of advance. Before dark, the night of the 17th December, this dangerous hole was plugged.

A glance at the map shows why the little town of Krinkelt was the center of turmoil. Here was the key road junction for the 99th and 2nd Division troops. Through it had to pass all vehicles to get to and from our forward troops. All day of the 17th December and the 18th December, this little road-junction town was a seething, jammed madhouse of jumbled traffic. Over the slippery, muddy road motor columns churned to the south and north and west. Troops plodded forward, ambulances flew back and forth ducking in and out of traffic, ammunition vehicles plowed along to gun positions and front line troops. Trains from troops in the pocket rolled south through Krinkelt and west toward Butgenbach and on to Elsenborn. Artillery battalions like our 372nd pulled their guns back through



SITUATION 17 DECEMBER, 10:00 A.M.-5:30 P.M.

The main attack continued northwest until it reached Bullingen, when it was made too hot for the attacking Germans. They hesitated in their advance toward Butgenbach for several hours and then bounced off to the southwest. The direction of the main attack was diverted.

the town to take up new positions near Wirtzfeld and Elsenborn.²² Tank destroyers ground forward up the roads to face oncoming enemy tanks, while our tanks rumbled along to take up positions to resist the enemy advance. Columns of trucks, jammed tightly bumper to bumper in long lines, halted waiting for road blocks to clear, advancing and halting to get past the road junction which was under an almost continuous hail of hostile artillery fire. As the day advanced and our troops out front were being gradually pushed back, small arms and tank fires of the front line fight were added in recurrent waves to the bursting artillery shells.

It was under these conditions that our 99th Division battalions of 105 howitzers had to displace to the rear. Caught in the pocket north of Krinkelt, from which position they had been supporting the attack into the Siegfried Line and later the defense, their only reasonable route out was via the town of Krinkelt. Secondary roads, or rather, third class roads—for the Krinkelt Road was itself only a secondary road—were quagmires and mud traps for their heavy equipment. Cross-country travel for them was next to impossible. Tank fights were going on across the main road Krinkelt-Butgenbach, and through this cross-fire many of our batteries heroically drove their guns. Most of them made it—others were not so lucky!

At 5:00 o'clock that evening, in the dark, the 370th Field Artillery Battalion after being shelled almost continually during the day, for the Germans had our gun positions pin-pointed, finally withdrew under small arms and tank fire. It pulled through Krinkelt where it came under exceptionally heavy hostile gun fire and then along the Krinkelt-Butgenbach Road where it had to pass through that belt of tank cross-fire. It arrived at Elsenborn at about midnight—seven hours for a trip that should have taken about one hour. It was a nightmare of travel.

The 776th Field Artillery Battalion, attached to our Division at the time, was also able to make this trip and miraculously, with little loss. Not so fortunate, however, was our 371st Field Artillery Battalion. By the time they attempted to use the Krinkelt-Butgenbach Road, it was cut by the enemy. They turned and tried to get to Elsenborn over a small farm road just north of Krinkelt. Their heavy equipment bogged down in the marshy ground and despite

²² The 372nd F.A. (155s) left Wirtzfeld at 1630 Hrs. 17 Dec. and moved once more—this time to Elsenborn where it arrived at 1830 Hrs. The next day (18 Dec.) it moved one and one-half miles west of Camp Elsenborn to the town of Sourbrodt where it stayed throughout the "Battle of the Bulge."

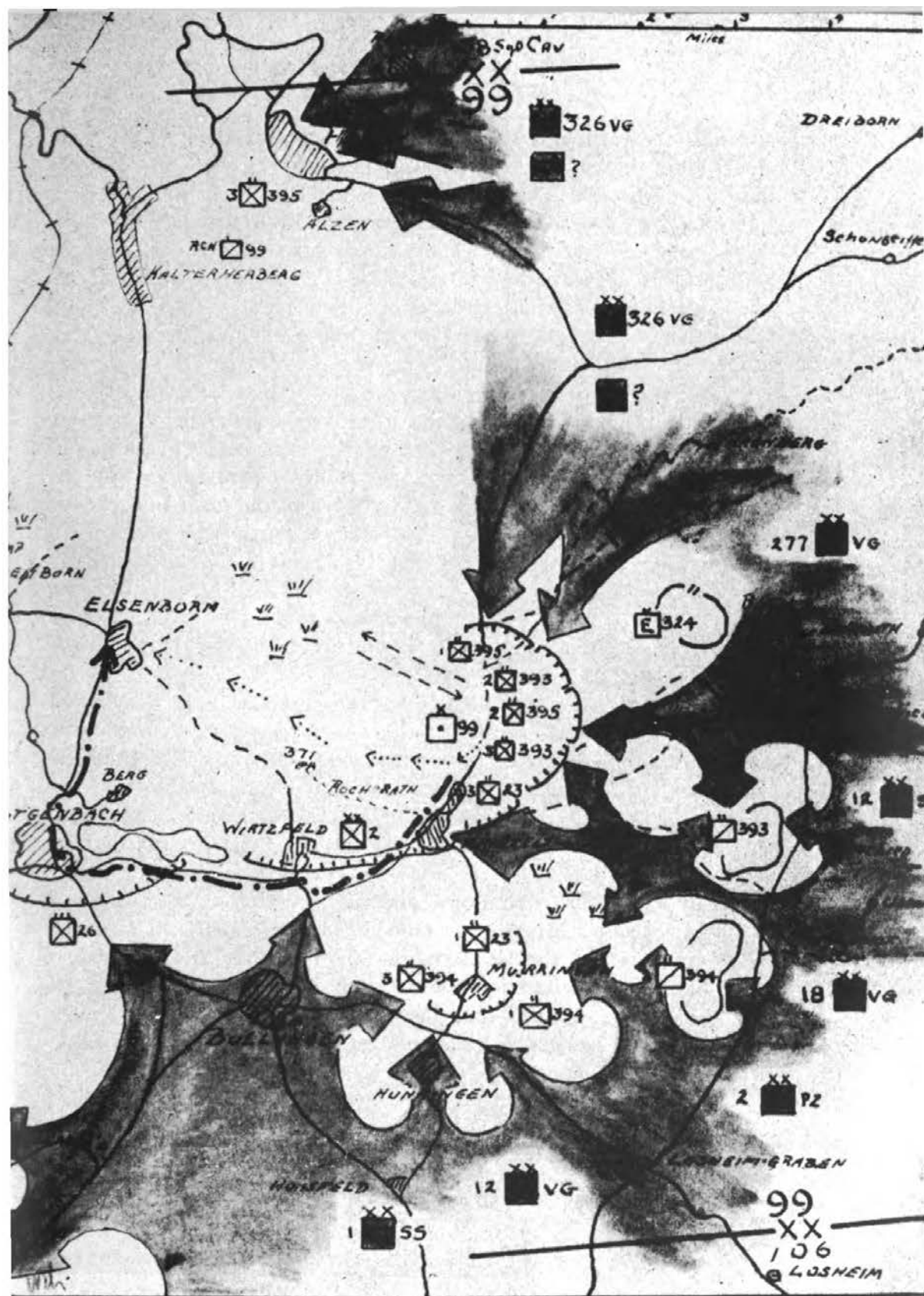
their every effort had to be abandoned. Seven of their twelve howitzers were lost. Most of the men of the battalion arrived at Elsenborn during the early hours of the 18th December afoot, completely exhausted. At the break of dawn they heroically returned to their guns and trucks and again attempted to move them. They succeeded in getting a few trucks out but hostile fire finally forced them to withdraw. They had, however, rendered their abandoned weapons useless to the enemy.²³

The 924th Field Artillery which had been in direct support of the 395th Combat Team during our offensive of the 13th-16th December was the last ordered to withdraw.²⁴ At about 9:00 P.M. in complete darkness the firing batteries were pulled out, one by one, and dispatched on their way to Elsenborn via Krinkelt-Butgenbach. They made it through a hail of fire all along the route.²⁵ During this ride through a "Dante's Inferno" three howitzers of Battery C were lost. It was an undramatic occurrence. A heavy multiple-mounted 50 calibre anti-aircraft artillery vehicle which had gotten into the battery column bogged down and blocked these three howitzers from getting out of their positions. When they tried to bypass the A.A.A. mount, they in turn bogged down in a soft marsh so completely that it would have required heavy engineer equipment to extricate them. They were abandoned. These guns were later rendered useless by our 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry as they withdrew. The Headquarters Battery 924th F.A. Battalion tried to return to Elsenborn by a route to the north. They bogged down in marshy ground and were finally able to extricate themselves and come back to Krinkelt to try and get through to Elsenborn by the regular route. By that time, 2:00 A.M. on the 18th, a column of about 400 trucks jammed bumper to bumper

²³ Col. Ed Hopkins, U.S.A., division artillery executive officer, writes about this event: ". . . because of enemy fire they could not get the equipment out. Our own fire prevented their recovery by the Germans and all howitzers were later recovered when we attacked over the same ground in January."

²⁴ Wire communications had been shot out and radio was the sole means of transmitting messages. The C.O. 924th F.A. Bn. (Lieut. Col. Logan Clarke; U.S.A.) writes: "The Germans had captured plenty of American equipment and we received a call at the fire direction center that night, directing me and my battery commanders to meet Gen. Black, the division artillery commander, at a certain set of coordinates. When checked these turned out to be well out in the West Wall. This came through in perfect English. We cursed the sender in voluble English and meager German! Later on I thought, 'Jesus! Suppose that *had been* Gen. Black?' We lost in that operation of the 16th-17th Dec. three 105 howitzers, ninety men and officers and 40 vehicles."

²⁵ On this march the truck in which the first sergeant of Btry. C rode was hit by a W.P. (white phosphorous) shell. The truck was destroyed and all were killed.



SITUATION 17 DECEMBER, 6:00 P.M.-MIDNIGHT

The heaviest fighting occurred in the south where an estimated FOUR German divisions plunged through and around the 99th Division's exposed south flank and up the road nets deep in rear of its thin front lines.

Routes back: 99th Division Artillery: — . — . — less 924th F.A. Bn. Hq.
 Hq. 924th F.A. Bn.: — — — — —> first try; —> second try.

and heading south was trying to pass through Krinkelt. They were trucks from the 2nd Division pulling out of the pocket. The battery then tried what daylight reconnaissance had told them was well-nigh impossible, a cross-country route. Breaking trail through the knee deep snow, the trucks and trailers slowly forced their way, yard by yard, and finally succeeded in traversing the six miles to Elsenborn after five hours of gruelling labor. They arrived without loss and found their firing batteries already in position supporting our front line troops with their fire.²⁶

Confused fighting in the town of Krinkelt continued throughout the night. Captured maps showed the town of Krinkelt as a major objective set by the Germans. The town was repeatedly in and out of our hands. 99th Division and 2nd Division men fought side by side. As new enemy spearheads hit and overran the town in darkness, our foot troops, coming out of the pocket up north from positions in the woods to the east which they had held during the day and from our positions in the south, would in turn drive out the German spearheads. No consistently uniform account can be given of those hours. The fact remains that the town of Krinkelt was in our possession the next day.

During the night, Combat Team 395 continued its withdrawal and hooked up its line with that established by our 324th Engineers, the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry and the 3rd Battalion 23rd Infantry.

A continuous defensive position was at last being established from Butgenbach through Wirtzfeld and Krinkelt to Rocherath and north in the shape of a hook across the Krinkelt-Arenberg Road (see map p. 43).

Outside of this defensive arc still remained the 394th Infantry (with its 1st and 3rd Battalions) and the 1st Battalion 23rd Infantry in defense around Murringen. Outside too were the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry and the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry from whom no word had been received for several hours. To our consternation, it was also discovered later that Companies A and B 324th Engineer Battalion were isolated,²⁷ having failed to receive word of a withdrawal and readjustment of positions by Combat Team 395.

In front of Hofen and Alzen on our extreme north flank our 3rd

²⁶ Writes Col. Logan, battalion commander: "I called my battery commanders together and told them before they started out for Elsenborn that if the situation arrived where their positions were going to be overrun, to blow their guns and go on foot cross country toward Elsenborn. They all took it in stride, weren't excited. I'd like to have the same crowd again!"

²⁷ Reported by Capt. A. J. Harvester, Co. A 324th Engrs., of Fort Worth, Tex.



THE CHURCH IN KRINKELT

At dusk 17 December the Germans forced one tank through our lines. It was set up in front of the church. Then they built a huge bonfire as a signal. The tank was destroyed.

Birdseye view looking west. The road to Wirtzfeld is visible in the distance.

(Courtesy 393rd History.)

Battalion 395th Infantry and 99th Reconnaissance Troop still remained as a stone wall against all German assaults.²⁸

²⁸ The 99th Recon. Trp. repeatedly sent out patrols deep to its front. No contact with enemy forces could be made. The terrain on this particular short part of the front was very bad for any type of offensive action.



View from Cubicle of
CHURCH IN
KRINKELT
Where Fighting
Raged Day and
Night

(Photo
393rd History.)

CHAPTER III

The Hot Corner

18 DECEMBER 1944

EARLY ON THE morning of the 18th December the situation in general was as follows: Weather—snow and cold; visibility—zero; roads—ruts, slush and mud. The Germans had pushed in deep behind our right flank, had overrun Bullingen, dodged Butgenbach and spearheaded some light tanks and motorized elements toward Malmedy. They were still held south of Murringen and east of Krinkelt-Rocherath, and had been unable to budge our men out of their position around Hofen on the north flank.

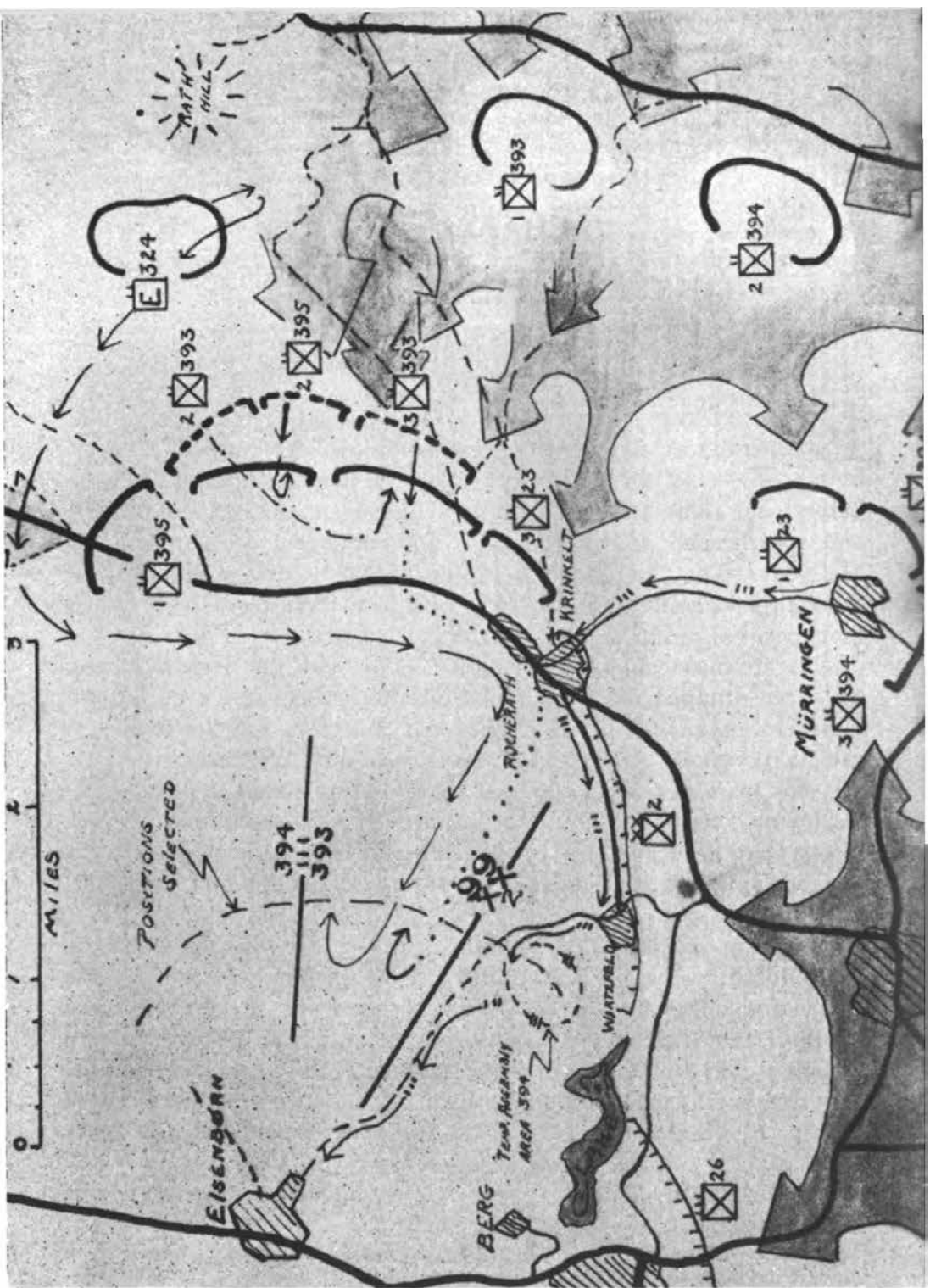
Paratroopers of the Lieutenant Colonel von der Heydte Group had been dropped west of Elsenborn-Kalterherberg and even around Hunsfeld. Germans in G.I. clothes and American vehicles had been caught in various places behind our lines.¹ Wire communications for the most part were out—shot out by the heavy enemy artillery bombardments. Radios were being jammed by German intercept. Our troops were dead on their feet for they had been fighting desperately and without rest since daylight the 16th December and were still at it.²

Starting on the south of our line, the two battalions of the 394th Infantry, that is, the 1st and 3rd, which had held the extreme right of the line and covered the right flank of the division to a depth of about 4000 yards during the 16th and 17th December, were being cut off. During the night of the 17th-18th December, however, they had fought their way back to Murringen and joined up with the headquarters and service units of the regiment and the 3rd Battalion's 23rd Infantry emplaced there.

Contact with the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry had been lost. It

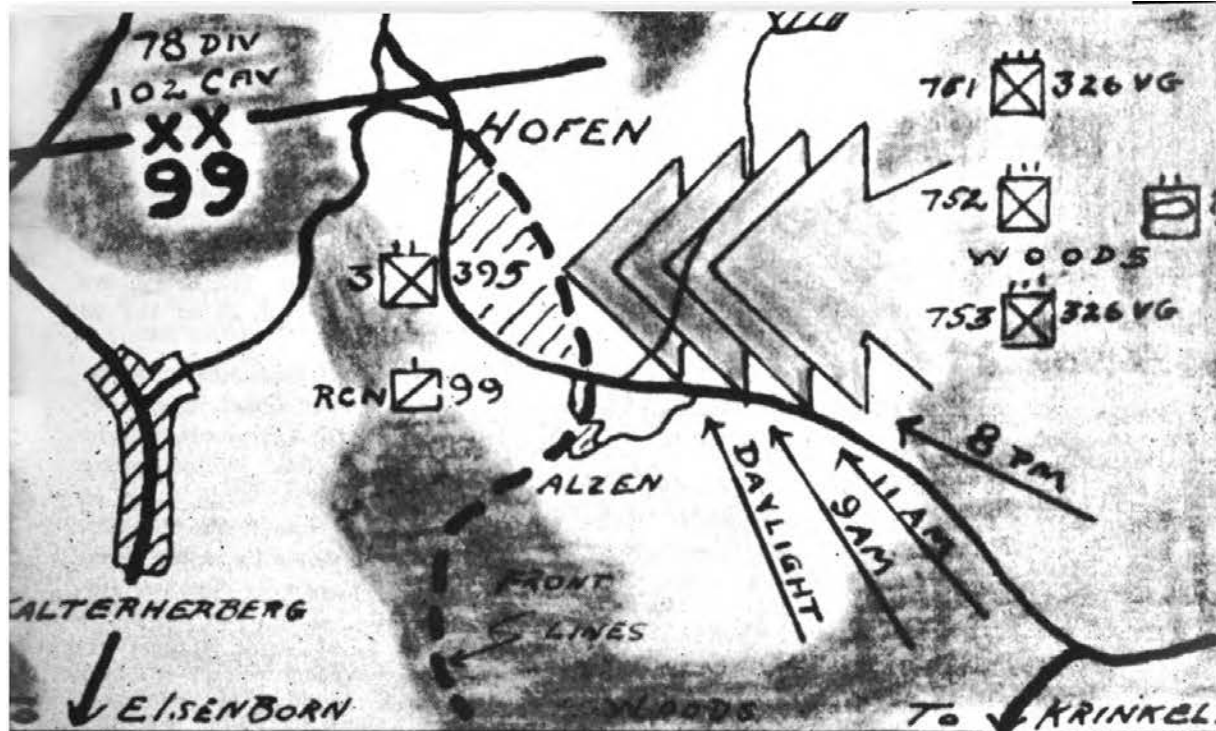
¹ About 800 parachutists were dropped along the Eupen-Monschau road to support the main German attack. (See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 104.) Some were reported dropped on our T.D. unit at Honsfelt at 6:30 A.M. 17th Dec. Germans in American uniforms, etc., were infiltrated through our lines in accordance with the plan "Greif" (see map and plan, p. 9). Parachutists roved the area of woods and bogland west of Elsenborn-Kalterherberg.

² C.T. 395 along with the 393rd Inf. had started an attack on the 13th Dec. and had been fighting since then without rest.



FIRST STAGES OF WITHDRAWAL

Situation before noon 18 December. The 394th Infantry withdrew from around Murringen at about 2:30 A.M. and assembled north of Wirtzfeld to re-organize before moving on to Eisenborn. The 324th Engineers and the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry used routes indicated.



THE NORTH FLANK 18th DECEMBER

The 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry held the north flank and repelled repeated fanatical attacks throughout the day.

was believed surrounded. The last word we had from it was that part of Company C 1st Battalion 394th Infantry had joined it and that the battalion was fighting in an all-around defense of its original position.

Farther north, on the front of the 393rd Infantry, east and north of Krinkelt-Rocherath, our troops had succeeded in establishing a new line, which was holding. The 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry was surrounded. Contact with it had been lost during the night. The last word from it was that it had been reduced to a small group of men desperately fighting around its command post to prevent it from being captured.

Combat Team 395 had withdrawn from its attack and had joined the defensive line of the 393rd Infantry and extended that line to the north and west around Rocherath-Krinkelt. In this adjustment of lines, contact with Companies A and B of our 324th Engineers, last known to be holding a position north and west of "Rath Hill," had been lost. Where they were, what had happened to them, was unknown.

Before daylight the German avalanche began again. On our extreme north flank on the front of our 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry and 99th Reconnaissance Troop the Germans hurled in their first

324th Engrs. Demonstrate Combat Skill

WITH 99TH INF. DIV.—When the Engineers have to throw down their tools of trade and pick up rifles, you may be sure that the “going” is getting rough for the regular doughs and other fighting GIs. They are Engineers, yes—bridge builders, road builders, minefield builders—but these American “hairy ears” can do a job of fighting when they’re called. And that’s what they did during the 99th division’s gallant stand against the German onslaught into Belgium.

Ten days after the combat engineers went into action—that is, A and B companies of the 324th Eng. Bn.—their total score against the enemy was roughly 400 Germans killed, scores of enemy guns and pill-boxes knocked out and, paradoxically enough, two Nazi prisoners. They had no time for prisoners. They were too busy fighting.

The action began around the Engineer CP east of Krinkelt, Belgium, on 16 December. The Americans retired under a furious German artillery assault. They arrived at Elsenborn on the morning of the 19th with only weapons, ammunition and the clothes on their backs and began at once to dig in positions for the defending infantry.

Plans Changed

A change of plans came in that night and the Engineers again reverted to doughboys and began to dig in their own positions two miles southeast of Elsenborn.

On the morning of the 20th as the fog lifted over the field ahead of them, they saw a patrol of 20 men

wearing U.S. uniforms. Lt. Col. Justice R. Neale, of Oberlin, Kan., soon ascertained there was something wrong in Jerryland. The Engineers let ‘em have it and all of the 20 went down.

The Germans’ real attack began about noon when 1/Sgt. Gerald F. Scott, of Waldo, Ark. spotted eight self-propelled guns behind some hedgerows, with a large force of Nazis climbing onto them. The Engineers’ small arms fire at 500 yards range made the Jerry riflemen dismount.

At this point, Capt. Robert G. Fowler, of Watertown, N. Y., and Lt. Wm. D. Markin, of Oklahoma City, both with the 370th FA and acting as forward observers for the Engineers, got busy. They turned the massed fire of their artillery on the enemy guns and with the first 12 rounds set three of the guns a fire and blew up another, cutting Jerry’s 88 fire down 50 percent. Two of the remaining German guns fled and two of them hid nearby. Lt. Markin called for volunteers to go after the hidden guns with a bazooka, and from the ranks stepped Pvt. John S. McKuen, of Park Falls, Wis., and T/4 Joseph C. Kluepfel of Long Island, N.Y. They crawled out to meet the threat and stopped the first gun in its tracks. But they didn’t stop its fire. Two of the Americans were killed.

No Support

Lt. Charles Sissel, of Commerce, Texas, ran amid streams of burp gun traces, shouting, “We’re holding ‘em—but for God’s sake, get us artillery!”

They got it. The artillery support that night consisted of 420 rounds per minute for 10 minutes and 200 rounds per minute for an additional 10 minutes—or approximately 7,000 rounds in 20 minutes by 16 artillery batteries on a target area 300 by 400 yards. And the two Engineer companies had directed the fire of 15,000 rounds of ammunition, themselves—most of it within a half-hour period.

The Jerries were stopped.

determined attack of infantry and tanks of the day. It was repulsed. Another attack was launched at about 9:00 A.M. which was reinforced by a strong tank attack at 9:50 A.M. It penetrated our lines but the penetration was eliminated and the attack finally repulsed. A third attack followed at 11:00 A.M. with all the fury the Germans could muster but it was stopped cold in its tracks. Our position there held as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar.

It was evident that the enemy was trying his best to break through our north flank in his all-out drive for Aachen. He was unable to get around that flank as he had our southern flank.³

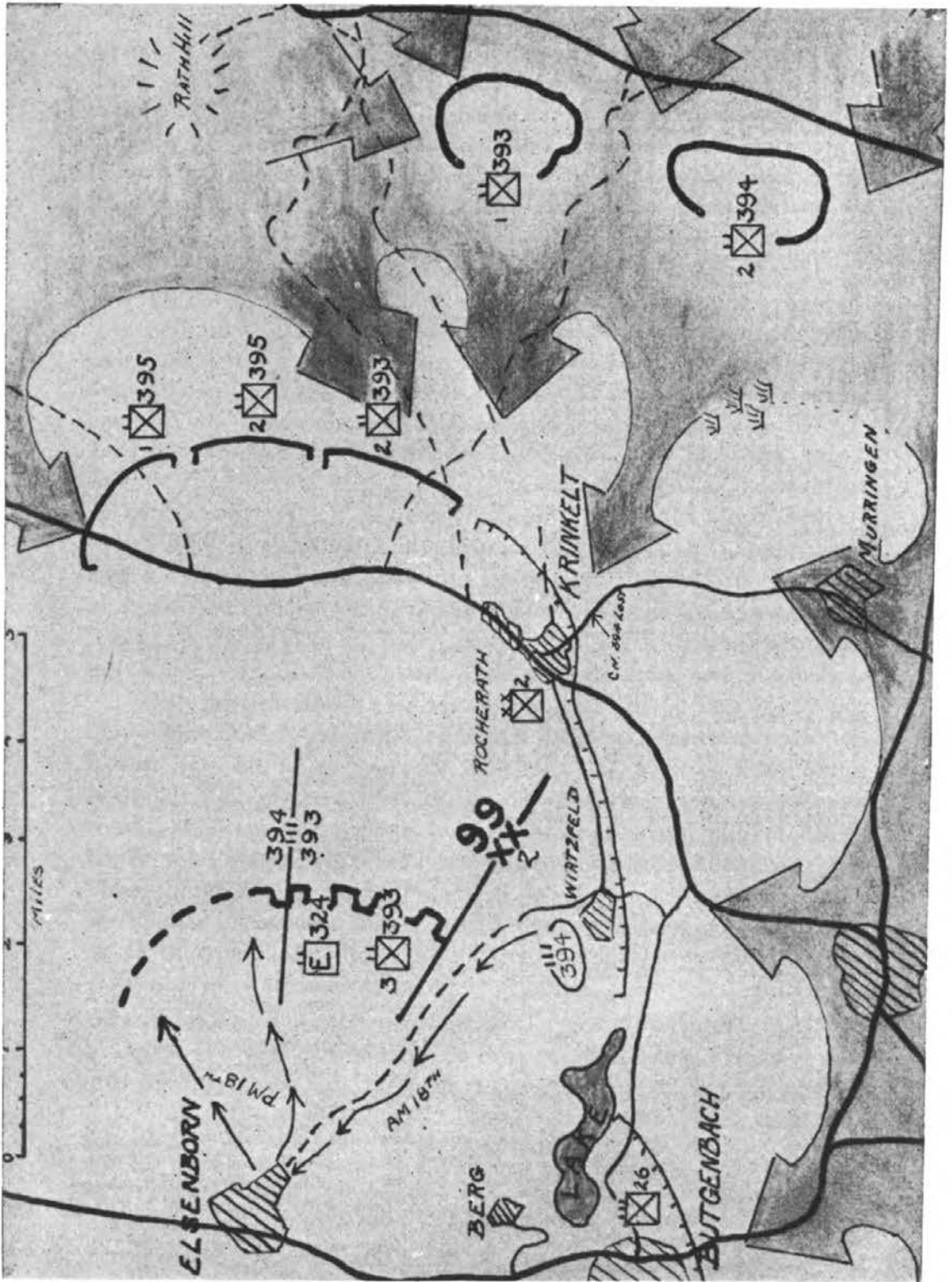
My headquarters had meanwhile picked out a good defensive position on the nose of the ridge east of the town of Elsenborn and ordered the 393rd Infantry (less its 2nd Battalion, now part of Combat Team 395) and the 324th Engineer Battalion to withdraw to that position. This defensive position was a last ditch defensive one to be held to the last man. The withdrawals to this position started at about noon. The first to pull back was the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry which had been badly chewed up during the 16th and 17th and had been fighting incessantly without rest since the 13th December. It withdrew through the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry which had been shifted for this purpose and then moved cross-country along the route indicated on the map (first stages of withdrawal) by dots.

That morning the 324th Engineer Battalion (less Company C) found itself isolated. It attempted to move south but ran into a cross-fire between the enemy on "Rath Hill" and the 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry facing him. It returned and tried again. This time it moved west and crossed the Krinkelt-Hellenthal Road and then turned south to enter the circle of defense that had been established.⁴ Strangely enough, it encountered little hostile resistance on this trek, and once having rejoined, moved by road and cross-country to Elsenborn Ridge.

Heavy vehicles on this withdrawal generally followed the Rocherath-Wirtzfeld Road and the trail to Elsenborn. This was supposed to be a good road but was actually a muddy rut on the terrain run-

³ On the 16th Dec. the German initial assault rolled back the light covering forces of Task Force X—14th Cav. Group, VIII Corps—which hooked up the 99th Div.'s right flank with the 106th Div. This permitted the enemy to penetrate deep into the VIII Corps sector before turning north into the V Corps sector and the deep rear areas of the 99th Div.

⁴ Reported by Lieut. Col. Justice R. Neale (Amarillo, Tex), battalion commander.



SECOND STAGE OF WITHDRAWAL
 Late Afternoon 18th December

ning cross-country in the general direction of Elsenborn. It was the only road we had—it was a "good" road.

The headquarters and special elements of the 393rd Infantry followed soon after their 3rd Battalion. As these troops, still fighting, broke contact with the enemy, their withdrawal was covered by the units of Combat Team 395⁵ which continued to fall back farther and farther to the south, taking over the areas vacated by the withdrawing troops, until they finally hooked up with elements of the 2nd Division already in their defensive positions around Wirtzfeld-Krinkelt.

By late afternoon the first troops arrived on the new defensive position. Dog tired and battle weary, they nevertheless promptly started digging in furiously. Here was a place they could hold, out of the woods, in the open where the enemy did not have a chance to infiltrate unseen through thinly held lines to get behind them and snipe at them from all directions. This was security!

As the day wore on, elements of the 394th Infantry appeared and took up positions allotted to them. They had broken contact with the enemy around Murringen, to which location they had withdrawn the night before. Taking the road Murringen-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld-Elsenborn during the early hours of the 18th, the regiment less its 2nd Battalion and its Cannon Company passed through the 2nd Division lines to an assembly area near Wirtzfeld where it halted temporarily and reorganized. It then marched to Elsenborn and thereafter moved into its assigned defensive position on the nose of Elsenborn Ridge. Dog tired and battle weary these men too, who had held their positions down south against the assaults of at least four German divisions, promptly started digging in furiously. Here was a place they could hold, out of the woods, in the open with their flanks secure so no enemy could cut in behind them. This was security!

Up north around Hofen, another German assault hit into our line at about 8:00 P.M. Again the enemy was repulsed. It was a cheering note. It was an omen of what would happen to hostile assaults attempting to overrun this new position on Elsenborn Ridge where these dauntless⁶ men of ours now had good fields of fire and secure flanks.

Recruits were they? Green troops? The Boche would learn! Yes, the hard way!

Cold words do not begin to describe the tumult and confusion

⁵ C.T. 395 at this time consisted of the entire 395th Int. Regt. less its 3rd Bn. plus the 2nd Bn. 393rd Inf.

⁶ Dauntless was also the code name for the 99th Div.

that reigned over the entire area. Like a great ant heap that has been kicked over, with the ants scurrying around in frantic effort to repair the damage done—running hither and yon in a confusion of effort which on closer inspection is an orderly confusion—so was the front of the 99th Division that day. Aid stations overflowing, wounded men being evacuated by Jeep, truck, ambulance, anything that could roll, walking wounded, prisoners going back under guard, trucks rolling up to the front with ammunition and supplies and firing at the same time at low flying airplanes. Vehicles off the roads, mired in mud and slush or damaged by gun fire only to be manhandled off the traffic lane to open the road; signal men trying to string wire to elements cut off or to repair lines which were being shot out as fast as they were put in. The continuous rumble of heavy guns spewing out their death and destruction, of tanks grinding along and spitting out their fire, of the shriek-bang of mortar shells landing while radio operators calmly sent their urgent messages for fire support. These things and those of human misery, anguish, pain, death; of heroism and bravery beyond description, were all going on simultaneously under a low, thick, brownish gray sky which tried to cover it all from the sight of man like a heavy blanket.

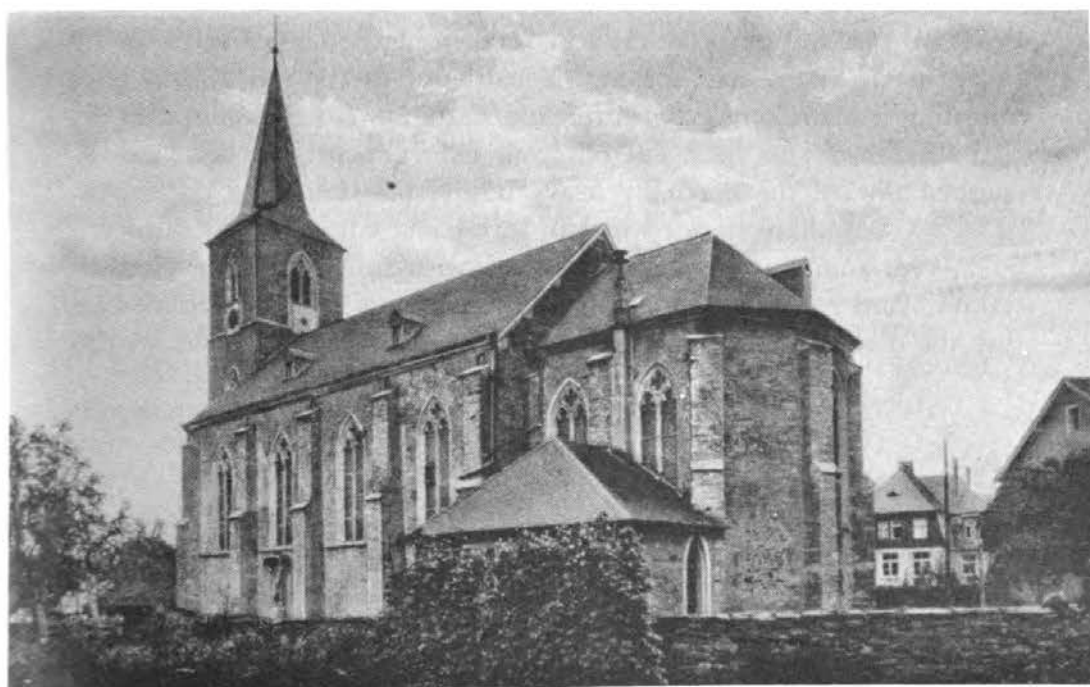
That was a day to break the courage of the strongest men, yet our men fought on unremittingly. They had no fear of death, only fear that they could not stop the Boche—these Boche who killed wounded men lying helpless on the field or in aid stations.⁷ These unreal, inhuman automatons who had lost all sense of proportion because they, the flower (?) of the German army⁸ had been knocked off balance by the unexpected resistance of the green *Schweinerhunde* of American soldiers.

All, indeed, did not move along smoothly. These withdrawals did not go on without a hitch. One cannot hold up his hand like a traffic policeman to halt the advance of an attacking army and politely turn off the road to the right. The enemy had first to be stopped—set back on his heels—stunned, at least temporarily, to permit the time essential for our troops to break contact and pull out. That meant fight—fight like demons! Attack! Then while the enemy was stunned, withdraw!

⁷ Eye-witnesses reported that several men of Co. B 393rd Inf. who had been wounded during the attack of the 16th and could not be evacuated before the position was overrun were later discovered lying face down with a bullet hole in the back of the head. Other reports of a similar nature came in at that time too.

⁸ Sepp Dietrich's 6th S.S. Pz. Army.

This the 394th Infantry had been doing, but the hostile tide of advance was not from one direction only. It came at them from the front and the right and the left. The Cannon Company of the 394th Infantry was fighting in close contact with the enemy from positions along the road south and east of the town of Murringen when they received the order to withdraw to Elsenborn. The company commander went back, reconnoitered the route, found it all clear, and then returning, hurried from gun position to gun position, took his guns out of action, some of which had been firing muzzle blasts at the enemy, and put the crews on the road back. It was dark by the time the last crew had been sent on its way. He followed. As he and his small command group approached the town of Krinkelt, they heard heavy small arms firing ahead. They had not yet overtaken any of their gun crews. They proceeded cautiously to investigate. They discovered that the Germans had moved in from the east in force. They had no chance of getting through on the road to Krinkelt and so cut due west cross-country and finally reported in at Elsen-



THE CHURCH AT HOFEN

Around this church our men of the 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry fought and died.
(Courtesy Sgt. Cass M. Mertzluft, St. Louis, Mo.—A picture post card.)

born. The command group arrived but the guns and gun crews had disappeared. They had apparently been captured one by one as they came down the road from Murringen toward Krinkelt by a German force which had pushed in from the east. This happened but a few hundred yards in front of the 2nd Division defensive line which had been established around Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld and but thirty minutes after the last elements of the 394th Infantry had pulled back over that same route. Such was the fluid situation in that area.

It was after dark, that night of the 18th December, that the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry and the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry, with whom we had lost contact, made their break through the enemy lines and finally got behind the defensive arc set up around Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld-Butgenbach.

During the morning of the 18th December, the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry had finally been driven out of its position around its battalion command post which it had so courageously defended. At that time the battalion lost its aid station which was overflowing with its own and enemy wounded. The strong hostile pressure on its left (north) flank had forced the battalion to the south, and that morning it made contact with the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry. This battalion had also been cut off from its regiment and been slowly pushed toward the north by heavy hostile pressure from the south. The two battalions decided to join forces and cut their way out.

With ammunition almost all gone, with strength in the 1st Battalion 393rd reduced from 825 men to less than 250, it was decided to use the dense woods, deep draws and confusion of the enemy to the

A regimental
"rear C.P."
in Elsenborn. The
"forward C.P."
was about
1,000 yards away
and the front lines
only about 500
yards farther.

Note shell hole in
roof and many
cut telephone
wires!

(Courtesy 393rd



fullest. Sideslipping, sneaking through hostile forces under cover of the forest, they arrived after dark at the edge of the woods opposite Murringen. All radio contact was lost.

The 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry thought it could rejoin its regiment in Murringen. With scouts out, the combined force approached the town from the northeast.

The "Point" was within 100 yards or so of the eastern few houses when it received machine gun fire, unmistakably from our Brownings. Haze had started to settle and our men hoped for a case of mistaken identity and friendly troops. Such hope was short lived, for as the fire fight developed numerous burp guns joined the action and the advance guard reported many enemy and some enemy tanks moving in.

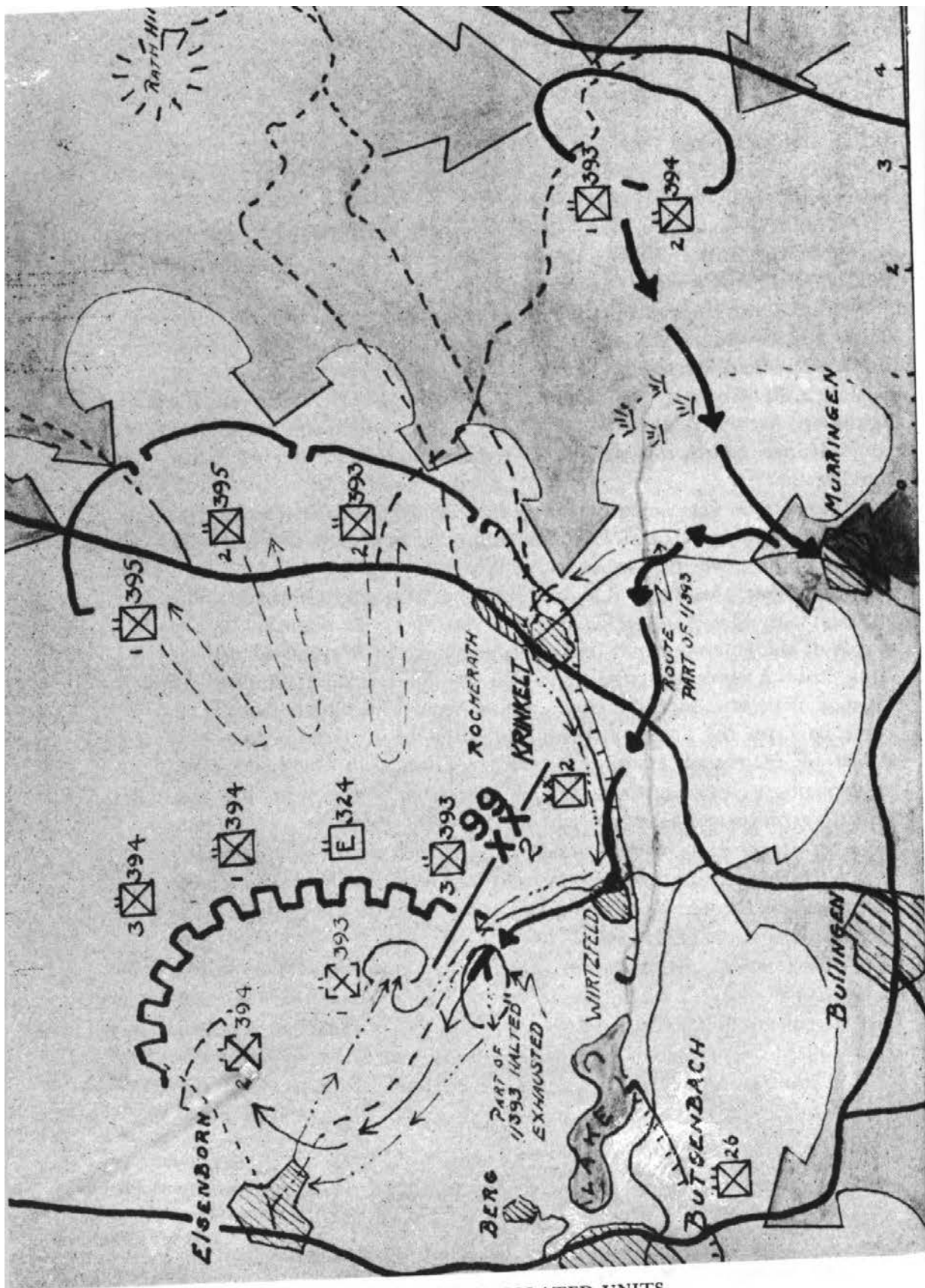
The attack was nevertheless pushed ahead and our leading elements, Companies E and G 394th Infantry, occupied the first few houses of the town in short order.⁹

It was at this time that our two battalions established radio contact with "Love 5," a Corps Field Artillery call station. In the words of the commander,¹⁰ "After an exchange of unusual identification, Love 5 agreed to come back on the air in twenty minutes if satisfied with our 'identification.' As we were waiting for Love 5 to come back on the air, reports and activities of our troops gave evidence of increasing enemy resistance. This, with increased tank movements, was not encouraging. Heavy haze and ground fog was settling rapidly—visibility was cut to a few hundred feet. . . . Love 5 came in on schedule with 'Friendly troops 2500 yards to northwest.' . . . With this reassurance that we were not *alone*, 2500 yards seemed but a stone's throw. Needless to say, we were eternally grateful to a good staff lieutenant."

The story of the battalion commander continues, "We pulled back under cover of our engaged advance guard and the fog, and broke contact successfully. As we withdrew to the northeast along a stream bank, we expected that we would run into the enemy again at the bridge on the Murringen-Krinkelt Road. Contact with the enemy might have been the lesser of two evils. We ran into inter-

⁹ The force was in a march formation with a "point" (a few men out in front—maybe a squad) followed by an "advance party" (probably a platoon, forty to fifty men) followed by a "support" (usually a company—in this case two companies). The entire formation is called an "advance guard."

¹⁰ Report by Lieut. Col. Matthew Legler, U.S.A., Retd., Buffalo, N.Y., the battalion commander of the 1st Bn. 393rd Inf.



RETURN OF ISOLATED UNITS

Night 18-19 December

After attacking Murringen the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry was separated in the darkness; part of the battalion stayed with the main column which broke through at Wirtzfeld, the other part finally broke through at Krinkelt. That night, too, the false withdrawal of C.T. 395 also occurred.

dictory fire—probably 155s and our own—but again without radio contact there was no alternative but to brave it. We then met intermittent rifle fire from across the stream to the north—in fact, we moved along what could be called the butts of a rifle range. Finally we made contact with a friendly outpost but a break in my column had occurred. The leading part of the column with me moved on through and beyond Wirtzfeld where we split up, the 394th part continuing on to the north to rejoin its regiment and my part halting temporarily about 1000 yards northwest of Wirtzfeld at about midnight, exhausted. After a brief halt we too moved on to Elsenborn and rejoined our regiment.”

The other part of this force, consisting of elements of the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry, upon withdrawing from the attack on Murringen, pulled back almost due north into a deep draw heavy in snow, mud and icy water, and was cut off from the main body by the concentrations of our own interdictory artillery fire. It struck out this time for Krinkelt which had been the location of its regimental command post.¹¹

A great fight was taking place on their objective. Tracer fire, bursting artillery shells and burning buildings were plainly visible. Suddenly they were taken under artillery fire by the defenders who had mistakenly taken them for hostile troops. Reeling under this second blow, this column nevertheless succeeded eventually in working a patrol¹² close to the defenders and finally contacting a friendly outpost. The fire was then shifted and our men slipped behind the defensive lines. There they joined in the defense of Krinkelt. These brave men could not desert their staunch comrades who lay wounded out on the fire-swept field. A group of volunteers was formed who throughout that entire night and until daylight made further effort foolhardy, dragged and carried their wounded back to safety and shelter.

All that night and the next morning they took part in the defense of Krinkelt. They were then ordered out to rejoin their regiment on Elsenborn Ridge. When they arrived there, they found the remainder of their battalion, were assigned a support line position in the defensive scheme of the ridge, and during that night dug in, into the flinty, hard-frozen ground, on the flank of the 2nd Division

¹¹ Based on the eye-witness report of 1st Sgt. Ben Nawrocki (South Bend, Ind.), Co. B 393rd Inf.

¹² This patrol was led by Sgt. Henderson, 1st Bn. 393rd Inf.

and in rear of their own 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry. They were home again, this time surrounded by friends. This was security!

Our artillery units had during the early hours of the 18th December braved the hostile fires and manhandled their guns over the treacherous cross-country terrain so that they could take up firing positions once more, this time near Elsenborn. That day brought into play for the first time our surprise artillery shell—the Pozit fuse—the proximity fuse. This fuse eliminated complicated firing calculations and assured quick, accurate and effective fire, mechanically and automatically. It was a great surprise weapon and wrought great havoc among the attackers. The 2nd Division artillery that day came to the assistance of our 99th Division's hard pressed troops at a most critical time, to do which they had to shift their fire 3200 mils¹³ (180 degrees) at one time. Such was the all-around fighting that was taking place.

That night, the 18th December, saw another operation take place which turned young men old overnight! I had ordered the withdrawal during the 18th December of the 393rd Infantry, the 324th Engineers and the 394th Infantry—pulling these troops through the defensive position around Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld which had been established by our Combat Team 395 and the 2nd Division. The orders prescribed that these organized units of the 99th would be passed through the defensive arc and then dig in and establish themselves on the Elsenborn Ridge nose. It further prescribed that all stragglers¹⁴ passing through the defensive arc would be held there to help strengthen the defenses of the arc.

There was no way of informing these stragglers where their units were located. Their fighting power was sorely needed to strengthen the temporary defensive line. After this line was withdrawn they would be able to rejoin their own organizations. This necessarily resulted in a great intermingling of 99th and 2nd Division troops.

This temporary defensive arc had to be held until the new position on Elsenborn Ridge was established. Time was essential. The battle weary troops arriving on Elsenborn Ridge needed a few hours of daylight to co-ordinate their fire and to properly dig in their positions. To this end it was planned, therefore, to withdraw the temporary defensive arc the next day, the 19th December, and this

¹³ Verified in Official Report First Army, Annex 4, p. 10.

¹⁴ Stragglers: Men temporarily separated from their units, such as walking wounded, lost messengers, small patrols lost or separated from their units in the woods fighting, returning prisoner guards, etc. All gradually filter to the rear.

operation was carefully co-ordinated between the 99th and 2nd Divisions.

Something went haywire—snafu¹⁵—call it anything you will. About midnight the 18th-19th December, Combat Team 395 started withdrawing to Elsenborn Ridge! Twenty-four hours ahead of time! The entire center of the new position was exposed, wide open, for enemy action. The left flank of the 2nd Division which at that time faced east and south around Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld was left open and could have been rolled up by the enemy who all that day had been attacking in ever increasing strength from that very direction.

Somehow or other the withdrawal was stopped!¹⁶ In darkness, over the treacherous terrain, through artillery fire, the troops were

¹⁵ Snafu: An army slang term, an abbreviation of "Situation Normal, All Fouled Up."

¹⁶ This episode was without doubt the roughest and most critical experience I ever had or hope to have. The going had been bad. The unexpected and unusual were happening every moment during the last two days and nights. In spite of all the hard knocks we had suffered we nevertheless had stopped the Germans temporarily and were hoping to be able to build a strong, tight position to stop them permanently. Our plans were working out successfully—a little more time was all that was needed—time and luck. It was about 11:00 P.M. on the 18th Dec. My headquarters was crowded into a first floor single large room of a bombed out building at Camp Elsenborn. Messengers were hurrying in and out continuously, the voice radio, the last communications link I had with some of my front line troops, was operating from one corner of the room, and my operations officers, in another corner, were trying to piece together the bits of information coming in to determine the pattern of the situation. I was on the command radio when I saw Col. Alexander J. MacKenzie, C.O. of C.T. 395, whose units were holding the front line around Rocherath-Krinkelt, come into the room. He looked tired and worn but still sported a smile. I was amazed to see him and promptly waved him over to me and asked him what he was doing at my headquarters—for I felt he should have been at his own command post near Rocherath at this highly critical time. He told me with a tired smile that he had had a rough time getting through but that he had made it and that his regiment was right behind him, coming cross-country in three columns. I almost passed out. I never asked him why he withdrew. I started him back fast to head off his regiment, to turn them around and get them back to their former positions. I jumped on the command radio to contact his regimental staff and his battalion commanders. I succeeded in getting through to the staff and one of the battalion commanders. They promised to do all they could to get the order to the adjacent battalions and the other troops of the combat team. I wanted to get out and join in the job to turn the columns and had a Jeep and an aide stand by ready to take me, but I realized that it was by far better for me to remain at my center of communications. I stayed and prayed—for that was all that I could do. I waited, and for the next two hours sweated blood. Failure to turn the regiment meant disaster. The regiment was turned and got back—by the grace of God! Col. MacKenzie, a splendid regimental commander, told me later that he had accepted as authentic a radio message to withdraw which undoubtedly originated from a German intercept station. In the tenseness of the situation he failed to check back, to verify the order.

stopped, turned and moved back to the approximate positions they had held before the withdrawal started.

God was on our side that night! The Germans did not take advantage of that mistaken operation. Maybe they did not know it took place. Maybe they were too tired to bother. Maybe they thought it was a trap. Maybe the heavy casualties they had suffered at the hands of our troops had left them too stunned to follow up closely. Whatever the cause, they did not take advantage of that break. Our men were able to get back without damage except to the feelings of the men themselves who, dragging their weary bodies along, undoubtedly wondered what the h— it was all about!

It does not require much tactical knowledge to realize that a withdrawal and a passage of lines under pressure, that is, where troops fighting out in front must withdraw while under enemy attack and pass through another friendly position hastily organized in their rear, is at best a most hazardous operation. Not only is there the danger that the troops withdrawing will be mistaken for the enemy and be shot up by the friendly troops in rear, that the withdrawing troops may block the covering fire of the troops in rear and thereby nullify the new position, but also the ever present danger that tactical unity of organizations may be completely disrupted and confusion result as units become intermingled.

During the 17th, 18th and 19th December the 99th Infantry Division's units successfully performed this treacherous operation not only once, but in some cases three times. That alone is a mark of their splendid training and adamant fighting spirit. As a result of these passages of lines, particularly those which took place late on the 18th December, when the 99th Division men passed through the temporary defenses established by the 2nd Division on the short line Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld, that 99th men became scattered through all front line units of the 2nd Division. This gave rise to the erroneous impression that the 99th Infantry Division had been routed and that the 2nd Division saved the battle.

During the 16th, 17th and most of the 18th December the 99th Division carried the full brunt of the entire German attack while stretched out on a twenty-two mile front. The 2nd Division along with a good third of the 99th Division was deep in the center of the 99th Division area, attacking into the Siegfried Line. During those three days of terrific fighting it was the 99th Division alone which stopped the German break-through and saved the 2nd Division from being cut off, surrounded and destroyed. During that period the 2nd Divi-

sion was given the time needed to pull back out of the pocket it was in and form the short three mile front from Krinkelt to Wirtzfeld and meet the German attacks which by this time had almost expended themselves. The 26th Infantry of the 1st Division was attached to the 99th Division on the 17th December and extended the Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld line farther to the west.¹⁷ It was through this line, on the 18th December, during the third day of the German attack, that many of the 99th Division troops, still fighting out in front of that line, broke contact with the enemy and withdrew through it and then dug in on the nose of Elsenborn Ridge.

There was no time for written orders, not even long-winded oral orders. Commanders in the fight understood and obeyed. Our soldiers obeyed, too, but often blindly, without understanding what it was all about. Naturally, when two units become as badly intermingled as the situation forced the 99th and 2nd Divisions to become during this passage of lines,¹⁸ all sorts of misconceptions of what was happening are bound to occur in the minds of the men who know little about the big picture. Time, however, was of the essence. Stop the Boche! That was all that counted. Unfortunately the fight went on and on. Explanations never were made and we, who were on the ground fighting, just laughed off as ridiculous the fantastic idea rumored about that the 99th Division had been routed, believing that when the history of that engagement was written, the facts would speak for themselves, and the glorious deeds of the 99th Division would be acknowledged.

These were all fighting American soldiers—99th Division, 1st Division, 2nd Division and all the various Corps units like the 254th Engineer Battalion which was attached to the 99th and helped defend Bullingen—there was no difference. They fought and suffered and died. They stopped the fanatical German hordes. Fighting around the clock in snow and slush, from fox-holes and in the forests, with the enemy popping up in the most unexpected places, with nothing secure and with everyone and everything questioned, there existed but one thought to the exclusion of everything else and paramount

¹⁷ This defensive line and the one on Elsenborn Ridge was selected by me under whom the defense was being coordinated during the 16th, 17th and 18th Dec.

¹⁸ It was during this time that V Corps ordered the 99th and 2nd Divs. to be combined because of this intermingling and for the sake of simplicity and unity of command. The C.G. 2nd Div. (Walter Robinson) commanded with the C.G. 99th Div. (Walter Lauer) deputy commander of the combined force. This arrangement continued until the units were disentangled and settled in the defense of Elsenborn Ridge.

in everyone's mind—*stop the Boche!* Fight and destroy the beasts! Try to survive. An hour then seemed a month, a year, a lifetime. The future was something to conjure with, a dream, a remote possibility of unimportance.

19 DECEMBER 1944

On the 19th December the 2nd Division and Combat Team 395 of the 99th Division received and contained the repeated assaults of the German forces. Attacks were hurled at our positions east and north of Rocherath and all along the line Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld where many of our 99th Division men scattered through the 2nd Division positions helped them in their task. Our lines were not tied in too tightly, and hostile groups penetrated through the position at various points, but in no place in a strength sufficient to become dangerous.

Up north at Hofen, our staunch defenders were again hit by infantry and armor at about 6:00 A.M. They routed the attackers, took a number of prisoners and reported a tremendous number of enemy dead.

Around Elsenborn Ridge our men were frantically¹⁹ digging in, tying in their positions with the troops on their right and left, coordinating their small arms, automatic and mortar fire and arranging for artillery barrages across their fronts, bringing in and distributing supplies and weapons and rushing to completion the thousand and one details essential to a strong defensive position organized in depth. Hot food was also brought up—the first some of our men had had in four days. Hostile planes attacked them repeatedly during the day. Our antiaircraft shot down three of these marauders.

Immediately on the right (south) flank of the 99th Division's sector of the ridge, a regiment of the 2nd Division, the 9th Infantry, was also preparing its position for defense.

By dark that night all had to be in readiness so that our troops out on the line Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld could break contact with the enemy and fall back behind this new position. The co-

¹⁹ Heavy entrenching tools were at a premium—even individual entrenching tools were scarce. Men had dropped them during the fight in the woods and came out with only their arms and ammunition. Now they used bayonets, helmets, mess kits, etc., to dig their fox-holes and gun emplacements—therefore the use of the word frantically. Never again would these men discard their best friend—the light entrenching tool.

A temporary 'fighting hole' while being
pushed back.
(Courtesy 393 History)



Looking out over our Front at Elsenborn. The enemy had
to attack over this Open Ground



(Courtesy 1st Sgt John Brown
Ontario Oreg.) (Others by 393)



Our men grin and bear it. It was "grim" work.

(Courtesy
Sgt. Selders, 393rd.)



ordinated withdrawal from the position around Rocherath-Krinkelt-Wirtzfeld was set for midnight.

A glance at the map (p. 59) showing the withdrawal of units during the night 18th-19th December shows the location of Combat Team 395 and the 2nd Division units in their forward position. To withdraw it is evident that Combat Team 395 would need to come straight back cross-country to pass through our own front line troops while the 2nd Division units would have to sideslip to the west and break back through their own front line troops. In the dark, with an active enemy, this was a touch and go proposition. Disaster could easily overtake them.

All front line troops on Elsenborn Ridge were alerted and strongly impressed with the fact that our own men were coming through, that they were to be doubly careful to watch out for them and not take them for the enemy and start shooting. Our artillery helped too by putting down fires in front of the positions our troops had held out in front so that this bombardment would cover the natural noises of the withdrawal. Everything was done to conduct the withdrawal in secret. Our men came cross-country through the deep snow and slush and over the rugged terrain.²⁰ Scouts out in front of our new defensive position contacted the returning units, signaled their own men and guided the units through their lines, all in silence and without lights. It worked out!

Again we broke contact with the highly vaunted S.S. troops without being closely followed up. This was the type of operation

²⁰ The routes used were about the same as those indicated on the map for the false withdrawal.

one dreams about in nightmares and hopes never to have to accomplish. Here it came to pass!

When it was all over, I for one who was at the command post breathed a great sigh of relief. Everyone connected with the perilous operation was elated. The spirit of success could be felt to surge through the hearts of all, but better still, of the successes to come.

We were not yet out of danger. This new position had to be tested. Would it hold? Would stoutness of heart and moral courage overcome our terrible shortage of weapons and equipment?²¹ That remained to be seen.

We had gotten our units back. The losses they had suffered were grievous. Companies of battalions which had sustained the brunt of the attack had been reduced to thirty or sixty men from 187. Battalions which had entered the fight with 825 men came back

²¹ As our men were forced back during the 17th and 18th Dec. they destroyed all weapons and equipment they could not carry out with them, so that they would not fall into the hands of the enemy.



Pvt. Henry Spiegel, Baltimore, Md., and Pvt. Seldon Cammer, Stanford, N. Y. (Company B 395th Infantry) ready for action with their Browning automatic rifle, in the second line of defense at Elsenborn.

(U.S. Army photo.)

to organize Elsenborn Ridge with a meager strength of 160 to 200 men. No accurate figures could be obtained at the time. It was not until the last of December, after the two Divisions had been sorted out and most individuals, stragglers and small detachments had rejoined their old units, that our figures on strength made any sense. It was only then that opportunity presented itself for officers and noncommissioned officers to crawl from fox-hole to fox-hole to determine definitely who was present and accounted for. The following figures on strength then developed:²²

393rd Infantry Regiment—114 officers and 1750 men from a normal strength of 172 officers and 3049 men.

394th Infantry Regiment—119 officers and 1904 men from a normal strength of 172 officers and 3049 men.

395th Infantry Regiment—146 officers and 2653 men from a normal strength of 172 officers and 3049 men.

The 395th Infantry had lost the least even though it had been attacking into the Siegfried Line for three days and then defended around Rocherath to the last.

The intrepid 324th Engineer Battalion fighting as infantry had lost over 100 officers and men. All infantry battalions of the 393rd and 394th Infantry Regiments had suffered heavy casualties. From the normal battalion strength of thirty-five officers and 825 men they were now as follows:

393rd Infantry:

1st Battalion—14 officers, 216 men

2nd Battalion—30 officers, 601 men (part of C.T. 395)

3rd Battalion—21 officers, 426 men

394th Infantry:

1st Battalion—21 officers, 428 men

2nd Battalion—26 officers, 553 men

3rd Battalion—24 officers, 550 men

According to the dictates of war, troops in combat sustaining a twenty-five per cent loss become demoralized and those sustaining a fifty per cent loss are usually annihilated—but not these stout-hearted men of the 99th Infantry Division. These "Checkerboard" doughs, even when their lines were pierced, had kept on slugging, died on their guns, had neither given way nor given up. They did

²² A number of replacements had been received during the period and were included in the number present.

HEADQUARTERS V CORPS
United States Army
Office of the Commanding General

1 January 1945

My dear Lauer:

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

General Von Manteuffel, Commander of the Fifth Panzer Army, stated in the address to his troops prior to the attack that "Our ground mission must be continuous; otherwise we will not achieve our goal." Due, in part, to the 99th Infantry Division, this ground mission has not been continuous, and he will not achieve his goal.

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

Sincerely,



L. T. GEROW,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

Commanding General,
99th Infantry Division,
APO 99, United States Army.

The above letter expresses the sentiment of the V Corps commander as to the effectiveness of the 99th Infantry Division's stand in the Battle of the Bulge.

not know the language of defeat—they hung on and fought and fought and finally won. They were true “Battle Babies!”²³

The loss of equipment, fighting equipment, heavy machine guns, mortars, cannon, anti-tank guns, howitzers, vehicles, prime movers, trucks, trailers and radios, all of which had been necessarily sacrificed, was sorely felt at this time. Every supply agency worked day and night without rest doing their utmost to obtain and deliver to these front line troops the replacement equipment so sorely needed. They performed a herculean task. Even as the troops first arrived on Elsenborn Ridge some supplies and equipment awaited them there, and from then on every hour of every day saw more and more of the essential supplies arriving. Ordnance, quartermaster, engineer, signal and medical equipment poured in!

The loss of supplies and equipment was a heavy cross for the 99th Division to carry, but the loss of our heroic buddies was by far heavier. Their loss was not in vain. It was estimated that during those few days the mighty *Wehrmacht* had suffered at our hands alone a loss of 4000 killed and over sixty tanks destroyed. Their schedule had been completely knocked out of balance, the road net they had hoped to seize had been denied them, the supplies they had hoped to capture and use were not there, having been moved or destroyed, and they had lost two most precious days, the initial ones in their blitz, for which they were to pay dearly later. Our loss was great, but their loss was by far greater.²⁴

20-31 DECEMBER 1944

Shortly after midnight the 19th-20th December a determined line faced the enemy. A strongly organized defensive arc which now constituted the north shoulder of the Ardennes salient (the “Bulge”) was formed around the north, the east and the southeast edge of Elsenborn. On this ground men of the 99th held the nose of the

²³ Battle casualties are the killed in action, wounded and evacuated and missing in action. In the army at large the infantry comprises only 20.5% of total strength but according to statistics took over 70% of the total casualties. The combat infantry divisions, like the 99th, sustained more than 81% of all casualties.

²⁴ This initial setback of the II S.S. Pz. Corps, Sixth Pz. Army, is attributed as one of the three determining factors in the failure of the entire German winter offensive. The other two factors are: Failure of the I S.S. Pz. Div. to cross the Ambleve River and drive north of Stavelot and failure to reduce quickly the island of resistance at St. Vith and the high ground to the south and southwest. (See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 116.)

"Hot Corner" from the 20th December to the 27th January, when the "Bulge" was finally flattened out.

Late on the 19th December troops of the 9th Infantry Division slipped down from the north to slide in beside the 99th Division.²⁵ At 8:00 o'clock that night the 9th Division assumed responsibility for that part of the front held by the 99th Division from just south of Monschau, beginning with the town of Hofen to a new boundary created just north of the town of Elsenborn. The 99th Division's troops in that area, namely the 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry and the 99th Reconnaissance Troop, remained in place and continued to operate in their positions, attached to the 9th Division.²⁶

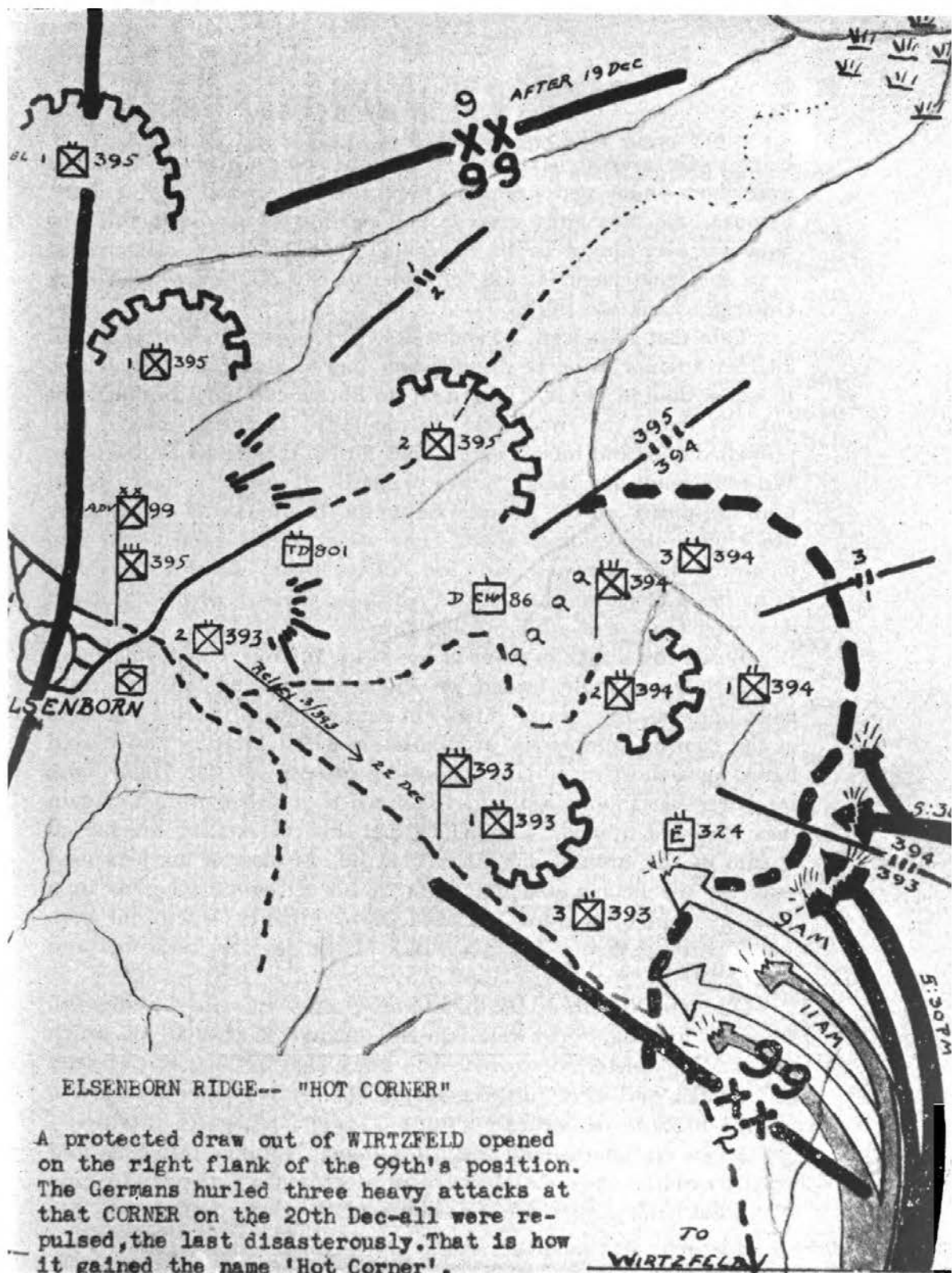
At 9:00 A.M. on the 20th December our new position on the "Hot Corner" received its first test. A mass of German infantry and tanks charged out from the protected valley which ran northwest from Wirtzfeld and opened in front of our position. It was preceded by a short, intense artillery barrage and was hurled with all the secrecy, speed and fury of which the Nazi war machine was capable. It reached our right flank in spite of our hail of artillery and small arms fire. It penetrated our front line between the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry and our "iron men" of the 324th Engineer Battalion. A company of self-propelled anti-tank guns which we now had in Elsenborn backing up our position started forward to meet the enemy tanks. They were not needed! The penetration was stopped, cut to ribbons and completely demolished by our doughboys. The position had sustained its first test.²⁷

Two hours later another German assault was hurled at the same place. This time tanks moved out of the protected ravine waving white flags. It seemed they wanted to surrender, and our fire was therefore suspended. Suddenly, after having maneuvered around to their satisfaction, they opened fire and their infantry charged our positions. Even in this game of kill or be killed certain standards of deportment develop, of which treachery is not one. The attackers had been kept under close scrutiny all this time and triggers were

²⁵ See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 111.

²⁶ The 99th Recon. Trp. was attached to the 3rd Bn. 395th Inf. on the 18th Dec. when the 2nd Div. Recon. Trp. operating in the same area but on the south flank withdrew.

²⁷ Capt. A. J. Haverstick (Ft. Worth, Tex.), C.O. Co. A 324th Engrs., tells about this attack in this fashion: ". . . went in as infantry on the ridge and repulsed tanks and infantry. Fought tanks with bazookas mainly and *got* the German infantry with 12 calibre 50 machine guns on a 200 yard front! What a pleasure!"



ELSENBORN RIDGE-- "HOT CORNER"

A protected draw out of WIRZFELD opened on the right flank of the 99th's position. The Germans hurled three heavy attacks at that CORNER on the 20th Dec--all were repulsed, the last disastrously. That is how it gained the name 'Hot Corner'.

being softly caressed. Reprisal was prompt and conclusive! No orders were given—none were needed! Our entire line opened fire—artillery, bazookas, machine guns, mortars and small arms blasted forth! The fight was over almost before it began. That the attack was repulsed is an understatement—it was annihilated! No doubt now remained. Our right flank was solid!

Late that afternoon, at about 5:30 o'clock, the enemy made still another attempt to break through our lines to seize Elsenborn Ridge. It was a double attack. This time he hurled his blow primarily at our left flank, the front held by the 394th Infantry. Tanks, self-propelled guns and infantry-grenadiers hurled themselves at our front. We were ready for them. It was primarily an artillery show. Small arms fire picked off the infantry riding on the tanks, and the artillery fire ripped the vehicles apart. The attack never gained real momentum. The area was made too hot for them. Besides the severe casualties inflicted on the German personnel the attackers left thirteen destroyed tanks and self-propelled guns on the field.

While this attack in front of the 394th Infantry was at its height, several German tanks loaded with infantry smashed into our right flank position once again. They ran over several front line fox-holes of the men of Company L 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry and played havoc for a short time. Our supporting company, of the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion,²⁸ again moved down to meet this threat. Again they were not needed. The enemy met such devastating fire hurled at him by the enraged doughboys that he left most of his personnel dead on the field and deserted six of his self-propelled guns in a draw in front of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry, where our men later destroyed them. The last attack of the day had been met and repulsed!

Our 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry, now attached to the 9th Division, had received several thrusts during the day, all of which they had completely destroyed. We knew that as long as our men held Hofen and were furthermore backed up by the 9th Division, our north flank was secure.

A new era for the 99th had come about. No more thin lines and weak positions. No more being pushed around. No more looking for a solid flank on which to rest and hold. We were a solid wall. No

²⁸ The 801st T.D. Bn., attached to the 99th Div., was not converted into self-propelled guns until the 29th Dec. when it took over four of the S.P. guns of the 612th T.D. Bn. of the 2nd Div. at the town of Berg. Up to that time it had towed guns, which during this period were emplaced south and east of Elsenborn.

enemy could nor would get through—and they never did!

Tested three times that first day, along every portion of our line, we now KNEW our position was solid!

The enthusiasm and zealousness of these 99th Division neophytes as they first entered combat from Aubel, Belgium, about a month before, had changed. They had become calm, calculating, cold and deadly fighting machines.

It was hard to convince the Boche that their days of pushing the so-called "green troops" of the 99th Infantry Division around were over and that attacking our Elsenborn Ridge position was like butting their heads against a stone wall. Their experiences of the 20th December apparently did not convince them.

They tried again on the 21st December. This time they kept our positions under heavy artillery fire throughout the day and then attempted to maneuver their tanks and infantry to a point close to our lines from which to launch their attack. They even resorted to the useless trick of maneuvering their tanks under white flags. It was an abortive attempt. It died before it could develop. Our artillery slashed it to pieces!

From the 21st December to the 27th December the position was relatively quiet except for intermittent heavy artillery concentrations received throughout the area, occasional lone plane air attacks, and the following attack made on the 99th Reconnaissance Troop.²⁹

At 6:30 A.M. the 22nd December, two companies of the 277th Volksgrenadier Division (15th German Army) supported by horse-drawn artillery attacked the reconnaissance troop. The enemy had painstakingly negotiated the difficult terrain on that front and tried to surprise the troop which was scattered along a forward outpost area on Schwalen Creek east of Kalterherberg. A main line of resistance had been created around the town of Kalterherberg by elements of the 9th Division. The attack started in the darkness before dawn but was discovered at once. The 3rd Platoon of the troop was surrounded during the fighting but kept on fighting throughout the day.³⁰ Troop headquarters counterattacked with its three armored

²⁹ The 99th Recon. Trp. along with the 3rd Bn. 395th Inf. were at this time operating under the 9th Inf. Div. The troop consisted of about 146 men, three officers, and its complement of vehicles and M8s (twelve armored cars, four half-tracks and thirty Jeeps).

³⁰ Six German paratroopers of the von der Heyde Grp. captured by the 99th Recon. Trp. were given a lesson in American style of fighting, while a seventh prisoner was taken and five enemy killed. Lieut. William K. Worley and a quartette of volunteers made up of Sgts. William Fulton and Gerald Eickmeier, T/4

vehicles but was repulsed. Later the 3rd Battalion 47th Infantry counterattacked and the outpost line was re-established. During this engagement six paratroopers of the von der Heydte Group were captured along with a number of others, and the troop reportedly killed over fifty of the attackers. This was the last attempt by the Germans to penetrate around the north flank of the 99th Division.

It is generally conceded that the 22nd December ended the initial phase of the German winter offensive.³¹ Von Rundstedt had sacrificed the better part of four divisions—the 12th S.S. Panzer, the 3rd Parachutists, the 12th Volksgrenadier and the 277th Volksgrenadier Divisions—in his repeated attempts to break through the 99th Division front and the Elsenborn Ridge-Monschau sector. He was unable to accomplish his plans without the road net Monschau-Eupen and Butgenbach-Malmedy-Verviers. The 6th Panzer Army was forced to reorganize after its setback on Elsenborn Ridge. The 99th Division had accounted for the 277th Volksgrenadier Division and the better part of the 12th Volksgrenadier, 12th S.S. Panzer (Hitler Jugend) and 3rd Parachutists. Three other German divisions had suffered grievously at the hands of the Checkerboarders—namely the 326th Volksgrenadier, 18th Volksgrenadier and the 2nd Panzers. Their fanatical mass formation charges had decimated their ranks. They had to stop and reorganize and that was their first great setback in their “On to Antwerp” plan.

The little dorf of Elsenborn sat on top of a ridge and was fully visible to the enemy. Our two most important supply roads joined at that town. One road ran generally north and south from Butgenbach through Kalterherberg to Monschau, and the other east and west from Elsenborn through Camp Elsenborn and Sourbrodt to Verviers and Eupen. All supply and troop movements had to go over these two roads. The Germans kept the roads under continuous surveillance and harassing or interdictory artillery fire. Every means was

James A. Sublett and 1st Sgt. William H. Bryant were returning from the 3rd Plat. with the prisoners when they saw a German patrol had them covered with two machine guns. The enemy apparently had seen them walk toward their lines and waited for them on the return trip. One of our men spied the head of a German, warned the others, and all hit the ground. The reconns got in the first round of fire. While three of the men carried on a running fight toward the C.P., 150 yards away, Sgt. Bryant and another man made the paratroopers lie on the ground. “As we crawled down a draw, bullets whistled over our heads. We didn’t have to worry about the prisoners running away. They didn’t want to be killed any more than we did!” “Our firing must have been good,” said Sgt. Sublett, “for the enemy disappeared leaving five men dead and one who surrendered.”

³¹ Official Report First Army, Vol. I, pp. 117-120.



A view of the Sourbrodt-Elsenborn Road. Note the telephone wires.

used to reduce the effectiveness of these fires, such as irregular time spacing of vehicles on the road during daylight hours, heavier use of the roads at night, etc. Finally our engineers erected a screen of large pine trees paralleling the east-west road. Cutting and hauling these large trees from the forest, they stuck them in the deep snow and thereby blocked hostile ground visibility. It was successful. During daylight hours thereafter, more of our vehicles were able to use that road without fear of coming under observed artillery fire³² until they entered the road junction at the town of Elsenborn.

This road junction at Elsenborn was a favorite point for German artillery concentrations. Every time three or four vehicles jammed up there, a few hostile shells would drop in. It was a hot spot. Our military policeman on traffic duty at that point had to keep traffic rolling, and particularly so when shells started coming in. If he ducked into a nearby cellar for protection there would be no traffic

³² The most effective artillery fire is observed fire.

control. If he stayed out in the open he stood a good chance of becoming a casualty. This traffic control man apparently got tired of running back and forth, waving traffic on and ducking for cover, so he built himself a fox-hole with overhead cover right at the road junction. His head and arms stuck up over the ground, and he controlled traffic by whistle and arm signals. When shells got too hot he simply ducked down below ground level to miss the bursts. On one of my many trips to Elsenborn and my forward command post, my driver and I could see that the road junction was under fire. We were on the alert looking for this traffic man so that he could signal us over. He was not immediately visible. We spotted him in his fox-hole frantically waving his arms and blowing his whistle at us to get across. As we crossed he gave me a great big "highball," and his smile was just as big! He had solved his problem and was happy about it. I was too! That salute and smile were indicative of the spirit of the men of the 99th Division.

The Germans had quieted down. They couldn't push us out, so they tried to make life miserable for us by shelling our positions.



In the woods near Sourbrodt. It was rugged for the supply troops.

We did not neglect them, either. As a matter of fact, it was on the 22nd December that our strategic air power was let loose on the Germans. All that day the sky was black with our air squadrons headed toward *Festung Germania*. Thousands of planes and still more headed to the east. Toward dusk that night they were still winging their way to the east while others, having dropped their loads, were returning, flying west to their landing fields. That was a display of air strength which surprised all of us, cheered us and renewed our confidence in the strength of our allied arms.

It was on the night of the 22nd December too that the relief of front line battalions began. The first to be pulled back for a brief respite was the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry. It had been fighting continuously since the 13th December without a chance to properly reorganize, to get a decent meal or even a full hour's rest. It was relieved by the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry and was pulled back about 1000 yards to the town of Elsenborn. There in some of the houses and cellars of the town it got a *good* night's rest, cleaned up the best it could, ate a few hot meals, reorganized, and on the 24th December went back into the front lines to relieve our fighting 324th Engineer Battalion.

The front was relatively quiet these days. We nevertheless sent numerous strong patrols out to keep contact with the enemy. On the 23rd December, for example, the 394th Infantry alone sent out twelve patrols. They wormed their way over the open ground and discovered the enemy, in small groups, digging emplacements and constructing log shelters at the edge of the woods. They penetrated farther but could not find the enemy in strength. On our south flank, in front of the 393rd Infantry, heavy enemy small arms fire and the complete lack of cover prevented any active patrolling. We had our daily air attacks. The reports from our 535th A.A. Battalion became monotonously similar: "Five enemy aircraft over area; three shot down"; another day, "Nine enemy aircraft over area; four shot down." And so it went. It was again a quiet front!

Christmas Day at Elsenborn was one that, as the years roll around, those who were there will always remember—the rural countryside covered by a clean white snow blanket, the tall, graceful pine trees bearing piles of light, fluffy snow along their green branches, a church bell ringing out clearly its peal of "Good Will to Men"—all this did what it could to create a spirit of Christmas. Our quartermaster had promised turkey for dinner, and in the spirit of the day our men had



CHRISTMAS DAY

Hostile harassing fires did not stop these men of Company D 395th Infantry from joining their chaplain, James L. Neighbours (Santa Monica, Calif.) in a brief celebration.



Chap Herman N Benner (Providence R.I.) holds Church service for members of the 394th Infantry. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

THERE WAS A DIFFERENT SPIRIT- EVERYONE WAS HAPPY



The CG congratulates his Chief of Staff
Col Paul R. Davison (USA Retd.-VanNuys
Calif)



Three pals 'L' 393 celebrate
Sgt Selders, Stillwater Okla., Sgt
Juhl, Eklyn NY, Sgt J.W. Brown, Ont., Oreg



Artillery-
men smile
too.
PFC Shannon
(davenport Ia)
Sgt Stoutenour
(Elkhart Ind)
Sgt Royse
372 FA
(Courtesy PFC
Blumberg, Phila
Pa)



A doughboy takes it in his stride.
(Newrocki-SoBend Ind)
Lt Brown 'L' 393 smiles
The whole world seems brighter.



even hauled small Christmas trees into their dugouts and decorated them with various small ornaments made out of colored paper and Lifesaver candies.

The Germans thought differently. Among them must have been a student of history—probably a Hessian who feared another excursion by American troops on Christmas Day—for throughout the day they kept throwing over a double dose of harassing fire.

In spite of their opposition to the spirit of St. Nick, our front line men did get their holiday turkey, cold perhaps, without all the trimmings, without a table under which to stick their feet—but get it they did. Even though it was eaten out of a mess kit with one eye on Jerry, it brought with it the spirit of Christmas and will always be remembered in Christmasses to come.³³

I sent out the following Christmas message to the troops, which I felt expressed the feeling prevailing at the time:

“CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

“to

“EACH AND EVERY SOLDIER OF THE 99th

“It is with the greatest pride that I greet the heroic soldiers, and the title of soldier applies to officers who are proud to call themselves soldiers, on this turbulent approaching Christmastime.

“The individual and collective fighting of the gallant 99th has been superb. It can be described only in superlative praise.

“Although this Christmas may be troublesome and not in keeping with our best traditions, it will be a sacrifice to the brilliant, happy and peaceful Christmasses that will be celebrated in years to come.

“May ‘God bless you, merry gentlemen,’ and let nothing you dismay.’”

Nothing did dismay the men of the 99th.³⁴ They took their

³³ Maj. Oscar Moland, M.C., (Augusta, Wis.), commanding officer of the division clearing station, writes: “Christmas day Dec. '44—The clearing station was set up in a Belgian dairy farm at Sourbrodt, which the following week became the division command post, and we moved to Jolhoy. The quartermaster got the turkey and trimmings for us and the mess personnel prepared it in blackout—all were fed. Christmas eve, the mess sergeant and I concocted a Tom and Jerry of powdered eggs and powdered milk and—medical Bourbon. Every patient in the station got a hot toddy. Capt. X, a chaplain from blank unit, was the only one who turned his down, but he gave his share to someone else and sanctioned the attempt at Christmas cheer on the front!”

³⁴ Southeast of Hofen the Germans had moved in and taken over a small bridge. The 99th Recon. Trp. had just joined the 3rd Bn. 395th at Hofen and on Christmas morning the troop attacked and recaptured the bridge. The troop unfortunately had to do without its Christmas turkey.



dangerous patrolling and their day-in and day-out fox-hole duty as a bitter dose of medicine which had to be taken and gotten over with. It was anything but pleasant. Patrolling was bitter, nerve-wracking and physically exhausting duty over and above its danger. To sit in a front line fox-hole was not relaxing, either. At best a fox-hole on Elsenborn Ridge was nothing but a hole in the ground that wanted to fill up with icy water. To warm up food and to keep a bit warm, general use was made of the "desert stove."³⁵ After a few days under such conditions men's clothes became greasy black, and their faces and hands became the same color. Soldiers looked as though they were made up for a minstrel show. Relief and clean-up were essential.

Every three days one of the battalions was pulled out of the line and taken to the rear, where the 324th Engineers had established a "rehabilitation center." About three miles back of the front lines, in a dense woods, the engineers had dug into the side of a low hill and created a rest haven—hot water showers, shelters fairly secure from

³⁵ Desert stove: A tin can half filled with sand over which gasoline was poured. When lit it would burn for a considerable length of time with a wavering yellow flame which threw off lots of sooty, greasy smoke.

artillery fire, and—*bunks!* This was heaven. Here, too, a battalion could receive its replacements, who were most welcome.

The schedule was most rigid—come out one day, one day for cleaning and rest, go back the next day—total, three days. If everything remained quiet the battalion could expect its turn again in a month. There were eight³⁶ front line infantry battalions at that time plus other attached troops, so that the most any one outfit could be given was one trip a month. Even so, it was a great morale booster.

Life was not dull on our front. Our area was kept well peppered with hostile harassing fire intermingled with air raids which kept chewing up our telephone lines, made road movements hazardous and life generally disagreeable. The bad winter weather had also to be combated. Whenever the sky cleared but slightly, which was seldom, our "Jeep planes," the L-4s observing for our artillery, would take to the air, and promptly the hostile fire would cease.³⁷ The Germans had learned that as soon as one of our planes took to the air, it could spot the location of their batteries and promptly direct the devastating fire of our counter-battery artillery on them. So it became normal procedure—a "Jeep plane" up, Jerry's fire ceased!

We sent back as much artillery as we received, maybe more. Our ammunition was rationed and we always kept a stand-by supply to meet any emergency. We did not like being on the receiving end of the hostile trajectory, and we trusted our fire was as well received. They kept our positions under constant observation and watched the roads constantly. Their 88s were always sniping at anyone and anything moving down the road from Elsenborn to our front lines.

This was a road of sorts which we had scooped out of the snow. It ran a twisting course from Elsenborn between the positions of the 393rd and 394th Infantry Regiments, down the forward slope of the ridge toward our front lines. It was a one-way road, over which every night we sent our supply trains and hot food. It was tricky. Our trains had to get in and out before daylight or be shot up. Most of our movements in this area had of necessity to be made at night in blackout or during periods of daylight when fog was low and thick

³⁶ Our ninth battalion—the 3rd Bn. 395th Inf.—remained at Hofen under the 9th Div. At midnight the 24th Dec. our 99th Recon. Trp. joined the 3rd Bn. 395th at Hofen and took up the defense of the southwest area facing back toward their former positions east of Kalterherberg and flanking a woods south of Hofen in which elements of the 277th V.G. Div. were located. It had its own Christmas celebration as part of the perimeter defense of Hofen.

³⁷ The German Army did not use artillery observation planes. They were considerably behind us in the matter of artillery fire control.

or when it was snowing, so that visibility was reduced and the enemy could not see what we were doing.

I generally made a trip down to my front line units twice a day, and had to use this road. It was always a gamble. I would select times of poor visibility, snow or fog, or times when one of our "Jeep planes" was up. To be caught out in the open of the forward slope of the snow-covered hillside was to court disaster. I had several narrow escapes, even with all my precautions.

The fight settled down to intermittent shelling, narrow escapes, occasional excitement, some casualties, but lots of physical hardships and downright discomforts.

It continued that way until the 28th December³⁸ when the Germans pulled one of their own "snafus." "You'll be able to walk right into Elsenborn," they were apparently told. Our intelligence sections, however, had every move of the enemy pinpointed prior to the attack, and tipped off our artillery and doughboys.

From 5:15 A.M., before daylight, until 6:20 A.M. the hostile artillery plastered our positions with a heavy concentration and then at 6:45 A.M. two battalions of their 352nd Infantry, reinforced with armor, charged our lines to hit between the 393rd and 394th Infantry Regiments.

Attacking soldiers who survived the first devastating artillery and mortar fire, laid upon them the moment they started out, were killed or wounded by the hail of small arms fire and grenades hurled at them by our dug-in doughs. The fighting spirit of the defenders was exemplified by the story told among men of Company B 394th Infantry. One of their squad leaders at the height of the engagement called out in a booming voice, "Come on, you bastards, we're ready for you!" The attack was disorganized and then completely annihilated in front of our defensive lines.

That the enemy had come to stay was evidenced by the fact that they carried full field packs, heavy entrenching tools, M.G. 42s, mortars, plenty of ammunition, loaves of bread and bottles of wine. They had come to stay and occupy Elsenborn Ridge, and, sadly enough, most of them stayed—permanently.

By 10:00 o'clock that morning the show was over. It was the end of the last attack the Germans ever made on our front in an attempt

³⁸ Official Report First Army has this attack taking place on the 27th Dec. Probably the same consistent error started at the beginning of the winter offensive when First Army reports the 99th Div. position penetrated to Bullingen on the 16th Dec. whereas that took place on the 17th Dec.

to pierce the Elsenborn line. The German officers, who were always in the deep rear areas during an attack, finally realized apparently that the 99th could not and would not be budged from its stone-wall defense of Elsenborn Ridge.

The attack was probably a last-gasp attempt to reduce the north shoulder of the "Bulge" and thereby give new impetus to the German offensive which was at this time bogging down.³⁹ For the first time, the German salient in the Ardennes showed signs of shrinking. Armored spearheads of the German Panzer Corps, almost in sight of the Meuse River, were forced to fall back. Von Rundstedt was running into real difficulties. The troops our higher command had rushed into the area were hedging him in, denying him the important road nets he needed, and to add to his discomfort, heavy snowfalls had made vehicular movement off the roads all but impossible.

Bastogne still held out, and our Third Army was driving up from the south. During the ensuing few days, the drive from the south forced Von Rundstedt to divert more and more troops to that front, and with them went the last vestiges of hope for his bold, daring drive to Antwerp. Seventeen days after the initial assaults, the enemy had been fought to a standstill. The stubborn, determined fighting by our troops had made every foot of ground he gained costly in men and material. From now on the "Bulge" began to shrink more and more rapidly as our armies switched from the defensive to the offensive.⁴⁰

New Year's Day came and went. The Division was alerted to be ready to participate in the general offensive scheduled for D day and H hour. The "Bulge" was to be flattened out from the south and east. Our armies were to drive sledgehammer blows from those direc-

³⁹ See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 125.

⁴⁰ During December, the following units operated under the 99th Inf. Div. Dates indicate date attached and date relieved:

| | |
|--|--|
| 801st T.D. Bn. | 2nd Plat. Co. C 741st Tk. Bn. 15-18 Dec. |
| 400th F.A. (Armd.) Bn. 1-7 Dec. | Cos. C and D 741st Tk. Bn. 16-18 Dec. |
| 26th Inf. 17-18 Dec. | 254th Engr. Bn. 17-17 Dec. |
| 196th F.A. Bn. 6-12 Dec. | 254th Engr. Bn. Vol. 1m2.9th Bn. the DE |
| 535th A.A.A. Bn. (A.W.) (M.) 11 Dec. | 1st and 3rd Bns. 23rd Inf. (2nd Div.) |
| to --- | 16-18 Dec. |
| Co. D 86th Chem. Bn. 11 Dec. to -- | List incomplete—many other small units |
| 700th F.A. Bn. (less Btry. B) 12-17 Dec. | for short periods. |
| 776th F.A. Bn. 12-19 Dec. | |

On 15 Dec. Co. F 395th Inf., 99th Div., was relieved from attachment to the 102nd Cav. Grp. which was operating on the north flank of the division and rejoined its regiment near Krinkelt. It had been assisting the 102nd Cav. in the defense of that area.



Fulsa, near Sourbrodt, Belgium
Privates First Class A.D. Moses, Houston, Tex and
Art F. Runnels, Alameda, Calif., clean the snow
off their AA Gun- Etry 'C' 535 AAA Bn attached to
the 99th Division. 4 Jan 45
(US Army Photo)



Men of the 324th Engineers put up the side wall of a dugout in the
Rehabilitation area.
(Co 'B' 324 Engrs)

(US Army Photo)

tions, using the "north shoulder" as the anvil against which these blows would crush the enemy. The 99th, among the other units holding the "north shoulder," received its mission: "Continue on the defensive, but on D day and H hour send strong patrols against the enemy to create the impression that a general attack was being made."

"On to Antwerp!" had been the battle cry of Von Rundstedt's forces on the 16th December. On New Year's Day his order of the day was, "We have succeeded in disrupting the enemy's planned winter offensive against our Fatherland." It was a case of saving face, of "heads we win, tails you lose"!

Much has been written and heard about the attitude of the German high command, but the viewpoint of the common soldier who did their fighting is highly illuminating. The following extracts are from the diary of one of these German Landsers—a member of the 991st Infantry Regiment of the 277th Volksgrenadier Division, one of the German units which faced the 99th Division during the December fighting:

- 14 Dec.—In close contact with the neighboring regiment. Something big is in the making.
- 15 Dec.—Relieved. By automobile to Hollerath. Everything is on the alert. This might well be the decisive phase of the war.
- 16 Dec.—We are ready to attack. Concentrated artillery fire. Bitter forest fighting. Many casualties.
- 17 Dec.—Slow progress with heavy losses. Forest mopped up. At night we take the village. We are surrounded in the village. Waiting for relief.
- 18 Dec.—All around are Americans. German tanks break through to us. S.S. Hitler Jugend (12th S.S. Division) co-operate with us. Paratroopers arrive (3rd Parachutists Division). Many Panthers and S.P. guns.
- 19 Dec.—Continuous artillery fire. Snipers in every building. Our attack is stalled. Nebelwerfer arrive. We are relieved during the night.
- 22 Dec.—Near Rocherath. Dead bodies everywhere. Spent the night in a house in Rocherath. Heavy artillery fire.
- 23 Dec.—Only a few men left in the battalion. My feet are frozen.
- 24 Dec.—A sad Christmas. No food.
- 25 Dec.—Still no food. The only water we have is from a fox-hole. Very cold.
- 26 Dec.—Some food arrives.
- 27 Dec.—To Rocherath. C.P. in a house. Finally a warm place.
- 28 Dec.—Other units on attack on "Rodershoehe" (Elsenborn Ridge). Badly beaten.
- 30 Dec.—We go over to the defensive. We build bunkers (entrenchments).

31 Dec.—Dry New Year's Eve.

1 Jan.—Back to Hollerath. It is freezing. Battalion being reformed.

3 Jan.—Replacements from the Luftwaffe (air force).

19 Jan.—Take up positions in Rocherath.

This German Landser was captured by one of our patrols. During the period 16-18 December the 991st V.G. Regiment attacked the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry east of Krinkelt. On the 28th December the 352nd V.G. Regiment of the 246th V.G. Division launched its disastrous attack against the position of the 393rd and 394th Infantry Regiments on "Rodershoehe," the German name for Elsenborn Ridge.

REMARKS BY THE AUTHOR

(See Letter on Page 90)

General Eisenhower in his book, *Crusade in Europe*, stated in connection with the opening operation of the German Winter Offensive of 1944 that "The 99th Division was rapidly forced back in confusion." Many letters were received from former members of the 99th Division vehemently objecting to this unjust criticism. As a result, the author wrote General Eisenhower, setting forth the facts of that operation as told in the first three chapters of this book, only more briefly. He replied as above. It is evident that he depended on the data contained in the First Army Report, which is in error.

The second part of the quotation from this report appearing in the above letter, reading "By night, the upper reaches of the Our River were in enemy hands," etc., pertains to the situation in the VIII Corps sector and that of the 106th Division. The town of Holzheim is about two miles south of the town of Honsfeld which was on the south border of the 99th Division sector. The town of Bullingen in turn is about two miles north of Honsfeld.

The expression used in the First Army Report of "a penetration made *nearly* to Bullingen" could mean anything. It is the author's belief that it was meant to insinuate that the German penetration was being made in that direction—toward Bullingen—and so the use of the word "nearly."

That was unfortunate—or was it fortunate?—for it brought about the writing of this history.

Bullingen was captured by the Germans on the 17th December and not the 16th.

It took the Germans three days to drive the 99th Division right flank back ten miles—that is not rapid in anyone's language. Little confusion existed.

December 6, 1948

Dear Walter:

I regret that you interpreted my description of the action on December 16th and 17th as something derogatory to the 99th Division. I meant only to imply that an attack of terrific weight hit these units and that the 99th, which was on a very extended front, was forced back rapidly and in some disorder. I quote from the First Army Report, page 104:

"The heaviest blow of the day was made at 0730 hours in the vicinity of the boundary between V and VIII Corps. Here the right flank of the 99th Division in the Buchholz Forest was bent back and a penetration made nearly to Bullingen. By night, the upper reaches of the Our River were in enemy hands and our advance elements were forced back to the wooded ridge line approximately 2 miles west and southwest of Holzheim. At this point, the 14th Cavalry Group was disposed on a line which ran approximately through..."

This report can, of course, be in error. That I realize, but you will understand that so far as my direct battle reports were concerned it definitely meant that the right portions of the 99th were very rapidly forced back.

I note that on the maps you submitted me that with respect to this same action "by nightfall the Germans were pushed back and the original line restored."

Either we have an example here of a very great difference/in two reports on Divisional action, or the 1st Army Report refers to other troops than the 99th. There is nothing in the report to imply this. I concede that you were on the ground and should know.

By no manner or means have I ever, under any circumstances, questioned the loyalty, courage and skill of American troops. I repeat that I was merely trying to show under what unfavorable conditions they fought.

Nevertheless, I have instructed my publishers that in all future printings of the book, starting immediately, the paragraph which offended you will be revised. Specifically, there has been eliminated any intimation that troops of the 99th Division retired rapidly in any confusion.

I clearly recognize your anxiety to have the story of your Division based upon fact. I assure you that your anxiety in this direction is no greater than mine. I am appreciative also of your recognition of my concern for fair and accurate report.

Thank you very much for your letter and for your nice invitation to visit you.

With personal regard,

Sincerely,



Major General Walter E. Lauer (Retd.)
Post Office Box 461
Monterey, California

CHAPTER IV

Retrospect

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE published in *The Checkerboard*, official newspaper of the 99th Infantry Division, on December 1, 1943, summarizes the events of the first year's life of the Division—its birth and growing pains. This Division was to gain for itself, on the field of battle, the sobriquet "BATTLE BABIES."

*99th's FIRST YEAR EVENTFUL
Raw Recruits of 12 Months Ago Now
Field-Hardened Soldiers*

The 99th Division, as it closed in at Camp Maxey, Texas, Friday, November 19, entered its new home just a year after its activation at Camp Van Dorn, Miss., on November 16, 1942.

The past year of the Checkerboard Division's existence has seen it develop through its various stages of training into an aggressive, fast-moving, hard-fighting outfit of soldiers which has won many commendations for its achievements.

Year Eventful

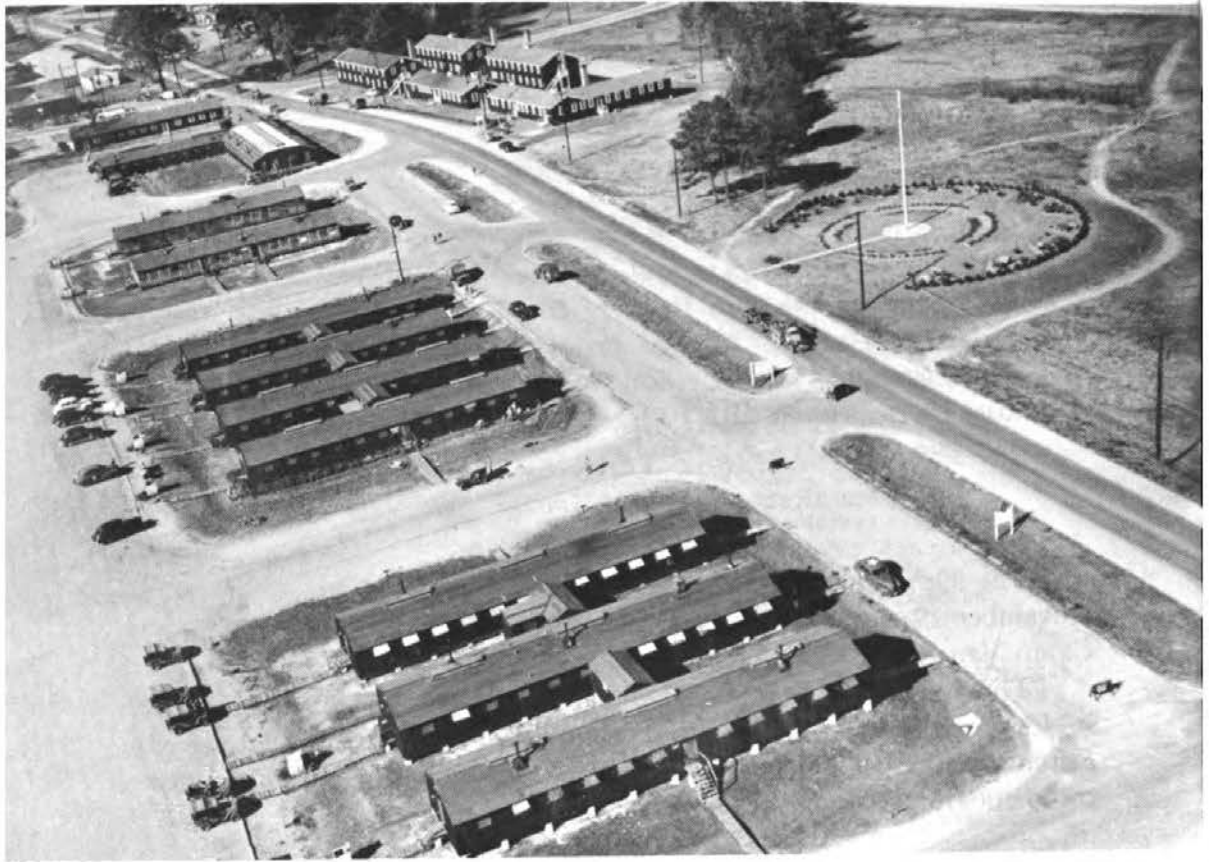
These soldiers as they turn back through the pages of the 99th's history can recall many outstanding events, not only military but also along special service lines, since the activation ceremony of the Division, with Brigadier General Thompson Lawrence commanding and Colonel Harry J. Collins as assistant.

Camp Van Dorn, located down in the southwest corner of Mississippi, was the first home of the new Division. The camp had been named in honor of Van Dorn who had served with distinction on the Confederate side in the Battle of Vicksburg during the Civil War.

Checkerboarders who entered the camp from December 6 to 20 will remember those early days at Van Dorn—days of rain and mud, and more rain and more mud—the sieve-like (tar paper) barracks and administration buildings which admitted much of this—the burning down of the two service clubs which left the men deprived of these social facilities throughout their tenure in camp.

Start Training

They will remember the beginning of training (with cadre from



CAMP VAN DORN, MISS.

Both service clubs burned down before Christmas. The camp was isolated and the men were not happy. The 63rd Division took over from the 99th when it went to the Louisiana maneuvers.

(U.S. Army photo.)

the 7th Division) on January 4, 1943, when "Hut, tut, trip, foah" became a familiar ringing song in their ears. They will remember the birth of the Division newspaper, *The Checkerboard*, on January 13—Fred Waring's program dedicated to the 99th, in which the three selections voted upon by the Checkerboarders were played, "What Is This Thing Called Love?" "Idaho," and "The Rosary."

Days followed in which the men learned the first rudiments of marching and basic fundamentals of soldiering—days of hiking, calisthenics, bivouacking, map reading, rifle practice, and lectures galore.

Punctuating this period were such notable events as the first broadcast of the 99th Radio Review on January 20 over the remote control facilities of Station WSKB in McComb, later adding WJBO, Baton Rouge, and WMIS, Natchez, and the first appearance in *The*

ate Van Dorn



Checkerboard of Private Van Dorn, the popular comic strip character created by T/5 Robbie Robison.

Basketball

Another event in the soldiers' memory books is the inauguration on February 15 of the Division-wide basketball tournament, in which the 393rd, 394th and 395th Infantries, Division Artillery, 99th Signal Company, 324th Medical Battalion, 324th Engineer Battalion, 99th Headquarters Company, 99th Reconnaissance Troop and the Quartermaster-Ordnance teams vied for top cage honors.

The 394th Infantry emerged from this struggle on March 23, defeating the 393rd Infantry in the final game to be the undefeated cage champions of the 99th Division and gain possession of the handsome trophy in token of its achievement.

Shortly after this, the 394th Officers duplicated the feat of their enlisted men by downing the Division Artillery in the final game of their basketball tournament and winning the Division Officers' cage title.

Beauty Queen

Concurrently with these activities on the athletic front was the running of the Beauty Contest by *The Checkerboard*. The men will remember submitting the photographs of their wives and sweethearts and the selection from them of the "Queen of the 99th Division."

Among military events of note at this time were the appointments of Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges as commander of the Third Army and Major General Wade H. Haislip as commander of the XV Corps.

The 5th Infantry became attached to the 99th and paraded on March 20 in review for the first time since its return from Panama.

Division Review

On April 3 occurred what was the most significant event in the 99th's military calendar up to that time. This was the review marking the end of basic training.

Vivid in the soldiers' memory is their "graduation" march in review to the stirring music of the 393rd, Division Artillery and 5th Infantry Bands. This was the ceremony in which they were graduating from elementary to unit training—from rookies to soldiers.

An April 14 Corporal Paul Herman, Service Company, 394th Infantry, won a \$25 War Bond for his song, "The March of the 99th." He won the contest sponsored by the Division Special Service Section.

A week later the 99th lost its assistant commanding general when Brigadier General Harry J. Collins was named commander of the famous 42nd (Rainbow) Division which was to be reactivated at Camp Gruber, Okla., on June 14.

He was replaced on May 9 by Colonel William B. Bradford, who came to the 99th from the 33rd Division at Fort Lewis, Wash., where he was chief of staff. Colonel Bradford became a brigadier general two weeks later.

An outstanding event during April was Easter Sunday, April 25. The occasion was solemnized by two impressive outdoor services, Protestant and Catholic, which were attended in large numbers by the men of the 99th.

Fitness Tests

The month of May is chiefly remembered for the XV Corps physical fitness tests, in which the men put forth with might and main and distinguished themselves for their fine condition and muscular coordination.

Checkerboarders can recall June 1, which ushered the first group of WACs into Camp Van Dorn and gave them their first opportunity to see the woman-soldiers at work.

June also marked the running of the Checkerboard Golf Tournament, in which Private First Class Jack Gray, 99th Headquarters Company, stroked his way to the championship and possession of the handsome trophy donated by the divot diggers.

Baseball

The Division-wide baseball league got under way, comprising

twelve teams. and ran throughout the summer months, giving the 99th diamond fans some thrilling exhibitions of free-for-all, knock-'em-down baseball.

June also saw the winning of the "best day room" contest by the 799th Ordnance Company, whose originality of design and furnishings gained them not only the title but a big party as well.

Combat Team

On June 5 the entire Division witnessed the huge 5th Combat Team problem in a four-hour demonstration, in which a battle scene was simulated under the direction of Colonel A. J. Mackenzie, C.O. of the 395th Infantry, to show the close co-operation necessary between infantry and artillery.

Thrilling to the men of the 99th were the personal appearances from June 17 to 19 of Carole Landis, glamorous and lovely film star. She entertained the men with her patter, songs and dances, several of her appearances being augmented by the accomplished tap routines of Corporal Fayard Nicholas, famous colored dancing star of movie fame.

Fourth of July week end was highlighted by the victory of the 99th boxing team over the 38th Division pugilists in five bouts out of eight, and the fine open-air band concert which entertained the music-loving soldiers on the holiday evening.

July 24 saw the 99th baseball team, comprising the 395th Infantry team, down the 38th Division team in a close, hard-fought tilt by the score of 2 to 1.

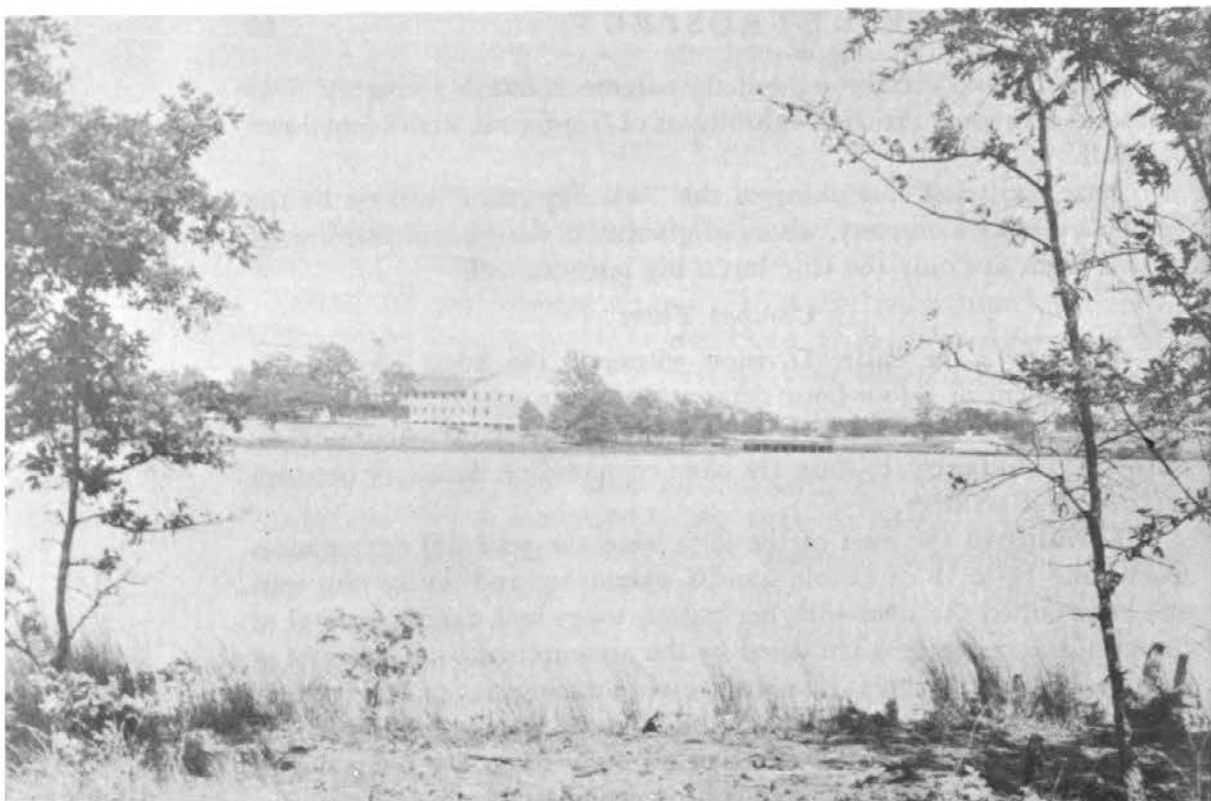
On July 30 Major General Lawrence left to become commander of the Infantry Replacement Center at Camp Roberts, Calif.

New C.G.

On August 2 Brigadier General Walter E. Lauer came to Camp Van Dorn as the new commanding general. The new commander came to the Division with a background of years of experience topped by participation in the landing of American forces in Africa.

Further into the month of August occurred such events as the visit by Al Goodhart, composer of the popular song hits, "Johnny Doughboy" and "I Saw Stars," and the qualification of the 395th Infantry and 99th Reconnaissance Troop baseball teams for the championship game to be played at the conclusion of the D Series maneuvers.

Just prior to these maneuvers, Brigadier General Edwin L. Sibert, who had served with distinction as commanding general of the Division artillery since its activation, was transferred.



Service Club No. 1 at Camp Maxey overlooks beautiful Lamar Lake, scene of many training and recreational activities by soldiers stationed at this post.

D Series

The soldiers of the 99th began their three weeks of D Series maneuvers on August 15. These were designed to accustom the men to deprivations and hardships of field life, to put them on their own resources, to make them tough, and to prepare them for the large scale maneuvers in Louisiana.

At their conclusion on September 5, General Lauer expressed himself as highly pleased with the Division's showing, the spirit of the men and their ability to "take it."

The short span between maneuvers saw the 99th Reconnaissance Troop baseball nine nose out the 395th Infantry in a ten-inning game by a score of 3 to 2, to win the Division baseball championship. The handsome trophies, which had been on display for a long time, were awarded the winner and runner-up.

Louisiana Maneuvers

The 99th Infantry Division embarked on its Louisiana maneu-



HEADQUARTERS NINETY-NINTH DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

TO THE MEN OF MY COMMAND:

WE COMPLETED OUR MANEUVER TRAINING AND WE'RE RATED AN "EXCELLENT" DIVISION, "READY FOR COMBAT" ON THIS OUR FIRST ANNIVERSARY-- THE 15th OF NOVEMBER 1943.

THE UNORGANIZED GROUP OF A YEAR AGO HAS BECOME A STRONG AND EFFICIENT FIGHTING TEAM***THE 99TH INFANTRY DIVISION.

I AM PROUD OF OUR PAST ACHIEVEMENTS!

AHEAD LIES SERIOUS WORK--FINAL PREPARATION FOR COMBAT.

LET US EVER STRIVE TO GIVE PROOF THAT THIS IS THE ARMY'S BEST FIGHTING DIVISION.



vers on September 16, the first of the problems beginning on the 20th. During these maneuvers the Checkerboard soldiers, under the leadership and planning of General Lauer, distinguished themselves and won the highest praise and commendation for the excellent manner in which they executed the problems.

While in the field, the Division lost its chief of staff, Colonel David W. Craig, who was transferred to Fort Sill, Okla., and acquired Colonel Paul R. Davison, who brought with him an outstanding record of military ability. The Division also had assigned to it capable Brigadier General Frederick H. Black as Division artillery commander.

It was with a feeling of great satisfaction that the men of the 99th closed in on their new home in Camp Maxey, Texas, one year after the birth of their fine Division.

The sincere welcome accorded them here, the genuine hospitality extended to them by the camp personnel and citizens of neighboring towns, and the excellent facilities afforded by the camp itself have caused all our soldiers to exclaim, "This is heaven."

To mark the first anniversary and in tribute to the accomplishments of the Division and its members, the following letter was published by Division headquarters:

Veterans of rugged Camp Van Dorn will long remember the pleasant surprise they experienced upon detraining at Camp Maxey, the camp to which the Division was assigned upon completion of the Louisiana maneuvers. The camp looked like a doll's-house village—white painted buildings with green roofs—paved streets and grass plots around the buildings—cleanliness and order—recreational facilities all in excellent operating condition—real barracks, kitchens and mess halls—this was "heaven" in more ways than one. Few knew that the Division was awarded this fine camp because of the excellence of its work during maneuvers, but all appreciated the award. Many Checkerboarders were experiencing army life in the standard type of cantonment for the first time.

"We never even heard the troops come in! No shouting, no confusion, no horseplay! Just the quiet swish-swish-swish as the columns marched up the roads to their barracks upon detraining, marked the men of the 99th as soldiers and not recruits. They are the finest disciplined troops we have seen. We are glad to welcome them to Camp Maxey!" Those were the remarks of Colonel Robert Annin, an old-time regular officer and the camp commander, and his remarks reflected the opinion of all the camp personnel.

The Division spent almost ten months at Camp Maxey in putting

on the final polish in preparation for actual combat. Intensive training and review of all phases of combat and technique of weapons and their use was rehearsed and gone over again and again until all became second nature and automatic. The Division did not stop its training upon developing just one team of experts, but insisted upon every man being raised to the highest degree of efficiency—to that of expert—in every position and weapon with which the team was equipped and for every operation for which the team was responsible.

Training was no longer a "chore" but a game of skill in which every man exerted every effort of which he was capable. The high standard—that of perfection—was the goal set. This goal affected every phase of daily living—so-called housekeeping to that of specialized operations such as the attack of a fortified area.

During this period the Division received more than 3000 men released to it from the Army Specialized Training Program, the A.S.T.P. They took the places of the men who were released by the 99th Division during maneuvers to go to the 85th and 88th Infantry Divisions, scheduled for early departure overseas.

The A.S.T.P. men were a welcome asset. The men whose places they took had been thoroughly trained and ready for combat, and so the A.S.T.P. men were organized into a provisional regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Jack G. Allen of the 393rd Infantry and given an intensive three months training course. They were excellent students. At the end of this course they had become as proficient as the men we had lost, and were absorbed by the Division just in time to take part in the hasty "box-building" program that began in August.

It was during these months that the Division received many distinguished visitors who came to inspect, to observe progress made, to determine the readiness of the Division for overseas service.

Among the outstanding visitors were Judge Patterson, then undersecretary of war; General Leslie McNair, chief of the army ground forces; Lieutenant General Ben Lear; General Simpson; General John P. Lucas, hero of Anzio, then commander of the Fourth Army, and many others. All agreed that the men of the 99th were ready for combat, and sea spray could be felt and tasted in the Texas dust.

Such expressions of opinion as that of General McNair and General Courtney Hodges, commanding general of the Third Army at that time, when they rode the entire front and rear of the 395th Infantry's defensive position on maneuvers, that "It would take a numerical superiority of five to one to route out the defenders," and

that "they had finally seen a regiment which knew the meaning of dig-in" became commonplace occurrences. How prophetic that expression of opinion was, remained to be told in the glowing pages of history to be recorded by the Division on the bloody battlefields of the Ardennes. The only difference was that the numerical superiority of five to one became a horrible eighteen to one.

It was during these months too that all troops experienced their first maneuvers using live mortar and artillery shells in overhead fire. It was a dangerous phase of training but one that was essential. It did not pass without accident, for it was at this time that a short round fell with fatal results among our men advancing in a mock attack. The heroic actions of those closely involved, the coolness, speed and precision with which everything humanly possible was promptly accomplished to meet this disaster, further marked the readiness of the command for combat. Hardly had the first shout of "Medic!" been heard before an ambulance arrived to speed the men to the station hospital at Camp Maxey, where several operating teams alerted by the commander's radio were waiting to receive the casualties and render them all possible treatment. For their heroic action and coolness under these trying conditions the Soldier's Medal was awarded two of the men.

It was not all work and no play. Athletic events, dances and shows, in which the 395th Infantry's stage show, "Sad Sack Review," was an outstanding production, were interlaced with field training. Among the big events which took place was Infantry Day, Thursday 15 June 1944, when over 6000 people from southeast Oklahoma and northeast Texas communities attended the program put on by the doughboys of the 99th. There, too, was Army Day and the many and various colorful ceremonies and reviews conducted by the troops, intermingled with the baseball championship series won by the Reconnaissance Troop, the championship basketball series won by the 393rd Infantry, etc. There was boxing to which Joe Louis gave a great deal of impetus when he visited the Division, and then there was the enjoyable lake swimming and hospitable U.S.O. clubs for recreation and relaxation.

Intense training, however, always continued. Problems and tests were conducted over carefully chosen terrain for squads, platoons and their leaders. In March began concentrated effort to get each man P.O.M. (Preparation for Overseas Movement) qualified. Individual and crew-served weapon firing for qualification and familiarization



Judge Patterson -Undersecretary of War



LT GEN Wm H SIMPSON



Gen Ben Lear



Maj Gen J.P. Lucas



Lt Gen Leslie McNair

was a requisite of the program as well as special battle courses, infiltration courses, close combat courses and village fighting.

By July each regiment in the Division had won the distinction of "Expert in Infantry" and was awarded that coveted trophy, the "Expert Infantry Streamer," for their regimental colors. Each regiment had qualified more than sixty per cent of its personnel as "Experts in Infantry"; that meant in all phases of infantry operation—weapons, physical endurance, agility, etc., plus team-served weapons. More than sixty per cent of the regimental personnel had qualified as "Individual Experts."

This, too, was but a forecast of what the men of the 99th would accomplish in combat, where almost every man won the Combat Infantry Badge, where each regiment was awarded the coveted Combat Infantry Streamer to add to its Expert Infantry Streamer, and two battalions were awarded the highest honor—the Blue Streamer—the Presidential Citation. Every service unit in the Division, quartermaster, signal and medical became Distinguished Units.

During the last weeks of July, rugged regimental maneuvers were held in the hills of southern Oklahoma, and units received their last "fillers" to bring all organizations to full Tables of Organization strength. Here men picked up the last valuable little tips that often mean the difference between life and death for the front line soldier—how to stay alive and how to punish the enemy.

The "salt spray" was getting thicker and thicker. Training time was ticking itself out rapidly, and the urge to see strange places and real combat was getting stronger and stronger.

Each company, troop and battery day room at this time displayed maps of the world, carefully marked day by day with the most accurate information available as to the progress of the war and the location of front lines. Anxiously would these maps be scanned and commented upon. Surely the war would not be over before they could get into it—eagerly and impatiently they awaited the day to get going—but with the stoical philosophy of the soldier who has had much training in "hurry-up-and-wait" they felt they probably would be disappointed. They were wrong!

The word finally came through—project "box-building" arrived. Under the able supervision of the Division engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Justice R. Neale (Amarillo, Texas), commanding officer of the 324th Engineer Battalion, a streamlined version of Willow Run, Grand Rapids, Mich., and Detroit came into being. Boxes of every size and design to meet the peculiar size and shape of implements of

war to be packed and crated for overseas shipment came flying off the assembly line. In no time at all, the areas around the barracks of the troops sprouted out in lines upon lines of boxes being numbered and marked for hauling away, to be next seen on the piers for loading into transports.

Around the clock the men were processed through the medical and dental clinics, where they received their last inoculations and dental care to qualify them for movement overseas. The amount of work turned out by these highly specialized and expert teams was tremendous. Every individual in every supply and administrative section worked from early morning to late at night inspecting, checking, preparing for shipment, packing and crating, marking and weighing all the myriad articles and records involved.

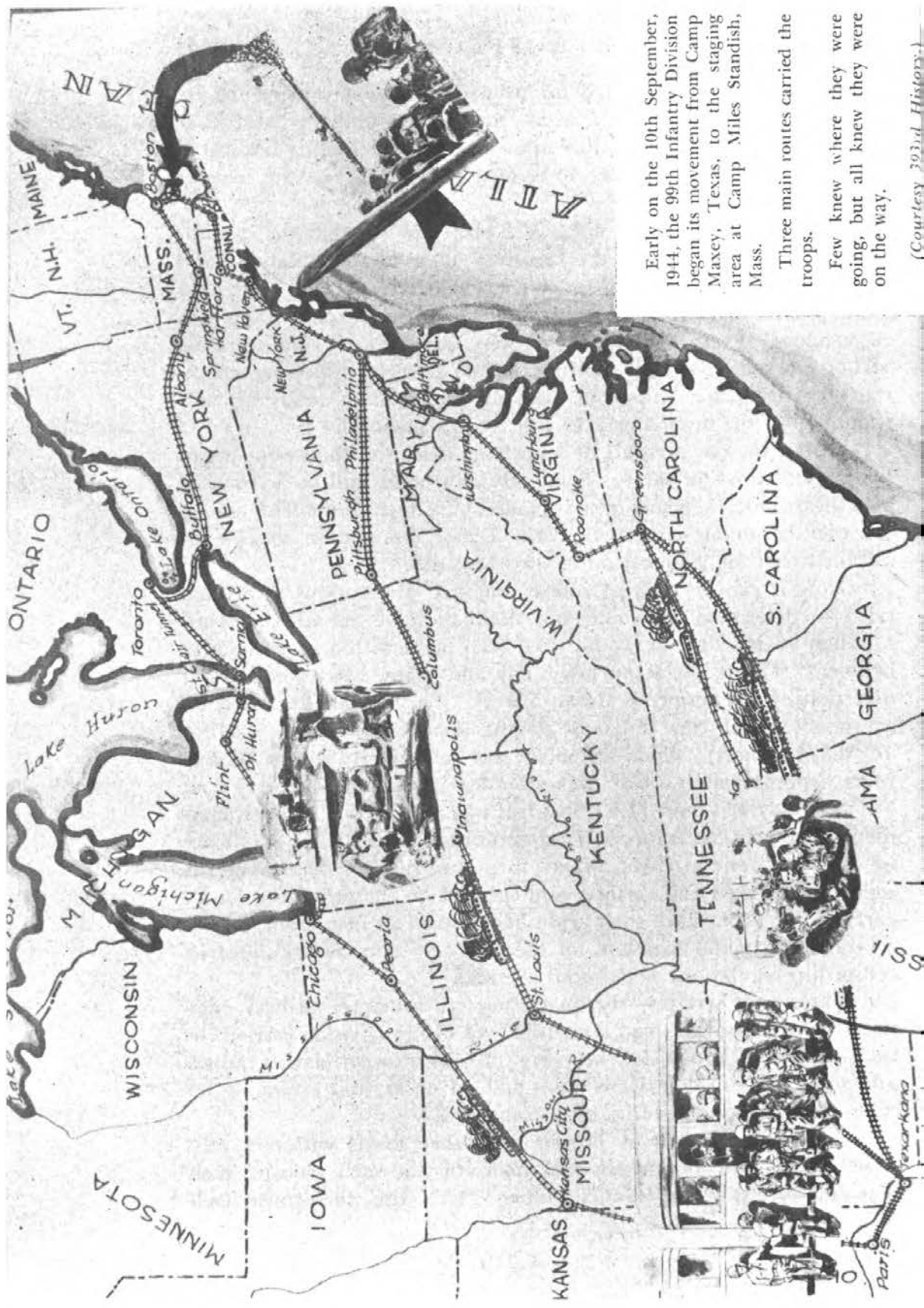
At last the day arrived, 10 September 1944, and the troops began leaving—destination secret. Fond farewells were said to wives and sweethearts and the many friends made by the men of the 99th among the ever hospitable citizens of Paris, Texas. Destination secret—but all knew that the 99th was on its way overseas!

Now it can be told, of course, but had any curious individual tried to determine the route and destination of the Checkerboard Division at that time he would have been faced with a most complex problem. Trains left at all hours day and night, headed in various directions, for a period of almost a week. They all finally ended up at the beautiful New England staging area, Camp Miles Standish (C.M.S. for short), which served the port of embarkation at Boston, Mass., approximately three days after leaving Camp Maxey, Texas.

The stay at Camp Miles Standish was a short one. All arrangements had been made for the reception of the troops. The excellence of the work done at Camp Maxey in preparation for overseas movement was checked and verified, and speeded on the procedure for an early sailing date. Each man again had to pass an inspection, receive several shots in the arm, and for the first time came under the strict censorship regulations as enforced overseas.

The supply services—the quartermaster, ordnance, medical, engineer, signal, chemical—and the entire staff of the Division carried the brunt of this operation, for they were the ones busy correlating records and supplies heaped in warehouses and on docks, and arranging for their clearance and loading onto transports.

Short-period passes to Boston and other towns within a fifty-mile radius were authorized, and many of our men enjoyed their first real New England lobster dinner. Here, also, these men made



Early on the 10th September, 1944, the 99th Infantry Division began its movement from Camp Maxey, Texas, to the staging area at Camp Miles Standish, Mass.

Three main routes carried the troops.

Few knew where they were going, but all knew they were on the way.

(Courtesy 293rd History.)

their last long distance telephone calls to home and their loved ones. The excellent facilities provided by the telephone companies permitted a message to go out to any place in the United States almost immediately—but the place of origin of the call remained secret.

Less than two weeks after arriving at C.M.S. the final preparations for embarkation were completed and the Checkerboarders boarded ships, including the army transport *George W. Goethals*; the ex-freighters *Explorer*, *Excelsior* and *Exchequer*, and the one-time luxury liner *Argentina*, and sailed for England on September 29.

The convoy left from Boston harbor, and after a relatively uneventful¹ voyage for that time of the year on the North Atlantic, arrived at the British Isles on October 10, 1944, just one month after leaving Camp Maxey, Texas. Ships docked and debarkation took place in every major port from Guorock, Scotland, through Liverpool to Southampton, England.

The Division was assigned to an assembly area in Dorsetshire, southern England, and the movement of supplies, equipment and personnel over the rambling English railroads began. Lorries and goods wagons, P.O.M., "Straight ahead, you cawn't miss it"—Piddelhinton, Maiden Newton, Lyme Regis, Broadmayne and similarly strange sounding terms and names assailed the ears of the Texas-trained soldiers. It was new, it was strange, it was the beginning of the great adventure, and just a taste of the stranger experiences to come.

The thoughtful courtesy of the English country folk, their fatalistic attitude toward life, their set customs and peculiar class distinctions, their entire mode of life with few modern conveniences, were a revelation to these American lads. Visits and courtesy food packages when invited to share a meal at home with these stalwart and staunch folk who were being strictly rationed and yet wished to share their limited food with their visitors to show their appreciation of the great task these newcomers were taking over, quickly established a mutual bond of friendship and understanding.

Forty-eight hour passes, most of them to London but some to points as far as Scotland, were the rule rather than the exception. The many fine cathedrals and the historic sights close by were eagerly visited by many of the men, and for those remaining there were company and battalion parties at which English girls enjoyed fresh doughnuts and hot chocolate.

¹ On 6 Oct. our convoy reportedly was attacked by a U-boat. Few knew about it.

To those fortunate enough to get a pass to London, the sights of Picadilly Circus and of the urban Britisher in his own metropolis, who always seemed to be in a frantic sort of double-time-in-place hurry, making a frustrated attempt to emulate his American cousins getting things done, while carefully carrying a precisely rolled umbrella—and rubbers—were an additional experience long to be remembered.

The 99th inherited camp sites and accommodations which had not been used since D Day, 6 June, and signs and remnants of articles left indicated that the area had at that time been occupied by the famous American 1st Division. Indeed yes—the taste of salt spray was being replaced by that of gunpowder.

Feverishly T.A.T. and impedimenta, the supplies and equipment so carefully prepared for shipment at Camp Maxey and inspected again at the Boston port of embarkation, were unpacked and uncrated and conditioned for real combat.

Training was not forgotten. It was resumed with renewed intensity. Conditioning marches were conducted every day, rain or shine, most of the time during the former, for this was England.

To the supply personnel of all the units the first week in England was a nightmare of bafflement. Equipment unloaded from the ships and shipped by rail to unit camp sites were in many cases misdirected or lost in transit. To trace these shipments through the phlegmatic agents, hidebound by regulations and rules, caused many a supply officer almost to lose his mind. How it was finally accomplished still remains a mystery.

A whole book can be written about the scenic narrow roads, winding and twisting through the countryside, over which convoys of trucks were conducted—safely by God's good grace. Not only were the roads narrow and dangerous but all the American motor vehicles were equipped with left-hand drive for operation on roads where traffic kept to the right. In England traffic keeps to the left.

Speed was of the essence, and our troops were badly wanted on the continent. A great conference was called by the S.O.S. (Service of Supply) at which detailed arrangements were announced for the early departure of the Division for the combat zone.

Administrative operations had been proceeding at top speed, but now the tempo was increased. To equip the Division with its quota of motor transportation, a detachment was sent to the continent, to "Omaha Beach," where a big pool of motor vehicles was available, and at the same time vehicles were issued to the Division from the motor pools in England.

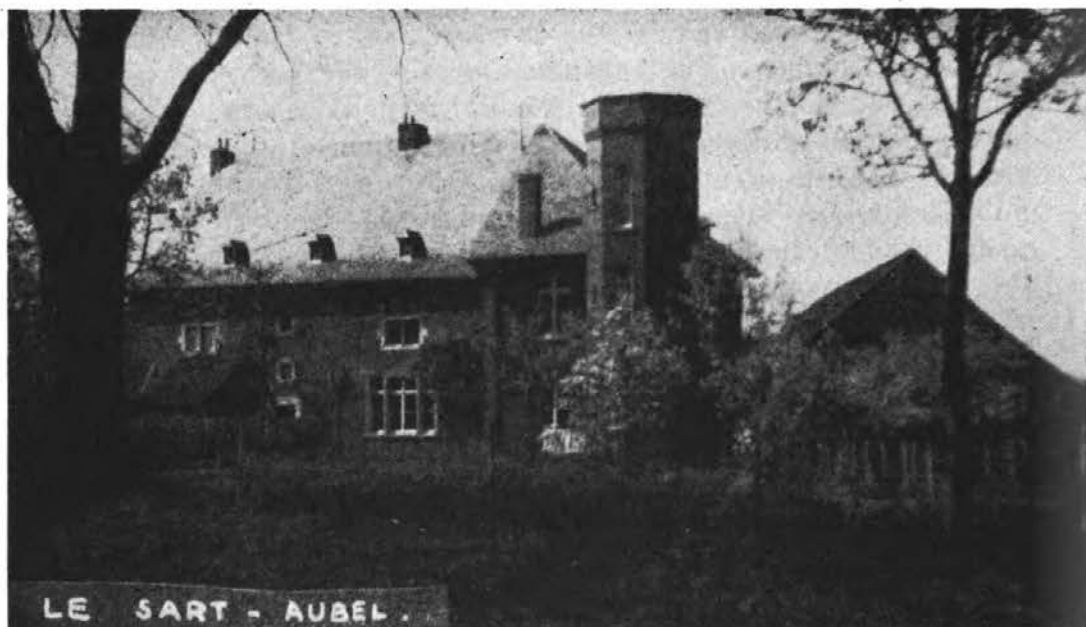
The movement order for the Division arrived, and on November 2 troops started moving by rail and motor to the southern English ports of Southampton and Bournemouth simultaneously with the arrival of trucks which had to be greased, oiled, in many cases repaired, checked, assigned to units, marked, loaded, and dispatched to the embarkation ports. It was done expeditiously and in time. The successful accomplishment of this operation "frenzy" with composure and equanimity again proved without a doubt that the 99th was a well trained organization, thoroughly prepared for combat.

The normal confusion of loading occurred, with troops being ordered on vessels at one port while their heavy equipment was to be loaded out of another, as happened with some of the artillery units. All in all, the loading into various types of small ships, including L.S.T.s, was accomplished with dispatch, and between the 3rd and 7th November the entire Division was moved across the English Channel to land at Le Havre, France.

The port of Le Havre, at the mouth of the Seine River, was just being opened. The 99th was the first unit to cross its beach. The mouth of the harbor was still partially blocked by sunken craft, and the town itself, which had sustained a severe aerial bombardment through error several months before, presented the Checkerboarders with their first picture of war's ravages. The scent of Texas dust, supplanted by sea spray and gunpowder, was in turn supplanted by the visible signs of war—the war in which they would soon be taking a part.

No time was lost in Le Havre. Trucks were debarked and more trucks arrived. Troops and equipment were assembled in the open field camp site about five miles east of Forges, France, and then everybody who could drive a truck or a Jeep found himself driving in the convoy which took off immediately across northwestern France and southern Belgium with destination Aubel, Belgium, 285 miles away—across Normandy to Amiens, through Picardy and Flanders, through Bapaume, Cambrai, Valenciennes to Belgium, then Mons, Charleroi, Namur and Liege to Aubel.

As the convoy rolled over these roads, it became more and more evident to everyone that the route being followed was passing through old battlefields. Remnants of destroyed tanks, armored vehicles and military trucks, rusting but still showing the Nazi markings, were observed more and more frequently along the sides of the roads. Men subconsciously strained their ears to hear the rumble of cannons. The underlying feelings of these men, anxious to get into the fray before



ST. JEAN LE SART, DIVISION HEADQUARTERS 5-6 NOVEMBER

Our mess tent was pitched in the mud under the tree in the foreground. (The picture was presented us by the owner, Ed Enst le Sart.)

the war was over, can best be described by the statement so frequently heard, "It won't be long now!" How true—they never realized that their oft expressed wish to get into the war before it was over would be more than satisfied.

They finally arrived at Aubel, physically weary and worn out but mentally keyed up, ready to go.

Aubel is a small farming town north of Verviers in the easternmost portion of Belgium near the Liege-Aachen Military Highway No. 3. This was the first visit of the 99th to this quaint Belgian town. It was to figure again in the story of the 99th, for it seems that destiny selected this town as both a rest haven and a jumping off place for the "Dauntless"² men of the Checkerboard Division.

The Division was to assemble at Aubel and then be ready for active assignment. The days of delay were over. As the leading elements of the column (395th Infantry) closed into Aubel, and while other elements of the Division were still embarking³ in England,

² Dauntless was the division code name.

³ Bad weather prevented some of the units leaving England as scheduled and several ships carrying artillery and signal units had to turn back after starting to cross the channel.

the first orders for the Division, Field Order No. 31, Headquarters V Corps, dated 8 November 1944) were received.

Under these orders the 99th Division was to: (1) Relieve the 9th Division, the 102nd Cavalry Group, Combat Command B of the 5th Armored Division, and the 85th Reconnaissance Squadron. (2) Assist in the defense of the V Corps sector. (3) Protect the right (south) flank of the V Corps and maintain contact with the VIII Corps (2nd Division) on the right. (4) Maintain contact with the 102nd Cavalry Group on the left (north) flank. (5) Conduct aggressive patrolling to the front to determine enemy dispositions and activities. (6) Conduct demonstrations as ordered by the commanding general V Corps along the entire Division front to assist an attack by Combat Command A 5th Armored Division.

It sounded like maneuvers, but was the real thing. With all the verve and enthusiasm of the neophyte to combat, these orders were zealously executed.

Regimental Combat Team 395, the first unit in the assembly area (6-7 November) was ordered out to relieve the 102nd Cavalry Group, Combat Command B 5th Armored Division, 85th Reconnaissance Group and part of the 39th Infantry of the 9th Infantry Division which were all in the northern part of the newly created 99th Division sector. C.T. 395 crossed its I.P. (Initial Point) in Aubel at 8:00 A.M. 9 November, on its way to execute its first war mission.⁴

During their brief stop at Aubel the men saw and heard their first buzz bombs and heard the first distant rumble of our heavy guns hammering away, which at night lit up the skies with their blasts far away in the distant northeast.

The weather was cold and snow began. Mud became ankle deep. Men were reminded of the newsreel pictures they had seen of the Finnish front—but what was a little physical discomfort compared to

⁴ Paul E. Wessner (Tampa, Fla.), Co. E 395th Inf., recounts: "In the small hours of the morning of Nov. 9 we were told to get up and get ready to leave. It wasn't bad enough that we had to roll our packs in the dark, it had to rain, too. Just as we were loading on the trucks at dawn, the rain turned to snow. It snowed all through our trip to Kalterherberg from Aubel. We relieved a cavalry outfit on the defense line set up about two miles from town. This defense line was a series of outposts. . . . Every day we sent patrols to keep an eye on the pill-boxes (Siegfried Line). It was on one of these patrols that William P. Wilson was a scout and I was left flank security. Wilson stepped on a land mine as he crossed a firebreak. . . . It nearly tore his foot and lower leg off. We carried him back on a stretcher made of rifles and field jackets. . . . The last we heard of him he was doing fine in a hospital in the States with his new leg."



Lieut. C. A. Carnevale (Mt. Vernon, N. Y.) and the C.G. discuss plans for organization of defensive position near Rocherath, Belgium, 14 November '44.

(U.S. Army photo.)

getting into the real thing, the fight, the war toward which they had been so industriously training.

Thereafter event followed event in rapid order. The 393rd Infantry closed in at Aubel and then moved right out on November 10 to relieve the 39th Infantry of the 9th Division, which was in a position opposite the Siegfried Line east of Krinkelt. The 394th Infantry left Aubel and moved to Wirtzfeld on November 11, ready to relieve the 60th Infantry and at the same time to act as a counter-attack force in the Division sector.⁵ Armistice Day passed with but a fleeting thought. By November 12 all elements of the 99th Division had closed into their forward area, and on the 13th the first small arms fire between our front line troops (393rd Infantry) and an enemy patrol took place. The next day the 99th Division relieved all other troops in the area and took over full responsibility for the front.

A period of rain, drizzle, light snow, slush and mud set in to make life disagreeable. In this country of short, steep hills, dense pine

⁵ The 370th F.A. Bn. went into position near Krinkelt 10 Nov. and its Btry. A fired its first round at the enemy on 11 Nov.

forests, woods trails and few roads—an ideal area for a game refuge—our men found themselves conducting their daily lives.

Aggressive active patrolling was the order of the day. Every day every unit sent out at least one patrol. Every officer and every man was required to participate in these patrols at one time or another. It was hard, it was dangerous, but it developed confidence in their own ability to operate successfully in these dense woods and against these self-admitted supermen.

Selecting and occupying better positions, digging them in, providing them with overhead protection, making them watertight, constructing protective shelters⁶ in the woods for the aid station, kitchen, command post, etc., became a never ending task.

It was realized early in this, the first operation of the Division, that our troops were spread paper thin along this extensive front and that an enemy force of a regiment or even a battalion attacking at any particular point could with ease cut through our line and raise pluperfect havoc in the rear areas. This had to be prevented, and prompt plans were made to guard against any such eventuality.

To this end, Purple, Blue, Red and Brown counterattack plans were worked out in detail; but they were not sufficient, and so a series of defensive positions deep in the rear of our front line positions and on the first available areas which provided good fields of fire, were laid out and constructed. These were set across the most likely routes of enemy advance and were made ready for occupancy in case of need.

Life gradually became routine, with daily flurries of minor actions of a purely local nature. Dropping a few artillery shells on the enemy, receiving a few, shooting up an enemy patrol and capturing a few prisoners, having one of our patrols shot up—this became the routine life of troops sitting in observation and conducting active patrolling.

The following summarized report is typical of these days:

- 16 November: The Division continued to defend its sector and conducted patrols to the front and flanks. Several enemy patrols were seen and fired upon. One M.G. was located at . . . The 400th F.A. Bn. fired 28 missions and the 801st T.D. Bn. continued to provide A.T. protection within the Division sector. The 395th Inf. killed one enemy during an attempt to storm its Company K observation post at . . .
- 25 November: Enemy activity increased somewhat during this period. Considerable foot and vehicular movement was ob-

⁶ A protective shelter was a log cabin revetted and sunken in the ground for better protection against artillery fire.

served. Forty enemy in full field equipment were observed at . . . and when fired on by our artillery moved to . . . and disappeared. Three artillery pieces were observed stuck in the mud. Horses were brought to haul them out but our artillery scored direct hits before they were out of range. Enemy counter-battery fire increased in volume and several rounds landed in the 370th F.A. Bn. area during the night. Two M.E. 109s flew over our area vicinity . . . at 1500 hours and our A.A.A. claimed one hit. One robot bomb shot down by 461st A.A.A. At 1500 hours the 2nd Bn. 393rd Inf. began relief of the 3rd Bn. 393rd, to be completed early 26 Nov. Contact with units on the flank was maintained. Thirty-one rounds of mortar fire received by Division. The 394th Inf. maintained contact with motor patrols from Task Force X on the right (south) flank. The 395th Inf. continued to improve positions and maintained contact with flanking units on the left (north).

The 801st T.D. Bn. fired 450 rounds H.E., harassing and interdiction fire at eight targets—results unobserved.

The 370th F.A. Bn. conducted a propaganda demonstration in the 393rd Inf. sector, employing a loud-speaker operated by V Corps personnel. Air O.P.s patrolled the sector during the afternoon but poor visibility prevented their effective use. No missions were fired. Our planes were fired upon by friendly A.A.A. while shooting at robot bombs but no casualties resulted.

Missions fired by Division artillery and 400th F.A. Bn.: nine registrations, 26 harassing, two O.P.s, four C.P.s, two counter-mortar, eight infantry, three propaganda, three patrol support. Total rounds expended, 499.

This operation was not a camping expedition or a Sunday School picnic, by any means. Every day saw action, men were wounded and killed, and the sick rate brought about by the bad weather was ever on the increase. It, too, had to be fought as hard as the enemy, even harder, for its toll was by far greater.

This month of November saw the first action of the Division, saw its first battle casualties, saw its first dead enemy and its first prisoners of war. The daily attrition was not noticeable, but when totaled for the month gave food for thought. When one considers that there were at this time more than 15,000 troops involved, the following

figures are not impressive, but they left their mark nonetheless on the commander and buddy alike:

| | | |
|-------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| Killed in Action | 20 | |
| Died of Wounds | 1 | |
| Missing in Action | 13 | |
| Wounded in Action | 153 | Total 187 (15 officers, 172 men) |

Hospitalized for non-battle injuries, of which the ever present, insidious trench foot was the worst cause, 822.

To offset this loss, the Division could show nothing as to ground gained, but plenty as to increased security and much more in becoming battle wise. During this month the Division had made itself "king" of No Man's Land. It could send out patrols deep into the enemy's area with greater and greater assurance of their safe return. In turn, it had caused heavy casualties among the enemy—more than we had received, we were sure—exactly how many, of course, was unknown, and we had taken a toll of thirty-five prisoners. If our thirteen men missing in action had been captured by the enemy, as was supposed, then we could well estimate that enemy casualties were in approximately the same proportion of roughly three to one, compared to what we had suffered.

Many lessons had been learned during this period—unfortunately, in many cases, the hard way. Individual protection against enemy mortar and artillery fire in dense woods presented quite a problem. Practically all rounds received were tree bursts, and the ordinary fox-hole or slit trench was inadequate protection. For better shelter men dug two-men fox-holes covered with a double layer of logs for overhead protection. Waterproofing was accomplished by construction of a false roof over the log shelter, and in some cases by placing a shelter-half between the false roof and the log shelter. Camouflage was provided by moss and thatched boughs of evergreen. This also provided a covered place from which to fight.

Officers had to learn that visits to forward observation points in daylight invariably drew attention and fire on the position, either destroying the value of the site or making it a nerve-wracking place for the observer. The observer had to stay out there, and a "no kibitzing" rule had to be enforced.

The enemy had learned many tricks in five years of warfare. A pair of machine guns would open fire simultaneously. One included tracer fire and would shoot high, inviting movement under the cone of fire; the other gun, without tracer, would pour in a lethal grazing fire directly below. Such were some of the hard lessons we learned. We

They Call Him a Fighting Fool

Sarge's Patrol Attack Knocks Off 62 Krau

By Robert S. Robison

Stars and Stripes Unit Correspondent

WITH 99th DIV.—“He’s a fighting fool,” say the buddies of Sgt. Dorsey N. Ball, of Cincinnati, Ohio, and the score of 34 Jerries killed, 15 wounded, and 13 captured in one engagement stands as proof to their testimony.

Sgt. Ball was a member of a combat patrol which set out recently to give the enemy hell. They had just moved out, when artillery exploded nearby, wounding two of the men.

Several hundred yards further on, they were again pinned down by artillery, rifle, and machine-gun fire which injured five more of Ball’s men. Noticing that they were considerably shaken by this, Ball became fighting mad. He screamed, yelled, scolded, and cajoled his men, firing them with his spirit. Upon sighting the Jerry position, Ball became the sparkplug of the attack.

No Maggie’s Drawers

He spotted an enemy gunner leveling off at them from his foxhole and sent a bullet from his M1 through the German’s forehead. Then he collected grenades

and began a personal mopping-up tour of the Jerry foxhole.

Hurling a grenade into each hole, he followed it with rifle fire direct into the position. At one hole, after winging in his grenade, two Germans attempted to scramble out, but Ball disposed of one of these with a shot from the hip, kicked the other in the face, knocking him back into the hole—and the grenade exploded.

Then, with his men covering him, probed into all the enemy dugouts and emplacements. After four machine crews had given him the “kammerad,” personally destroyed their guns and automatic pistols.

Not through for the day, Ball remained at the rear of his patrol as it withdrew and when the Germans tried a regroup he squelched it with rifle fire.



discovered too that large patrols were relatively unsuccessful operating in the fortified enemy area. They were too hard to control, whereas a three or four man patrol could penetrate these areas better, slipping through with less chance of detection with less noise and much easier control. We found that meticulous, detailed planning was essential for successful patrolling. Plans were worked up three days in advance—leaders were briefed and oriented, mission, routes to and return, all known obstacles, every enemy installation, etc., were carefully gone over. The patrol then had at least one day to check every weapon and piece of equipment and to work out the details of their procedure, plus such personal reconnaissances as they found necessary.

When the Division first moved into the area, enemy patrols were very active and aggressive. They had many outposts, and we were under constant observation. Our combination of observation and

combat patrolling throughout the month successfully drove the enemy from these outposts, and during the last week we were unable to contact any of their patrols. The enemy had completely withdrawn from their outposts and retired to their pill-boxes in the Siegfried Line. Our patrols were now able to move up to their front doors, and we were seldom bothered. The 99th Division had become the "boss" of No Man's Land.

That was what our killed and wounded during the month had purchased for us!

We learned many tricks on how to accomplish a mission and still stay well—about mines and booby-traps, about keeping warm and dry, about stalking game in this natural preserve which was occupied not by the beasts of the forest but by the most intelligent beast—man. We learned how to penetrate straight into his lair east of the International Highway or anywhere along our entire front where he was established in concrete pill-boxes surrounded by "dragon teeth," tank traps, huge iron road gates, wire entanglements and anti-personnel mine fields.

Despite these elaborate defensive arrangements, our patrols daily went into this hostile territory and dragged out captives, for we had to know who was in front of us. We found out: the 272nd Volksgrenadiers which with its 980th, 981st and 982nd Regiments and the 77th Replacement Battalion had relieved the 89th Infantry Division which moved farther north; the 277th V.G. Division with the 989th, 990th and 991st Regiments, and the 347th V.G. Division of two regiments, the 860th and 861st.

We discovered the names of their commanders from division to company and in some cases platoon, their strength and armament, and their locations. In strength, training and armament they varied greatly. We knew that the normal V.G. division averaged about 8000 men, but these units were not that strong.

We found out that many of the men were Austrians, many with little infantry training, that most of them feared their German N.C.O.s and had little respect for their Austrian officers who were in command of many of the companies.

We discovered many things, some valuable and some worthless, but when all the data was compiled and logical conclusions drawn it was definitely felt that many of the troops facing the 99th Division were poor specimens of the highly advertised German "superman." Or were they?

Several chapters could be devoted to the experiences of the patrols

sent out by the 394th, 393rd and 395th Infantry Regiments, mentioning these units in the order in which they held the front from our right (south) flank to our left (north) flank. These aggressive patrols accomplished their mission of driving the Germans into their West-wall fortress—as one wit described it, “We made ‘em crawl into their hole and pull the hole in after ‘em.”

First Lieutenant Joseph T. Dougherty, Company K 393rd Infantry (San Francisco, Calif.), reported the following patrol experience during this relatively quiet period of November. Many others in the Division will recall similar expeditions, perhaps not as colorful but just as deadly. He writes:

“As platoon leader of the 1st Platoon Company K 393rd Infantry, I was ordered to lead a patrol over “Rath Hill” for the purpose of investigating an enemy observation tower and to make an estimate for its demolition.

“Captain J. W. Gravely (Dangerfield, Texas) and a first lieutenant from the 324th Engineers went along. I had been over this area several times before. The patrol left our lines and proceeded through the enemy lines (part of the Siegfried fortified belt) and to the tower. The tower was empty at the time, and Technical Sergeant LeRoy Hudson and myself entered the tower. We then returned by a different route. While passing through the enemy’s lines on our return we were fired on by a German machine gun. Sergeant Hudson and I advanced against the position. Sergeant Hudson, at a range of about twenty-five yards, killed the gunner with his M-3 submachine gun and then ran out of ammunition. I was down to five rounds for my carbine, and with no place to go jumped into the machine gun nest on top of the dead German gunner and his assistant. I finished my ammo and started using the German weapon. From my position I shot several of the enemy in their rear ends. I had the advantage of being in back of the enemy while they were firing on the remainder of my patrol. Apparently none of the members of my patrol had seen me enter the nest, for I began receiving fire from the Germans *and* my own men. Captain Gravely, besides firing at me, was directing the fire of the rest of the patrol at me too. I was out of ammo for the German machine gun and it was impossible for me to leave the hole. I conversed in my high school German for about thirty or forty minutes with the assistant gunner, a kid about seventeen years old. One attempt was made by the enemy to grenade me out, but I was saved by lifting the German by his armpits so that his own men could see him, and he told them to go away. As it started to grow dark I jumped out of the

hole and ran and rolled across the open for about seventy-five yards with the enemy firing at me. As soon as I got a little cover, I helped remove one of our wounded men. Sergeant Hudson was shot through the backbone and lying in an exposed position where I could not get at him. Private First Class Jones and another scout were killed, along with Sergeant Oliver. I recovered Jones' body on a subsequent patrol but could not find the others.

"The C.G. decorated me the next day down at our command post."

A summary of this event was published in the *Stars and Stripes*, Paris edition, 13 December 1945.

December arrived and the rain and drizzle became snow. The temperature dropped to freezing and below, and the icy cold of winter in the Ardennes set in to add to the other physical discomforts of our men. It was far from pleasant to sit in a fox-hole day and night and shiver while closely watching the enemy, who was living under relatively "plush" conditions, in his warm and dry pill-boxes.

We had stirred up things and driven the enemy into his hole and were devoting our time to combating winter and the buzz bombs they kept sending over. The buzz bombs had become an ever increasing menace to our deep rear areas (Antwerp and Liege) and it appeared that one of their important launching platforms was almost directly opposite our south flank.

BUZZ BOMB LANDS IN ROCHERATH

It demolished several buildings and made a crater twelve feet deep.

A crippled Mosquito bomber returning from a raid over Germany crashed in this town a few days later and killed one man; others were severely burned. The pilots had bailed out and one of them alighted in the 370th F.A. area nearby.



Anti-aircraft units were brought in and spread across the terrain on every knoll behind our front lines. They started shooting down buzz bombs. The front of the 394th Infantry was nicknamed "Buzz Bomb Alley." While some bombs were shot down and fell harmlessly in unoccupied spots, others were damaged only to the extent of knocking their directional control out of balance and causing the bomb actually to buzz around like an angry hornet, zigging and zagging, to finally land with a devastating crash in our area. A few casualties resulted, but many more near misses were scored and a number of buildings were rocked and windows shattered.

There was always something going on in the area which had quieted down considerably since the 99th took it over, to make one realize that this was war and that this was not a "rest area."

CHAPTER V

Checkers

13-16 DECEMBER 1944

MARS, THE GOD OF WAR, must have chuckled at the ludicrous situation which occurred the 13th-16th December 1944. The Germans had assembled two Panzer armies in secret for an offensive, and we had the temerity to hurl an attack against the Siegfried Line to break through and seize the Roer River dams at almost the precise time and place they planned to deliver their "surprise punch."

During November and the first part of December, we of the 99th Division had been conducting intense active patrolling over our entire twenty-two mile front. So successfully had our men conducted these operations that we had established ourselves as the undisputed "bosses" of No Man's Land. We had driven the Jerries back into their pill-boxes of the Westwall. We were quite cocky about it! Life had gotten down to a sort of routine, if one can call it that, and it looked as though December would be just another month like that which we had put in during November. We were wrong!

The First Army, of which we were a part, was making its major effort in the Duren-Julich area, several miles to the north of our position. Further advance in that area, however, required the crossing of the Roer River. Four large dams controlled the flow of the Roer River. No large scale crossing of that river below the dams could be undertaken as long as the dams remained in enemy hands. If these dams were destroyed or suddenly opened, within a few hours severe flash floods would occur in the Duren and Julich areas. This would not only cut off the leading troops from support and supply and cause serious losses to any troops caught in the river bottom, but would have a vital effect on the entire operation since it would take from a week to two weeks before communications could be restored. Repeated attempts by aerial bombardment to destroy these dams had failed. First Army therefore decided early in December to launch an offensive with ground troops to capture these Roer River dams.¹ The

¹The four dams were the Urftalsperre, Schwammenauel, Paulushoff and Heimback. The first two were the most dangerous to the contemplated river crossing. (See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, p. 95.)

ATTACK OF SIEGFRIED LINE.

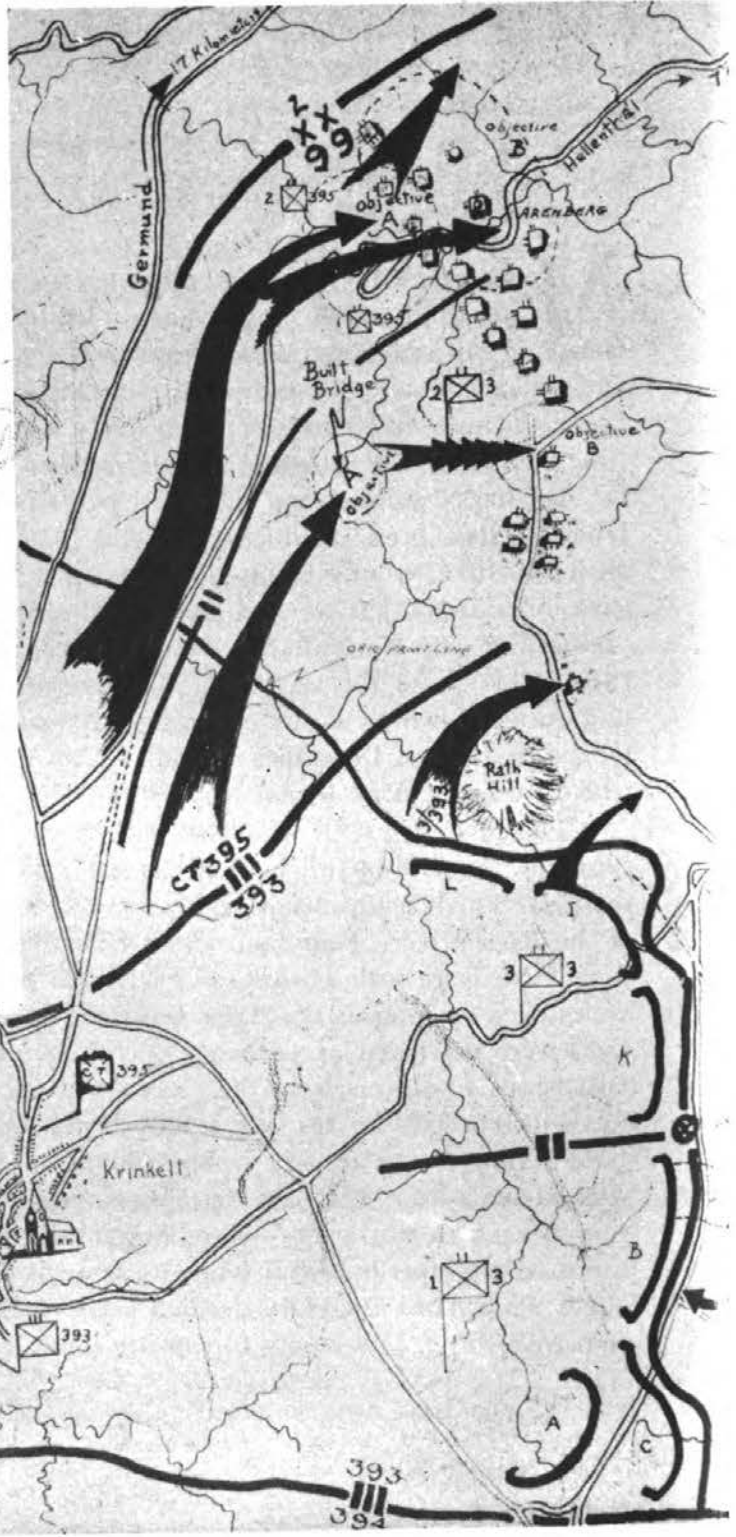
13-16 December

It was slow, deadly work. The brunt of the attack was carried by the 1st and 2nd Battalions 395th Infantry, assisted by all our artillery and engineers and reinforced by tanks, tank destroyers and chemical troops.

On the 15th December the 2nd Battalion 395th knocked out six forts and captured fifteen of their surviving defenders; the 1st Battalion 395th took Arenberg and its nearby pill-boxes, while the 2nd Battalion 393rd sat on its objectives at the critical road bend.

Our attack was successful. Our combat team had broken through the highly vaunted Siegfried Line and now waited for the 2nd Division, whose right flank they were covering, to come abreast.

Further south, "Rath Hill" and "Purple Heart Corner" had been eliminated and our demonstrations all along our line clear south to near Losheim had also been successful.



99th Infantry Division was selected to participate in this operation.

On 10th December the 2nd Division commenced moving up from its front line positions in the Schnee Eifel area of the VIII Corps to Camp Elsenborn, in the center of the 99th Division sector of the V Corps. The 106th Infantry Division replaced the 2nd Division on our south flank, and by the 12th December the 78th Division replaced the 102nd Cavalry Group on our north flank.

V Corps issued its orders for the attack to start on the 13th December.² Under this plan the 2nd Division was to launch its assault on a very narrow front through the center of the 99th Division's sector, and the 99th, using one regimental combat team, was to attack on the right of and in conjunction with the 2nd Division. Final objectives were: 2nd Division, the Urfttalsperre Dam; 99th Division, the high, wooded ground west of Hellenenthal and south of Harperscheid, thereby covering the right flank of the 2nd Division in its spearhead drive for the dam. Further to the north, the 78th Division and the 8th Division were also assigned their missions.

The first objective for the 2nd Division was the road junction northwest of Arenberg, and the first objective for the 99th Division was the little town of Arenberg. Both objectives sat right in the middle of the first belt of the Siegfried Line defenses.

The fact that the excellent patrolling of the 99th had driven the enemy into his Westwall defenses permitted our attacking troops to move unmolested right up to his first line of cement pill-boxes. The 2nd Division was able to move up the main Krinkelt-Gemund (Hellenenthal) Road unmolested (see map) and throw its weight directly

² See Map B, p. 4. The original plan called for this attack to be launched from the vicinity of Hofen, near Monschau, on the extreme north flank of the 99th's sector and to seize as its first objective the road junction northwest of Arenberg. This entailed a drive to the southeast across the front of the first belt of the Siegfried Line defenses in that area and over most difficult terrain. During the period the 99th had held its sector it had cleared the Germans out of the entire wooded area just south of this road junction and as a result we could actually place the 2nd Div. assault units directly in front of the first objective without a fight. This fact was brought out at the first conference on this operation which was held at V Corps headquarters and as a result the plan was changed. Instead of attacking over the left (north) flank of the 99th Div.'s sector, the attack was launched from the center of the 99th's sector. Instead of the 2nd Div. being on the left flank of the 99th Div. it was in the center of the 99th Div. First Army headquarters apparently was never cognizant of this vital change and therefore the Official Report First Army and its accompanying maps consistently indicate the 2nd Div. on the north (left) flank of the 99th Div. In fact, the 2nd Div. was never on the left flank of the 99th during this operation. It was initially in the center of and later on the right flank of the 99th Div.

against the defenses planted around the road junction northwest of Arenberg which was their first objective.

The 99th Division, by thinning out its north flank still more, was able to assemble one regimental combat team, the 395th. It consisted of the headquarters and headquarters units and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 395th Infantry plus the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry, reinforced by Company D 86th Chemical Battalion, Company B 801st Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company C 324th Engineer Battalion, Company C 324th Medical Battalion, and the entire 924th Field Artillery Battalion. We supported this team with the remainder of the 324th Engineer Battalion and the entire 99th Division Artillery. To further support the operation of Combat Team 395, a limited objective attack by the 393rd Infantry to seize "Rath Hill," and strong demonstrations along the rest of the front of the 393rd and the entire front of the 394th Infantry, were staged to coincide with the initial attack of the team toward Arenberg, its first objective.

The thinning-out process was done by the 99th Reconnaissance Troop taking over the front of the entire 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry which was located near Kalterherberg, and the 2nd Division Reconnaissance Troop taking over the front which had been held by Companies B and C of the 1st Battalion 395th Infantry. In this manner the 1st and 2nd Battalions 395th Infantry were made available for the attack. The 2nd Division attack zone was over the area previously held by the 1st Battalion 395th Infantry. The relief was completed by 2:00 P.M. 11 December.

This was a fight to be conducted through deep snow, over rough terrain and against stiff resistance from the world's most strongly fortified area. Only one third-class road, narrow and twisting, ran through these dense woods of the Monschau Forest toward Hellenthal, the direction of the 99th's attack. Other roads over the many small hills, narrow gorges and through the forest had to be built to follow up behind our men. This was a chore for the engineers, and it kept all their road and bridge building machinery and crews working constantly. Small clearings for forward gun positions were continually being sought so as to render closer and more effective artillery support to the assaulting troops. Supply and evacuation was most difficult, taxing the efforts and ingenuity of these essential services to the utmost.

The infantry assault teams, however, carried the brunt of this fight. The first belt of the enemy's fortifications along the Westwall

were planted in checkerboard style on the brow of hills and were all sited so as to be mutually supporting. They had been carefully constructed and tactically placed by the world's greatest exponent of this type of defense. Virtually all pill-boxes possessed the following general characteristics:

- (1) Limited fields of fire—forty to fifty degrees.
- (2) No weapon larger than a 37mm gun, although each fort was supported by artillery and mortar fire from positions to the rear.
- (3) Four to six feet of concrete overhead, and a similar amount underground. Walls five to eight feet thick.
- (4) Normal complement of troops, seven men per firing embrasure.
- (5) Excellent camouflage concealment materially aided by four years of disuse and natural growth.
- (6) Excellently prepared paths of fire. Heavy forests were dense enough to handicap armored maneuver.
- (7) Boxes were in clusters mutually supporting and linked by communication trenches and an extensive network of buried (six feet deep) telephone cable.
- (8) Observation posts protected by seven-inch-thick steel cupola. These were usually also command posts.
- (9) Dragon's teeth anti-tank obstacles around some of the pill-boxes.
- (10) Three bands, each about three kilometers deep—in some places ten-fifteen kilometers.
- (11) Most of the towns en route to our destination were also fortified and part of the defensive line—towns like Germund, Schleiden, Hollerath, etc.

The many days and weeks of training which the Division had put in on this very type of operation while in the States was now called into play. A head-on assault, we knew, would be murderous and foolhardy. We had to play checkers!

Each of the assault battalions was given its prescribed zone of attack, and each carefully reconnoitered its area and developed its own precise plans which were tied into the over-all plan. Slowly, vigilantly but relentlessly the attack went forward, step by step, pill-box by pill-box, area by area.

The point of attack having been selected, the mutually supporting forts were placed under a continuing accurate fire sealing every

gun port, loophole and embrasure to keep the defenders down and prevent them from firing at the assaulting groups. Similarly, the point of attack was sealed by fire while an assault group, moving in under cover of these protective fires, closed on the selected fort, and by use of flame-throwers, satchel charges of high explosive and other means, gradually forced its capitulation. Heavily mined fields, intense enemy artillery and mortar fire were invariably encountered by these assaulting groups as they closed in on their objective.

The attack opened as ordered at 8:30 A.M. on the morning of the 13th December. While Combat Team 395 launched the main thrust of the attack in the 99th Division zone, the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry staged its limited objective attack and the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry and the 394th Infantry staged their local demonstrations to give the impression of a general assault along the entire line.

In front of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry, "Rath Hill" ("Rat Hill" to those boys) and "Purple Heart Corner" had been cancerous sores in their side. "Rath Hill" looked down over most of the position held by the battalion. The battalion decided to take over the hill and establish themselves on it. To do so they had to overrun "Purple Heart Corner" en route. On the morning of the 13th December they attacked, using one company (Company L) in the direct assault and supported this attack with a platoon from Company I which attacked from the south at the same time. All mortar and other fires the battalion could muster supported the assault. "Purple Heart Corner" was quickly overrun, and "Rath Hill" was finally captured and occupied by Company L. Breathlessly positions were readjusted and consolidated and preparations made for the expected counterattack which did not come—then. It did come a couple of days later, on the 16th December!

The demonstration by the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry called for a single platoon diversionary attack, really just a strong patrol action. In order to give an idea of what we called merely "strong patrol action," the following account of this demonstration, as told by the platoon sergeant,³ follows: "The 2nd Platoon Company B was chosen for this deal to divert and draw fire from the big attack on the left. Lieutenant Carnevale and I made plans. We oriented the men and held a practice attack in a low area immediately behind the front lines. Captain Goldberg (Germantown, Pa.), the battalion executive

³ The platoon sergeant was Ben Nawrocki (South Bend, Ind.), later first sergeant Co. B.

officer, and Captain Duffin (Boise, Idaho), the battalion S-3 (plans and training officer) talked to the men on the importance of the mission.

"No wounded were to be picked up. We were to work fast and to take two light machine guns with us. Lieutenant White, observer from the artillery, and his crew were to come with us to co-ordinate fires.

"We had our radios and we strung a sound power line as we went, or rather as we would do on the following morning at 0730 13 December.

"We used 100 yard phase lines on which to stop and check in and wait for our supporting bands of fire and artillery to lift. We had about 800 yards to cover across the front.

"We had our practice on the afternoon of the 12th. The men knew what was up. Soberly they all went to the company drying rooms⁴ for a good nights rest and checking and oiling their equipment. Everyone knew exactly what to do. We knew we had a heavily mined area to cross and that there were two machine guns in the corner of the corridor of the woods we would pass.

"The men prepared themselves mentally, physically and spiritually. Some shook hands and didn't expect to come back. Lieutenant Carnevale and I did the same—in privacy. He didn't expect to come back. The men were sober and serious—they were out to do this job, do it right, fast, and get it over with.

"We started out from the left flank of the company at H hour which was 0730 (7:30 A.M.) 13 December. We crossed the open ground in full view of the Siegfried pill-boxes. Didn't receive any fire. We entered the woods and ran into accordion barb wire—still no fire. We started firing and whooping it up, and our supporting fire opened up and put down its band of protective fire. We tried to check in by phone and radio, but none worked. We then decided to wait at each phase line and then continue on, hoping that our supporting fire would lift. It did—our artillery fire ceased because of "no contact."

"We overran a German fortified outpost. We hit some of the Jerries because we saw blood on the snow. They dragged their

⁴ Company drying rooms had been constructed behind the front lines. Usually they were log shelters or a pyramidal tent dug in for protection against artillery fire and heated by a stove—a place where men could dry out after a period in deep snow or a wet fox-hole.

wounded with them. We destroyed the fortifications and their communications wire.

"As we got half way through we started to receive German artillery fire—it got heavier and heavier. Lieutenant Carnevale was hit. I went to him—he had a gaping hole in his back. He asked how bad it was and I lied and told him a slight wound. He ordered me to carry on and to leave him.

"The artillery and mortar fire got so heavy the men started to move back, but I got them going forward again. All I heard were moans and calls for "Medic." We were only about sixty yards from the end when we were to hightail it for any fox-hole we could find.

"Lieutenant Carnevale sent a messenger after me with orders to withdraw as too many men were lost. I started the withdrawal and ordered the men to pick up the wounded. I asked Lieutenant White and Sergeant Gregoryzyk to take Lieutenant "C."—he was too damn good an officer to leave to the Jerries. He wanted us to leave him. That was an order I refused to follow. I'm glad now.

"I thought that all had gone back, but to be sure I stopped to check at the International Highway and then found that someone failed to pass the word down to the extreme left flank. Sergeant Wasson and another man came up with one of their wounded—he raised hell with me for not getting the word to him. It was hard to take, for the fault was not mine—someone failed. Wasson told me that Sergeant Raymond Brockman was still in there guarding a man with a broken leg.

"I ran back with Sergeant Mizerny (a brave guy). Just as we got there, Sergeant Brockman stepped on a mine which blew his leg off. I ordered Mizerny to give him first aid and took the man with the broken leg back to get a stretcher for Brockman, who was big and heavy.

"As I was taking this man Crosby back, a land mine went off between my feet and blew the wounded man off my back—my rifle was blown to bits and I thought the whole front of me was off. It was a miracle, though—I have never doubted God since.

"Private First Class Theodoropoulos, a hero of a Greek who was always there when you needed him, came back to help me. I staggered back and got word to Lieutenant Kingsley (Rinsworth, Pa.), the company executive officer, to send help with a stretcher. Wasson went back with a crew and brought out the last man. We got back to the

aid station. We left only one dead man—over twenty were wounded.⁵

"Lieutenant Carnevale and I agreed, on the way to the aid station, that between 100 and 120 rounds of artillery fell on the platoon. We got all our men back, even though the orders at first were to leave them.

"It was hell—and it lasted only about one hour.

"I received first aid and then reported to Major Legler (Buffalo, N.Y.), our battalion commander. He assured me that the action had helped the attack to the north and he gave me some 'Purple Heart medicine'—a good swig of Scotch!"

Combat Team 395 moved forward in its attack at 8:30 o'clock on the morning of the 13th December. They drove in all hostile patrols and then carefully examined the defenses they had to overcome. Quickly they launched out in a three-pronged attack. Each of the three battalions took over a narrow zone, and each zone was mutually supporting.

The attack having once started, there was to be no letting-up day or night. All day of the 13th these three battalions kept pounding away. When night came, they increased their pressure and succeeded in knocking out several pill-boxes which they took over and from which they launched further assaults. All that night and the next day the attack progressed. The game of checkers was on in earnest.

In spite of everything the enemy could do and did, our men continued to knock out and destroy fort after fort. At the end of the first day they had cracked the outer defenses of the Siegfried Line and sat on their objective for the day, which was close to the town of Arenberg.

This was a slow, deadly game. Time after time, as our men closed in on a fort to place their satchel charges against doors or walls, or crawled on the roof of the fort to seal air vents and force the capitulation of the defenders, they would be met by devastating barrages of artillery and mortar fire from positions far in rear which fell exactly on the fort. They would be driven off only to return again and again until they succeeded. Our artillery bellowed away in counter-battery at these rear positions, and our cannon companies and attached anti-tank destroyer unit, from close-up positions, pounded away at the pill-boxes our men were attacking. The air was full of flying steel—coming and going. Company B of the 801st T.D. Bat-

⁵ In the account by Sgt. Nawrocki the men named, Sgts. Mizerny and Wasson and Pfc. Theodoropolous were killed in action on the 16th Dec.

talion alone fired 3448 rounds of ammunition in support of the doughboy attacks that day.

Relentlessly the brave men of the 395th Combat Team kept pounding away and smashing deeper into the first belt of the Siegfried defenses. Clearing away mine fields encountered, blowing up captured pill-boxes and cement forts, sealing up those which could not be forced to capitulate by bulldozing heaps of soil over the exits and gun ports or by welding shut the steel doors to the forts—these were just some of the varied and detailed actions involved in this operation.

It was no easy job to demolish completely one of these cement forts. Each one required several hundred pounds of T.N.T. to do the job. In this attack, every pound of equipment and supplies had to be carried by hand over a good three miles of trails, over hills and through woods. This took time—too much time to suit our fighting men.

The Army Engineers said they had a scheme of plugging up all holes and vents, windows and doors, etc., in one of these forts and then setting off a few pounds of T.N.T. inside the fort, with the intended result that the whole thing would blow up. We tried it time and again but it never seemed to work. Theoretically it should have worked, but we were unsuccessful at it.

Our men learned⁶ that a fort once captured had to be immediately occupied or destroyed or, as happened in one case, the enemy would infiltrate back into it and the job would have to be done all over again. It was rough, tough going—physically exhausting and mentally nerve-wracking—besides being the most perilous type of tactical action.

On the 15th December our never-ceasing pounding began to pay off. The 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry captured six pill-box forts and took fifteen prisoners that day. (The few prisoners taken is indicative

⁶ P. E. Wessner, Co. E 395th Inf. (Tampa, Fla.) tells this story: "We had two assault squads formed to take the pill-box. The first assault squad took the fort without much trouble. Our Capt. Hornby (Clifton, N.J.) was the only casualty, shot through the shoulder. We dug in for the night, just over the top of the hill from the pill-boxes. The forts weren't over 250 yards from us. The next day we discovered the Heinies had reoccupied the pill-boxes during the night, so this time, the second assault squad, the one I was in, took it again. Double E Hill and I fired twelve rockets and all but three hit the embrasure. With all the M.G. fire, rifle fire, bazooka and T.N.T. it was one small white phosphorus grenade, thrown down the ventilator by Frank Tezak, that brought them out running. The Engineers blew the box for keeps."



Rugged Terrain
along

SIEGFRIED LINE

(Courtesy-393rd Inf)

The terrain around
HOFEN

Picture post-card
taken during a
better time of the
year.

Courtesy Cass M.
Vertzlufft-St Louis
(Mo)



HOFEN, GERMANY

UP TO THE FRONT

Platoon 00'B' 393rd Inf moves up
to Siegfried Lines December 44
Scene near Krinkelt-later this
same area was covered with
American and German dead.



(Courtesy Sgt Ben Nawrocki)

of the adamant defense offered. Each fort had about six embrasures, forty-two or more men.) Our other battalions broke through, too. Finally, late that afternoon, our men were able to penetrate beyond the fortifications which were holding up the 2nd Division and turned their fire in that direction. A mobile 155 was brought up and added its powerful destructive force to that already in action, and under these combined pressures the fortifications at the road junction northwest of Arenberg, against which the 2nd Division had been hurling its strength, began to crumble.

On the 16th December our C.T. 395 launched out in another attack and captured Arenberg. There they held up temporarily to wait for the 2nd Division to come abreast of them. The 2nd Division captured the road junction and began to push ahead.⁷

It looked as though our long fight was at last to bear fruit. We had broken through the outer crust defenses, and hopes rode high that with this initial crack in the defenses a complete break-through would soon occur. That morning, while Combat Team 395 attacked and captured Arenberg, the great winter offensive, hurled by the Nazi as a last-gasp surprise operation, hit us! That is when Mars, the God of War, must have roared with laughter.

The scale of the attack was at first underestimated. Early on the morning of the 16th December, when this winter offensive started, our troops attacking into the Siegfried Line were permitted to continue their operation. We thought the German attack was a diversionary operation to draw reserves from the break-through front and to slow down our offensive. As the day wore on, it became more and more evident that the initial estimate was wrong, and our attack was called off.

How our troops succeeded in extricating themselves from the deep pocket in which they were caught, and their actions in subsequent days during that period in helping stem the German avalanche, was recounted in the preceding chapters.

Many charges have been hurled back and forth on the matter of this surprise attack. Our intelligence (G-2) personnel were condemned. Their inefficiency was held up for ridicule and they have rebutted with long-winded explanations that they had warned that such an attack was possible.

⁷ The 2nd Div. called the road junction "Heartbreak Corner." After their hard fight to capture it they had to give it up when they withdrew. It was enough to break anyone's heart.

It matters little who was right or wrong or who was at fault. The fact remains that this attack, staged by the V Corps, was launched at the direction of and with the knowledge and consent of all higher headquarters and was entered into with "eyes open." No one, commander or staff intelligence officer, would have permitted our attack into the Siegfried Line to be launched had any definite knowledge of the then impending German winter offensive been known.

CHAPTER VI

The North Shoulder of the Bulge

JANUARY 1945

FOR THE MEN of the 99th Division, most of the month of January was one of licking its wounds, repairing the damage done, re-equipping, receiving replacements, holding the front assigned on the "Hot Corner," conducting patrols into the enemy's lines, staging demonstrations against the enemy and trying to make life as bearable as possible on open, wind-swept Elsenborn Ridge.

Fighting the weather was just as bad if not worse than fighting the enemy. Veterans of World War I remember the oppressive life of mud and trenches and deep dugouts experienced at that time. That was bad—this was worse! Misery loves company, and even the company of trench life was denied our men. One-man and two-man fox-holes predominated. Here and there a cramped trench covered with logs for overhead protection for a battalion command post, machine gun emplacement or an aid station had to suffice for the deep dugouts of those earlier days.

Truly, day by day men enlarged their cramped protective shelters in this flinty hard and frozen ground, but these shelters never became anything more than glorified fox-holes.

As day after day in this cold, snow covered and dismal Ardennes rolled by, more and more replacements were received. The pitiful remnants of our fighting units began to grow big again. The internal fire of the survivors rapidly spread to the newcomers, to inspire them with the same high ideals, determination and fighting courage that those who had gone before them had left behind. The Division began to pulsate with full life, and our men looked forward eagerly to taking up the offensive so that they could repay the enemy for the many atrocities their comrades had suffered at his hands. Deep hatreds had been engendered which only bloodletting could alleviate.

Feelings ran high. The new men were rapidly indoctrinated. As one doughboy shooting the breeze put it, "Look around and see all the new faces!" New faces, yes, there were many of them in the fighting infantry battalions, but all stamped with the same determined American "do-or-die" expression.

The simple statement of "conducting patrols" and "staging demonstrations" is cold and meaningless. When it is realized that two and sometimes four patrols from each front line battalion penetrated the enemy's position each day, almost every one ending in a fire fight, that each patrol had to be carefully co-ordinated, organized and worked out in detail as to route in and out, objective, supporting fire, etc., etc., it may be better understood that the front line troops were not just sitting in their fox-holes fighting the weather. It was a quiet front as far as large scale operations were concerned, but by no means quiet for those taking part in the holding of that front. We lost one entire platoon in such an operation. It just disappeared. No word, no message—radio or otherwise—no sound; they evaporated. Occasionally a patrol was able to sneak in, bring out prisoners and get back again without a fight, but that was most unusual. It was always hazardous, dangerous duty.

We had to know what the enemy was doing, what units faced us, and so forth—we had to take prisoners to get the answers to these questions. This task of capturing and bringing in prisoners was rugged, hazardous work. Our defensive position was almost ideal, but that very condition—a wide open field of fire in front of our lines—which made it an ideal defensive position, operated against us in this type of work. The enemy also had a clear view of our location—he could see our patrols when they left our lines, and keep them under observation. Great care and concealment in going and coming had to be practiced. The ever present hip-deep snow but added to this danger.

The following brief story as told by Staff Sergeant Clifford E. McDaniel (Seiling, Okla.), one of the non-commissioned officers of a patrol, illustrates the elements of ruggedness and danger and ever-present death while on such a mission:

"Our 3rd Platoon of Company L 394th Infantry was reinforced by a machine gun squad of Company M 394th and we left our lines at 0800 15 January '45. By 1030 we had penetrated 600 yards into the enemy lines. We took about eight prisoners. It was tough going through the hip-deep snow and over the open, windswept, barren hills. As we started to return we came under heavy enemy fire from both flanks and from the front. My squad was placed in a semi-circle covering the withdrawal of the others. Private Bray was placed in charge of the prisoners and told to get them back to our lines. We had a fight to the finish! Remaining with me to the end were Arnold

Owens (North Carolina), Mario Muccarione (Ohio), Erwin Snyder (Kansas), Allen Ingraham (Virginia), Private Pinckney (Rock Tavern, N.Y.) and Keith L. Mounce, our radio operator. Lieutenant Comfort and Staff Sergeant Bosch who were in charge were both killed in action with about twenty others. Bray got the prisoners back at the point of a knife, his rifle having been shattered by a bullet. In my squad only three of us were left, and we were all badly wounded. We were captured—Pinckney, Ingraham and I! Later a German doctor amputated my leg because infection had set in. I was liberated at Linz, Germany, when the 'Checkerboarders' came in. The other two men were liberated later."

That is the brief story of one of our several thousand unsung heroes—a "Battle Baby." Such was the spirit of our men—"do or die." Another experience of one of our men, Private Charles H. F. Hehmeyer (Keokuk, Iowa) did not end as tragically, and is recounted to illustrate again that ever present element of surprise in patrolling

"He was 300 yards ahead of his 394th Infantry patrol, threading his way carefully through a dense woods, when without warning he came upon two Jerries. Hehmeyer and the two Germans bolted for cover behind trees, and the latter beckoned to the American to come out and surrender.

"Thinking fast, Hehmeyer explained in his best German (which was very good) that he was one of THEM—garbed in American togs and patrolling U.S. lines. He gave 'em hell for interfering! He got away with it."

Such was the daily life and experience of our men on this at present relatively inactive front. It wasn't all just watchful waiting.

Soon after it happened, news of the Ardennes offensive by Von Rundstedt made headlines in the newspapers back home. The *Stars and Stripes* published many articles on the subject. The actions and heroic deeds of various units engaged in the operation were praised and took up all the space in print and most of the time on the radio. But—NOT ONE WORD was released on the terrific battle put up by the 99th Infantry Division. Why?

This silence began to have a bad effect on the morale of our men patiently occupying their fox-holes on Elsenborn Ridge and beating back the enemy. They knew that they had been forced to give ground, but at the same time they had successfully warded off the initial fanatical attacks of the superior enemy force, had slowed down their steam-roller action, forced the Nazi machine to bounce off to the

south, denied him the important roads he needed, and—most of all—had inflicted such heavy casualties on the enemy that it knocked out the German schedule of advance by two full days or more. Thereafter they sat on the “Hot Corner” and kept knocking down Jerry attacks. In return for all this, not one word of public praise. Letters our men received from back home indicated that the people in the States did not know that the 99th Infantry Division was involved in this battle. What was wrong?

Patience—hurry-up-and-wait training—that element of soldierly life which is learned early in the army, finally came to an end. The “Why?” and “What is wrong?” had to be answered. It came out. The 99th was on the Secret List! It had been on that list all the time and therefore received no publicity. Being on the Secret List was always essential until a unit became engaged with the enemy. Thereafter it could always be safely assumed that the enemy had knowledge of the location of that unit. Someone had failed to recognize the fact that the 99th Division had been engaged with the enemy since the 9th November and moreover had during the first few days of the Von Rundstedt drive destroyed over 4000 Germans and sixty tanks—besides the Division had lost a lot of men. The Germans knew the 99th was in combat and had a healthy respect for us, but apparently some of our own people did not.

Finally it was conceded. The first news release on the 99th was permitted about 3 January 1945. Morale picked up after that, and Checkerboarders, nicknamed the “Battle Babies,”¹ began to feel that they no longer were forgotten men.

Newcomers to the Division were welcomed in rear areas and given as much battle “savvy” as limited time permitted. Each man was then taken in charge by an experienced buddy to go forward to a position on the ridge.

The order I had published and read to every man who joined during that period marks well the attitude of the entire Division. It read:

TO ALL NEW MEMBERS OF THE 99th DIVISION

I want to assure you of a warm and hearty welcome to the 99th Infantry Division. The old soldiers of the 99th are glad to have you, their new comrades in arms, to fight side by side with them to the

¹ U.P. War Correspondent John McDermott dubbed the 99th Inf. Div. the “Battle Babies” in his first release of the division’s action in the Battle of the Bulge.

complete destruction of the enemy. This is our goal, and don't think for a moment that Jerry doesn't know it!

We are all very proud of this division, its record and its achievements. We're fighting a hard fight and we're winning it. Now you have joined us to carry on the fight with us. You know you're welcome!

The 99th is YOUR outfit from this moment forward, Soldier! Be proud of her and make her proud of you! No matter what the job they give us to do, we'll do it together. Yes, we'll do it now, we'll do it right; and we'll never quit 'til it's done!

Welcome, Soldier! God speed your efforts through every day and night 'til this war is won.

WALTER E. LAUER
Major General U.S. Army
Commanding

A deep-down, burning desire had been seared into the very soul of each individual. Oh, for the day to come to get out of fox-holes and close with the enemy in force! Ever since we had taken over this front, with the exception of the troops involved for about three days attacking into the Siegfried Line, we had had to sit in observation or defend against superior numbers of the enemy. Yes, we had fought and counterattacked, we had stopped the Germans—but that was not the same as taking part in an attack in which our side might be a bit stronger and could “dish it out” for a change, and not be on the receiving end. We hoped and prayed that that day would come. Our wish was fulfilled—sooner than we expected.

The blows of the Third Army from the south and of the First Army from the east, hammering the “Bulge” out flat against the steel anvil of Elsenborn Ridge, the north shoulder of the “Bulge,” were gaining weight and momentum.

The First Army² started its relentless attacks on the 3rd January. Every day from then on the “Bulge” was flattened and compressed more and more. In spite of cloudy winter weather which curtailed air support, in spite of slippery mud and icy roads, substantial advances were made every day.

By January 9 the enemy appeared to be withdrawing from the western portion of the Ardennes salient, leaving infantry elements to delay while his armor moved to the east.

By January 17 the advance had progressed to such an extent that our American First Army, which on the 21st December had been

² See Official Report First Army, Vol. I, Sec. B, p. 130.

placed under the British 21st Army Group of Montgomery, reverted again to the U.S. 12th Army Group under Bradley.

By the 21st January it was evident that the enemy was methodically withdrawing from the Ardennes—a major operation which he conducted with skill and dogged fighting. At no point had a breakthrough been achieved by our troops, nor had any major formation of the enemy been cut off—a fact for which the enemy had bad weather to thank.

On the 22nd January, patrols sent out by our troops from the “Hot Corner” penetrated for 1000 yards or more with but light contact. Dugouts and organized positions near Wirtzfeld, in front of the 2nd Division, were found abandoned.

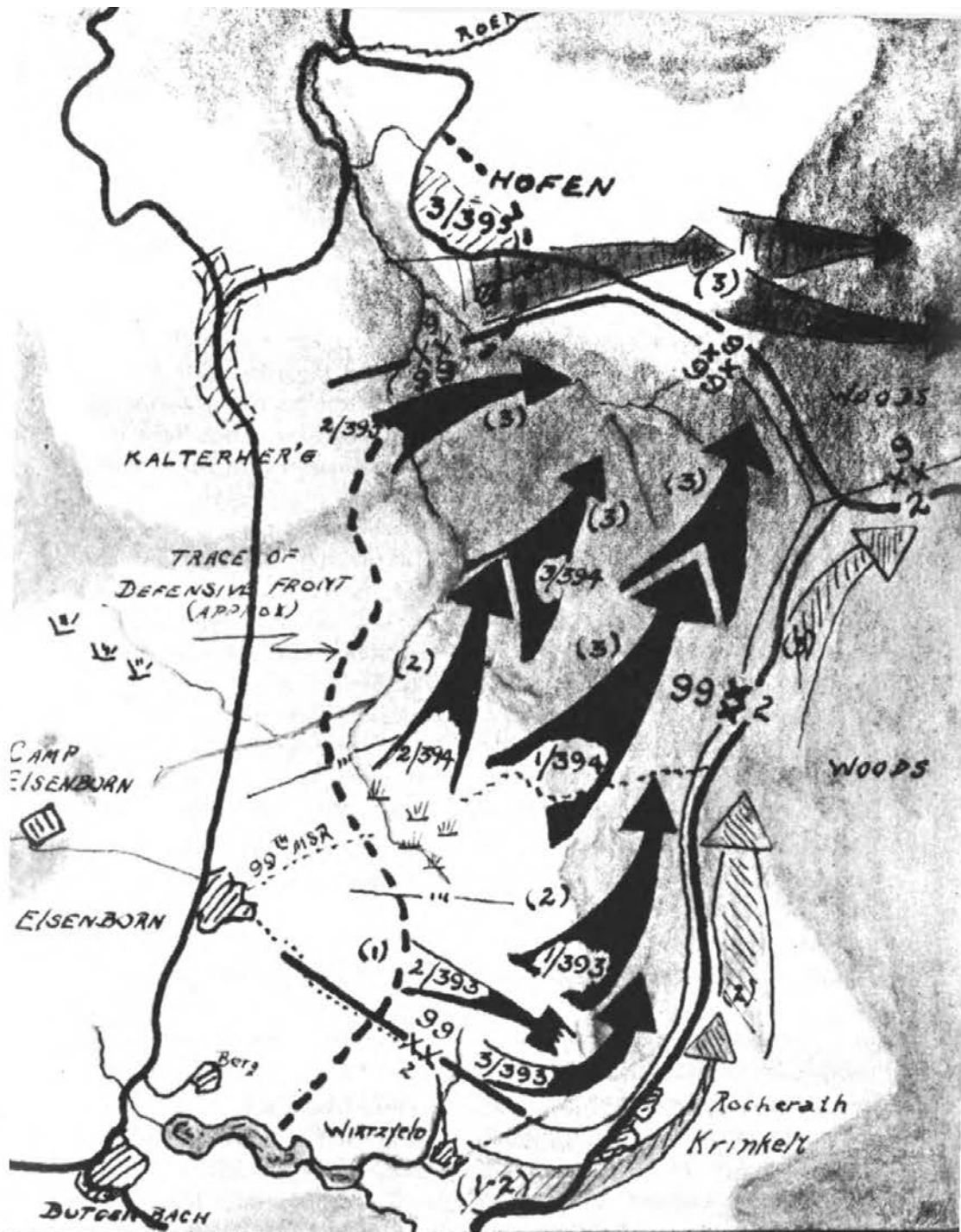
By the 24th January the “Bulge” had been flattened out to such an extent that our American troops advancing south of us had brought their lines practically abreast of the positions we held on Elsenborn Ridge. D Day and H Hour was rapidly approaching—that longed-for day when the men of the 99th could get out of their fox-holes and lash out at the enemy in a great assault.

The 99th Division adjusted its boundary with the 9th Division once again, this time taking over a greater portion of the front in preparation for the Big Day. Soon the 99th's front extended from south of Elsenborn to Kalterherberg. The 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry, with the 99th Reconnaissance Troop attached, still occupied its position around Hofen but continued to operate under the 9th Division.

All preparations for the big attack were completed. Like a tiger crouching, ready for the spring, getting its feet set better and surer, anxiously awaiting the exact moment to hurtle out in a death-grapple struggle, so the units of the 99th prepared in every detail and awaited the longed-for moment.

Further minor adjustments were made in the boundaries between the 99th and 9th Division on the north, and the 99th and 2nd Division on the south. These areas of responsibility were so drawn that the 99th Division would be pinched out after the attack had passed through the enemy-held territory of the Monschau Forest in the direction of the Roer River dam area. (See map p. 115.)

On the 28th January the attack started down south with the XVIII Airborne Corps using the 1st Division and the 82nd Airborne Division to spearhead its drive. On the 29th January Bullingen was recaptured, and on the 30th our entire V Corps jumped off.



ELSENORN OFFENSIVE

30 Jan-1 Feb '45

In black bitter cold and biting winds of night the attack was launched across open fields of waist deep snow against the enemy entrenched in the wooded area west of Rocherath. The enemy's grip on the critical corner was finally broken and the 99th surged cross-country over the snow covered icy hills and gullies and through the dense woods to completely clear the pocket.

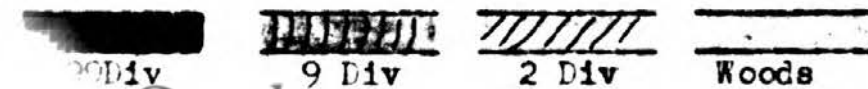
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On our right flank the 2nd Division quickly overran Wirtzfeld and then began to swing through Krinkelt and Rocherath to change its direction of attack to the north. To support this attack and to protect the left flank of the 2nd Division, the 99th started its offensive.

The initial attack was launched by the 393rd Infantry in an assault straight across the open fields of the front it had been holding. Its objective was the wooded corner around which the 2nd Division had to turn in its drive to the north. Seizing this corner would reduce resistance in front of the 2nd Division and at the same time protect its left flank.

To cross this dangerous, wide-open ground, the advance had to be made stealthily and under cover of darkness. Starting out at 3:00 o'clock on the morning of the 30th January, the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry began quietly to plow through the waist-deep snow and buck the bitter, wind-driven clouds of snow which filled the air. It was more difficult and took longer than planned. Just before daylight the battalion arrived in front of the woods in which the enemy was located and launched its attack. It failed! Heavy enemy fire pinned the troops down in the deep snow and immobilized them.

In spite of the heavy concentrations of artillery fire which we poured into that German position, in spite of every heroic effort to break the battalion loose, the troops remained pinned down. The hostile position on the edge of the woods, which had excellent fields of fire and perfect observation, could not be shaken. The 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry remained helplessly pinned down in the deep snow, in the open, throughout the day.

That evening the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry was committed to the attack. Under cover of darkness it plowed its way through the deep snow to a point near the woods opposite the 2nd Battalion. That very movement alone was one which called upon every ounce of physical energy and all the military skill of every member of the battalion. To maintain silence and direction while moving over the open fields in dark of night and complete blackout, with men dropping into deep snow pits and guides blinded by clouds of wind-swept snow, to finally come out at the desired point without disclosing the movement to the enemy was no mean accomplishment in itself.

At 2:00 o'clock the morning of the 31st January, in black darkness, blinding snow flurries and the damp, congealing cold typical of the Ardennes, the two battalions launched a coordinated attack. It succeeded! They broke into the woods and then proceeded method-

ically to clean up the enemy strong points which had held up their advance.

Again deep snow, fallen trees, mines, booby traps and determined rear guard action by small groups of the enemy forced our men down to a slow but methodical advance. Greater speed was essential. The 2nd Battalion was physically exhausted after its two days of fighting and isolation in the deep snow. It was relieved by the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry which carried on the attack to the north abreast of the 2nd Division.

While the 1st Battalion 393rd started its drive to the north, the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry launched an attack to the north from its front to drive the enemy out of the rough ground of the Monschau Forest area.

This battalion jumped off early in the morning on the 31st January in a swirling snow storm.³ It succeeded in crossing the open ground to its immediate front, driving in the enemy outposts and entering the woods without serious resistance. There its forward progress was halted by enemy fire which pinned down the two leading companies, E and F. Holding these positions and continuing to demonstrate against the enemy to fix his attention, the battalion maneuvered its support company (Company G) in a wide circle to the left to cut in behind the enemy. In the words of the battalion commander, "Moving through heavy woods, staying on the slope of a ridge, Company G ran into many antipersonnel mines suspended from the trees with trip wires waist high that had apparently been placed there very recently. The 1st Platoon of G Company lashed out in a sudden attack, destroying several machine gun nests and many German soldiers unexpectedly encountered, the action being so severe that hand-to-hand combat and grenades played a major part in this phase. The remainder of the company left the 1st Platoon and pushed ahead . . . they moved headlong into an enemy force of about 200 men who were moving up to counterattack our forces. Due to the element of surprise and to the aggressiveness of our men, this enemy force was routed,⁴ suffering heavy casualties." The backbone

³This account is based on the report of Lieut. Col. Robert L. Kriz, battalion commander (Grand Island, Neb.).

⁴Lieut. Col. Kriz reports: "Observation of the battleground after the action proved the severity of the fight. Our gallant dead were lying among the German dead. Panic of the Germans was shown by their abandoning of equipment, their dead and their aid stations. It was also obvious that our artillery had played an important role in making the attack successful."



A view of the area in front of the 393rd on Elsenborn Ridge. The woods they attacked are seen in the distance—upper left.

(Courtesy 393rd History.)



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE
SAME AREA

The open snow-covered field had to be crossed to close with the enemy.

*(Courtesy Sgt. J. W. Brown,
Ontario, Ore.)*



Two views of the woods after our men passed through them. Note denseness and trees slashed down by artillery fire.

(Courtesy Chaplain Neighbours, Santa Monica, Calif.)

of the resistance in that area was wiped out, and the battalion was able to move forward thereafter to seize its assigned objectives.

The 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry, which had been moved up to Kalterherberg in preparation for its attack, jumped off the morning of the 1st February in a swift drive almost due east. It was able to seize quickly its assigned objectives and to occupy and hold the high ground on the right of the 9th Division. This provided the 9th Division the flank protection it required.

The small triangle of area far to the northeast at the junction of the 9th and 2nd Division boundaries still remained to be cleared.

A word must be said about the terrain of this triangle of area. There were no roads. A trail which ran generally northeast from Elsenborn toward the Krinkelt-Germund Road crossed over a broad marsh which had no bottom. It was a summer trail. We scooped a road of a sort out of the snow and mud from Elsenborn to this marsh, but there it stopped. Beyond the marsh the ground rose in a series of short, steep hills to an irregular plateau which was heavily wooded. Beyond the marsh the only means of transportation was afoot. Everything the troops carried—machine guns, mortars, rations, ammunition and all the other combat equipment—had to be hand carried. A few Weasels (light, full-track vehicles) were available for supply and evacuation. Frequently even these Weasels became stuck, for they could not propel themselves over the short, steep snow and ice covered hills. The only dependable way of getting forward was afoot.

The area was thickly strewn with anti-personnel mines, which, covered by the snow, became hard to detect. Routes were swept by mine-detector teams, and columns in single file carefully followed these marked routes. Such a route through snow two feet deep, tramped over by marching feet, soon became a glazed, icy, uneven path more difficult to traverse than a tight rope. To step off the trail was to court disaster, as happened several times to those who sought to pick out an easier route. The short, steep hills became major obstacles to climb, like climbing up or down the face of a glacier.

When it is remembered that our men had to carry all their equipment by hand, and thus loaded, had to manipulate these treacherous routes, it can be readily understood that progress was slow—physically exhausting and heartbreakingly slow—to the fighting men who were anxious to keep close to the enemy. To the evacuation and supply services⁵ it was a nightmare of an operation.

⁵ Evacuation in deep snowdrifts was effectively accomplished by coordination



EVACUATION
From Ski-Sled or
Hand-Carry
to
WEASEL
to
LITTER-JEEP
to
AMBULANCE
(393rd History.)



It now became evident why the Germans had never attempted any large scale attacks on the front between Elsenborn and Kalterherberg during the period that our troops defended the north shoulder of the "Bulge." It was bad terrain, just too difficult to use.

The troops of the 99th Division so far engaged were physically near the point of collapse, and therefore early on February 1, the 394th Infantry passed its 3rd Battalion through its 2nd Battalion to continue the drive to the north. The 3rd Battalion met no opposition other than anti-personnel mines, rough terrain and a few fleeing rear guards. It soon sat on its final objectives.

On the right flank, the 393rd Infantry had exhausted itself in the heavy going it had encountered. That area was filled with anti-personnel mines, booby traps and a dense woods which had been slashed down by our artillery fire. Many fallen trees which had to be crawled over were found mined, and branches and undergrowth which had to be pushed aside as men advanced through these woods were booby-trapped. Progress along this flank was not as fast as had been planned, and the 2nd Division, advancing along the Krinkelt-Germund Road, was getting ahead of our left flank protection.

To ease this situation, the 1st Battalion 394th Infantry, which had been held in reserve, was committed to the attack. Moving north-east from its position on Elsenborn Ridge, it cut in ahead of the 393rd Infantry and then pushed ahead rapidly. (See map p. 115.) It drove straight north to the Division's final objective, the triangle of area at the junction of the 9th and 2nd Divisions. Toward the end of that day it cleared that area and established contact with the 9th and 2nd Divisions. The 99th Division had again accomplished its mission.

As each 99th unit accomplished its part of the general mission, it was ordered back to an assembly area near Elsenborn or Kalterherberg. The exhausted troops came stumbling back over the slippery, icy trails. Tired, cold, completely worn out, they tumbled into their old fox-holes on Elsenborn Ridge or into whatever shelter they found—too numb to be glad to be living, too dead to care!

The defense of Elsenborn Ridge was ended. The Boche had been driven out, and for the first time in 85 days (since 9 November) the 99th Division was out of immediate contact with the enemy.

between two-man operated ski-sleds and a "Weasel." Distances of 3000 yards from the firing line to a forward collecting point were covered in this way. Traversable roads from the forward collecting point to battalion aid stations were covered by litter-Jeep. In one case the battlefield was cleared of 82 casualties this way between 0700 and 1500 hours although snowdrifts were high and no roads or trails existed.

CHAPTER VII

Citations

IT WAS AN UNPLANNED but fitting climax that the battalion which had withstood every German effort to dislodge it from its positions on the extreme right flank of the Division during the first fanatical drives of the German *Wehrmacht* in December should have been the one selected to complete sweeping out the last hostile resistance on the 99th Division front.

This heroic battalion, the 1st Battalion 394th Infantry, won for itself the coveted Distinguished Unit Badge—the Presidential Citation. The order announcing this award follows:

GENERAL ORDERS)

No. 58)

WAR DEPARTMENT

Washington 25, D.C., 19 July 1945

BATTLE HONORS—Citation of Units———VII

VII—BATTLE HONORS.—As authorized by Executive Order 9396 (sec 1, WD Bul. 22, 1943), superseding Executive Order 9075 (Sec. III, WD Bul. 11, 1942), citation of the following units in the general orders indicated are confirmed under the provision of section IV, WD Circular 333, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction:

4. The 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry Regiment, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 16 to 18 December 1944 in Germany and Belgium. The German's Ardennes offensive was spearheaded directly at the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry Regiment, which was defending a front of 3,500 yards and protecting the right flank of the 99th Infantry Division. The enemy launched its initial attack against the 1st Battalion with an unprecedented artillery concentration lasting approximately 2 hours, followed by an attack of six battalions of Infantry, supported by tanks, dive bombers, flame throwers, and rockets. For 2 days and nights the battalion was under intense small-arms fire and continuous artillery concentrations, with little food and water, and no hope of replenishing a rapidly dwindling supply of ammunition. Knowing that reserves were unavailable, the men of the battalion, with indomitable spirit and confidence, repeatedly beat back the superior numbers of the enemy forces coming at them from the front, flanks and rear. Many times the men rose out of their fox holes to meet the enemy in fierce hand-to-

hand combat. Outnumbered six to one they inflicted extremely heavy casualties upon the enemy. By their tenacious stand, the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry Regiment, prevented the enemy from penetrating the right flank of an adjacent division, and permitted other friendly forces to reinforce the sector. The unflinching courage and devotion to duty displayed by the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry



THE 1st BATTALION 394th INFANTRY IS HONORED

Presentation of the Presidential Citation near Pauluszell, Germany, near the Inn River, 5 May 1945.



Men of the 3rd En 395th Inf- the Rock of Hofen-await presentati ceremony of the Presidential Citation-Gohr,Germany,7 Mar 45

(US ARMY PHOTO)



A proud moment for the 3rd En 395th Inf- Gohr,Germany,7 Mar 45 (US ARMY PHOTO)

Presentation of the Presidential Citation
 On the platform(a 2 1/2 T Truck) left to right Lt Col James Callagher
 Regimental Commander,decorating a Company Guiddon with the 'Blue Streamer'-the G.
 Col McClernand Butler C.O. 3rd En 395- Capt F.X.Callagher Aide-de-camp and Lt
 Duncan,Div G-1. Col Eutler holds a box full of the individual ribbons for his

standing performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 16 to 19 December 1944, near Hofen, Germany. During the German offensive in the Ardennes, the *3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment*, was assigned the mission of holding the Monschau-Eupen-Liege Road. For 4 successive days the battalion held this sector against combined German tank and infantry attacks, launched with fanatical determination and supported by heavy artillery. No reserves were available to the battalion and the situation was desperate. Disregarding personal safety and without rest, the men fought vigorously to hold their positions against hostile penetrations. On at least six different occasions the battalion was forced to place artillery concentrations dangerously close to its own positions in order to repulse penetrations and restore its lines. On other occasions, men came out of their fixed defenses and engaged in desperate hand-to-hand fighting in order to repel enemy assault teams. The enemy artillery was so intense that communications were generally out. The men carried out missions without orders when their positions were penetrated or infiltrated. They killed Germans coming at them from the front, flanks, and rear. Outnumbered five to one, they inflicted casualties in the ratio of 18 to 1. With ammunition supplies dwindling rapidly, the men obtained German weapons and utilized ammunition obtained from casualties to drive off the persistent foe. Despite fatigue, constant enemy shelling, and ever increasing enemy pressure, the *3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment*, prevented the German break-through from extending to the Monschau area, guarded a 6,000-yard front, and destroyed 75 percent of three German Infantry regiments. The courage and devotion to duty displayed by members of the *3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment*, in the face of overwhelming odds, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

G. C. MARSHALL
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO
Major General
The Adjutant General

The entire Division had duplicated the record of these two heroic battalions, not only in spirit but in fact! During those hectic days of December through January and culminating on the 1st February 1945, when the last vestiges of German resistance were eliminated from its front, every element of the Division had covered itself with glory. Every unit should have been awarded the Presidential Citation, every unit had earned it. Unfortunately, however, many elements combined to defeat such action, not least among which was the loss in combat of the commanders concerned who could report in person

on the deeds performed, and the urgent press of the most important kind of business, namely, fighting the war to a successful conclusion. To these fighting men at that time the seeking of reward and recognition for deeds performed could come later—but then it was too late.

The Belgian Government, in grateful recognition for the heroic action of the 99th Infantry Division when it prevented the German horde from sweeping through that country, honored the entire Division and its attached units with its special badge, the "Fourragere 1940." The decree, issued by Prince Charles, Regent of the Kingdom of Belgium, follows:

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

Decree No. 2509 of the 17th of June 1946

CHARLES, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom

On the proposition of the Minister of the National Defense we decided and decide:

The 99th Infantry Division of the US Army and the attached units including:

535 AAA AW Bn (Mobile)
 99th Order of Battle Team
 130th Interrogation of POW Team
 131st Interrogation of POW Team
 448th Military Intelligence Interpreter Team
 99th CIC Det . . . 99th Rcn Troop
 801st TD Bn (Self-propelled)

(From 19 November 44 to 16 Dec 44 and from 16 Dec 44 to 3 Feb 45) are cited twice to the Order of the Belgian Army with attribution of the Fourrageres 1940¹ for

1st Citation: "During the period from the 8th of November to the 16th of December 1944, the Division and attached units entered into action along the border of the canton of Malmedy. During that period, the division endured the test of combat and developed the technique which proved itself in the campaign of the Ardennes. An offensive directed against the Siegfried Line met with success, when the great German Offensive was launched on the morning of the 16th of December 1944."

2d Citation: "During the period of the 16th December 1944 to the 20th February 1945, the Division and Attached units showed a stoical

¹ The Fourrageres 1940 was created by Decree No. 300 of Mar. 26, 1945, by Charles, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom, to honor, in a visible and permanent manner, the bravery which certain units of the army exhibited during the war. The Fourrageres 1940 is braided in the colors of the ribbon of the Croix de Guerre 1940 and is worn by all officers and troops as part of the uniform. Holders of the Fourrageres 1940 may, when in civilian clothes, wear a miniature of the decoration in the buttonhole.

determination and an extraordinary heroism in facing, checking and finally pushing back the German offensive of the Ardennes. The Division took a defensive position on the Elsenborn crest and checked all the enemy attacks under extremely difficult climatic conditions until the 30th January 1945 when the Division was again able to take the offensive."

The Minister of the National Defense is in charge of the execution of the present decree.

Given at Bruxelles on the 17th of June 46

/s/ CHARLES

/s/ DE FRAITEUR

Praise, citation and decoration notwithstanding, the greatest reward remains deeply scored in the heart of each member of the Division who participated in the actions of those days—the soldier's satisfaction with a job well done, the approval of his comrades.

CHAPTER VIII

Out and In and Out

FEBRUARY 1944

THE FINAL DRIVE to clear all hostile resistance from the triangular area allotted the Division was completed on the 1st February. Our mission was accomplished late that afternoon when the advance of the 9th and 2nd Divisions met at the apex of the triangular area and pinched out the 1st Battalion 394th Infantry and the Division.

In the practical application of the science of warfare, combat troops can always advance another yard and fire another shot, no matter how exhausted or weak they may be. Soldiers of the Checkerboard Division had proved that axiom repeatedly during the past three months, and now they were called upon to prove it once again. A few hours' rest and they were on the go once more.

On the 2nd February, while some of our combat troops were still marching into Elsenborn and Kalterherberg after accomplishing their missions, the 99th Division was attached to the XVIII Airborne Corps, and our reconstituted Combat Team 395,¹ reinforced, was alerted to move out motorized on short notice.

That day several of our units, while awaiting the next move, policed² the area over which they had fought. They collected the dead and any equipment they could find. As an example, the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry, in scouring the area it had fought over on the 31st January, collected and piled up 108 dead Nazis. Members of the 395th Infantry were able to get into the town of Krinkelt, which had previously been their headquarters, and recover their Regimental Colors which had been left in a box at their old command post site in December. The box was discovered, covered with snow and untouched by the Nazi. Members of the Division intelligence section returned to the town of Bullingen, out of which they had been driven on the 17th December, and recovered many of their records. The

¹ C.T. 395, now under Lieut. Col. James S. Gallagher (Latrobe, Pa.) consisted of the entire 395th Inf. Regt. plus 924th F.A. Bn., Co. C 750th Tk. Bn., Co. A 644th T.D. Bn., and Co. C 324th Medical Bn.

² Police: An army term meaning to clean or place in order.

records were intact.³ Some had been scattered over the floor of the room in which they had had their office, but when collected, none were lost. The bodies of many of our own dead, previously reported missing in combat, were recovered and brought back for burial in the cemetery at Henri-Chapelle. It was sad business, much of this policing of the battlefield.

Early on the 3rd February, Combat Team 395 departed to join the 1st Division of the XVIII Airborne Corps fighting in the Siegfried defenses northeast of Krinkelt, and command groups of the 393rd and 394th Infantry Regiments were sent south on a reconnaissance of the areas they were to take over. Late the previous night at a conference at XVIII Corps headquarters (Maj. Gen. Matt Ridgeway commanding), instructions had been issued for the 99th Division to take over the entire XVIII Corps front as quickly as possible.

On the 4th February, Combat Team 395, operating under the 1st Division, launched an attack and drove eastward about 3000 yards against scattered resistance to seize Hill 628 and the commanding ridge in the direction of the town of Hellenthal. As luck would have it, Combat Team 395 found itself operating in the same area in which it had been attacking on the 16th December, when its attack was called off because of the great German winter offensive.

That day, too, the remainder of the Division⁴ began moving south through the little towns of Butgenbach, Bullingen, Murringen, Losheimgraben and Hunningen to relieve elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps. These little Belgian towns in which our men had fought so bitterly during the opening days of the Nazi drive in December had been recaptured by American troops and were all free again.

There they stood, these little towns, battered and destroyed. Fought over twice, little remained of their quaintness. Roofless houses, pulverized buildings, rubble-filled streets, overturned guns,

³ The fact that records of this sort were untouched by the Germans is indicative of the over-emphasis placed on their efficiency.

⁴ During February the 99th Div. was composed of the following units:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 99th Inf. Div.—organic units (see p. 5) | 592nd F.A. Bn. 5-8 Feb. |
| Attached: | 750th Tk. Bn. -5 Feb. (detached) |
| 535th A.A.A. Bn. (A.W.) (M.) | 644th T.D. Bn. -5 Feb. (detached) |
| 801st T.D. Bn. (less Cos. A and B, detached 3 Feb.) | 814th T.D. Bn. (less Co. B) 8-13 Feb. |
| 424th Inf. Regt. (with Co. C 81st Eng. Bn. attached) 5-8 Feb. | 817th T.D. Bn. (T.) 13-22 Feb. |
| 591st F.A. Bn. 5-8 Feb. | 629th T.D. Bn. (S.P.) 22- Feb. |
| | 786th Tk. Bn. 23- Feb. |

smashed vehicles, dead horses and demolished tanks—this was the stark picture they presented of the destruction of war. It was not a pleasant sight.

The next day the men of the 99th began to replace the front line units of the XVIII Airborne Corps. The 393rd Infantry Regiment⁵ relieved the 18th Infantry of the 1st Division, the 394th Infantry Regiment relieved the entire 82nd Airborne Division, and the 395th Infantry Regiment relieved the 26th Infantry of the 1st Division and then reverted back to the control of the 99th Division.

The chances of war had brought about a situation which gave our men a peculiar satisfaction. The 393rd Infantry, as it took over its front, found itself occupying the very fortifications it had gazed upon so enviously from cold, wet fox-holes during November and early December. The 394th Infantry found itself moving into some of the very pill-boxes on the Siegfried Line it had opposed in November and December. These men found to their great disgust that the squad shelters they had erected in the woods and on which they had sweated so many hours of manual labor had been used by the Germans as horse stables. The floors were carpeted with a foot of manure. Such is war!

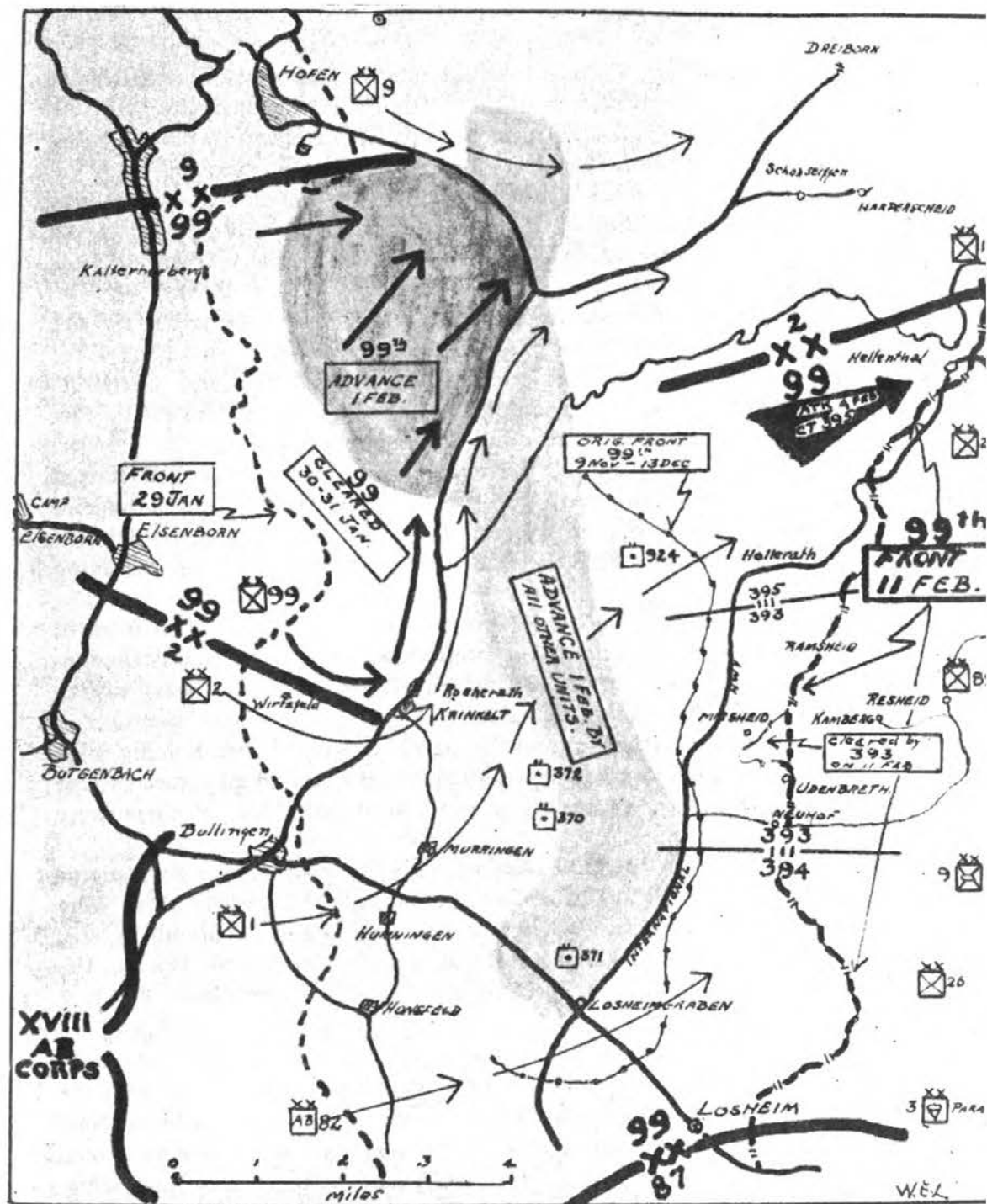
On the 5th February, the 99th Division took over the entire front of the XVIII Airborne Corps and again came back under the control of the V Corps. Little fighting took place. Regiments maintained and improved their defensive positions and patrolled to the front and flanks. No general offensive was planned for this area. The division was in contact with the 2nd Division on the north and the 87th Division on the south, and that was about all.

Fighting men of the 99th soon became fed up with this sitting and watchful waiting in the rain and mud, of which they had had their fill. They had had a taste of the offensive and they wanted more—so they started to make life miserable for the Jerries.

A small salient projected into the line held by the 393rd Infantry just north of Udenbreth, a small border town. It was caused by three large pill-boxes still held by the enemy. The 393rd decided to knock out these forts and straighten out its line.

After a preparation of machine gun, artillery and three inch gun tank destroyer fire, a reinforced platoon of Company G 393rd Infantry moved forward to attack the key fort at 3:47 P.M. February 7. By 5:00 P.M. the platoon was pinned down on a knoll about fifty yards

⁵ The regiment was now commanded by Col. James K. Woolnough, Inf., U.S.A.



THE 99th DIVISION RELIEVED THE XVIII AB CORPS, 5th FEBRUARY

By an accident of war our units found themselves back on the relative fronts they had held in November and December, 1944, to continue the attack.

short of one of the pill-boxes by mortar fire and a murderous cross-fire from another pill-box north of the one they were attacking. Despite this, however, two men from the 324th Engineers, operating with the platoon, crawled forward in an unsuccessful attempt to blow the key pill-box. Ten minutes later (5:10 P.M.), another platoon from Company G set out to attack the pill-box to the north. It, in turn, was pinned down by fire from several other points. At 6:00 P.M. the entire attack was called off. The fire we were able to bring to bear on the enemy was insufficient.

One prisoner captured reported that our tank destroyer fire resulted in the death of about fifty Germans. Our attacking force had sustained eight casualties, including the platoon leader in charge, who wanted to go out that night and attack again despite the fact that he had a wounded arm and one finger shot off.

There was blood in the eyes of our men. They had started something, and they were going to finish it. Calm, cold judgment, however, prevailed, and so they went to work on a more detailed plan of operation which they put into effect later with more satisfying results.

Farther south, on the right flank of the Division and in front of Company F 394th Infantry, a twenty-man enemy patrol was encountered late that afternoon and driven off after suffering heavy casualties. The enemy was also active.

On a whole, the front was relatively quiet—not much going on—but there was a marked increase in the number of prisoners of war we were getting. Some of them we captured; most of them were deserters.

We began a program of more active patrolling. On dark nights our patrols penetrated the German position as deep as three kilometers and harassed the enemy in Rescheid, Giescheid, Kamberg, etc., tossing grenades and firing into houses occupied by his troops. We made life miserable for the Germans. It had its effect. More P.O.W.s, more deserters!

The attitude of the P.O.W.s being brought in had undergone a change. Arrogance was forgotten; most of them were fed up with the war and all of them tried to curry favor—even the self confessed Nazi party members. Among the more intelligent prisoners, the view of a well educated thirty-six year old German engineer was interesting. He stated,⁶ among other things, "You Americans are not awake yet

⁶ This German's viewpoint on American attitude was interesting then but

to the fundamentals of German thought. You are too friendly and kind hearted, you judge everybody by your own yardstick." That, I suppose, was true, but the men of the 99th had learned their lesson—they knew and had experienced German ruthless sadism and had no use for German soldiers, Jerries, Krauts, Boche, or anything else one called them. They had but one way to handle them all: surrender, give up fast, or be killed!

On February 8th the 424th Infantry⁷ Regiment of the 106th Division, which had suffered heavily in December but had meantime been reconstituted, was brought up to our front and relieved the 394th Infantry in place. The 394th moved out of the roomy pill-boxes they held in the Siegfried Line and assembled near Losheimgraben in Division reserve. That part of our front was then turned over to the 106th Division.

The 393rd Infantry had meanwhile perfected its plans to knock out the pill-boxes which were bothering them. Early on the morning of February 10th a strong combat patrol from Company F started out to attack the key pill-box on which their earlier attempt had failed. Using grenades, satchel charges and flame throwers, the pill-box fell within an hour and a half. Four P.O.W.s were captured, and our men suffered but three slight casualties.

The next morning Company G launched its attack on pill-box number two. This was a strong, three story affair. On the first attempt the attacking platoon was caught in an enemy cross-fire but was able to regroup and advance to within twenty-five yards of the fort. Again they were forced back by heavy machine gun fire from

should be more so today. Extracts from his interrogation follow:

"You [Americans] are being too kind. Everybody in my home town was tired of the war and prayed for the Americans to come and deliver them from it all. . . . My countrymen are all to blame for the war. They will tell you with tears in their eyes that they just had to obey their leaders. Don't be taken in by this attitude and don't let your Army of Occupation be taken in either. . . . In every German there is the inborn spirit of a mercenary trooper of the Middle Ages. They all love uniforms and army life. My old father, now eighty-two, even today straightens his back when he hears a military band go by, his eyes glisten and one can plainly read on his face the ecstasy he is feeling at the reawakening of past military life. . . . The Americans are kindness personified, they give children sweetmeats, civilians are not molested: . . . Germans laugh at this unexpected kindness . . . it is taken as a sign of weakness and degeneracy and the Germans begin to look for excuses for their defeat at the hands of these 'soft' Americans. All Germans from the age of eight to thirty are incurable. Time must elapse for them to die out and in the meantime, exercise rigid control, exterminating the troublemakers and re-educate the tractable."

⁷ Was attached to the 99th Div. on 5 Feb.

an adjacent pill-box. With the aid of medium artillery fire placed on their objective they were able to work their way back again, and engaged in a grenade battle. They then brought in a bazooka team and a flame thrower. The close-in battle raged for five hours. Finally, at 2:40 P.M. that day, the pill-box capitulated after our demolitions and flame throwers made the place too hot for the Krauts. Two officers and thirty-three men surrendered—our casualties were minor.

That day, 11 February, marked the beginning of the relief of the "Battle Babies" from the front line by the 69th Infantry Division. Our 395th Infantry was relieved in position by the 271st Infantry Regiment which had moved up from Waimes, and our 394th Infantry, in turn, left Losheimgraben and moved into Waimes. Our 371st and

Everything Went Wrong at Once But 99th Winds Up With 3 Pillboxes, 77 PWs

WITH 99th INF. DIV.—Knocking out three enemy pillboxes on three successive days, all laterally in line and each supporting the other, and capturing 77 prisoners was accomplished by doughboys of the 393rd Regt.

After a daytime reconnaissance, 2/Lt. Edward J. Lins, of Mazo-
maine, Wis., led a squad of 14 men and a supporting squad of the same number against a pillbox only 100 yards from the jump-off point. His demolition crew already had placed a satchel charge at the door of the pillbox before he drew any fire.

"When things went that well, I knew something would happen," Lins said. The satchel charge failed to detonate. Two more were planted but with no results. He called for his flame thrower. It didn't ignite. In an attempt to make it ignite, most of the fluid was discharged against the door and around the charges.

As a last chance, a white phosphorous grenade was sailed at the door. When it exploded, the flame thrower "juice" fired and in turn detonated the three charges. Within the next minute a white flag appeared and five shaken Jerries surrendered.

Next morning 1/Lt. Sollie E.

Womack, of Centralia, Texas, jumped off with his assault and support squads from the captured pillbox but he received machine gun and sniper fire at H plus 1. There was an exchange of grenades but nothing important happened. Plans were changed. Another platoon was committed to take high ground to the right rear of the pillbox, then to inch down and plant demolitions. Womack, a scout, two BAR men, and four riflemen took up their old positions in front of the German position to draw the enemy's fire.

Things clicked. The charges went off. The flame thrower went into action, and the WP grenades again did the trick. The bag was 16 prisoners, including two officers.

After a night reconnaissance and a good briefing, 2/Lt. Rupert L. Hall, of San Jose, Calif. jumped off at 0630 the next day to take another pillbox. Surprise again was the keynote. Within 10 minutes the support squad was in place to protect the flank and cover the assault squad coming up, the flame thrower was in action, satchel charges were blown, and white phosphorous smoke was drifting from the pillbox. Within the next five minutes 31 prisoners were on their way to the regimental cage.

Probing Mine Field, Blind Leads Blind

WITH 99TH DIV.—Just a case of the lame leading the blind—or vice versa!

Pfc James Dinger, of 26 east South street, Wilkesboro, Pa., a machine gunner with Company M, 394th Infantry Regiment, had been ordered to clear a field of fire for his outfit's guns and he had to go through a minefield to do this. So he and another man obtained one of the company's mine detectors and set off across the infested area. Their buddies watched them. Sud-

denly they rubbed their eyes in astonishment.

There was Dinger proceeding



gingerly ahead of the man with the mine detector carefully directing his route of travel!

924th Field Artillery Battalions were also relieved by the 879th and 880th Field Artillery Battalions of the 69th Division.

The 393rd Infantry was relieved by the 273rd Infantry. Before pulling out, these fighting men of the 393rd who had started something were bound to finish it. They had knocked out pill-boxes numbers one and two—pill-box number three still remained. This time Company I, using one platoon, launched an attack against pill-box number three at 6:45 A.M. This was more than just another attack. It was a crusade⁸ and at the same time a practical demonstration to a number of officers and men of the 69th Division (who attended as observers) on how a job like this was done. The first assault squad, using flame throwers, satchel charges, rocket launchers and grenades, breached the steel door of the pill-box and captured it at 7:00 A.M.—just fifteen minutes after they started. Two officers and twenty-eight men were captured, one German was killed, and our men suffered three casualties from hostile machine gun, mortar and artillery fire.

The next day, 13th February, the 99th Division front was turned over to the 69th Division, and the "Battle Babies" assembled in the area Waimes-Heppenbach-Born. Then began a short period of rehabilitation of troops, maintenance of equipment, clearing mine fields and repairing of roads. The icy weather, followed by thaw and rain, had reduced all the roads in the area to quagmires. These roads nevertheless were essential and had to be kept open to accomodate

⁸ The division slogan—"Do it now, do it right and don't quit until it is done!"—had made the successful accomplishment of this attack once started a must.

the great truck traffic incident to the supply and evacuation of a corps. It was a major job.

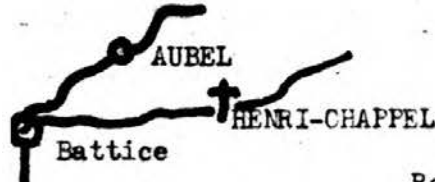
About 2000 of our men were employed every day assisting the various V Corps engineer units in repairing the roads around Bullingen, Butgenbach, Elsenborn and nearby towns, so that the Malmedy-St. Vith and the Malmedy-Butgenbach-St. Vith Roads could be kept open. Many mine fields had to be cleared, trees from the forests felled, trimmed and hauled out to be used to corduroy these rapidly deteriorating roads. It was a labor "chore" for fighting troops, but it had its advantages. For the first time since entry into combat, our troops could have open fires. This was a great morale builder. The ground was damp but the weather was fair, and clothes could be dried out. All troops were paid for the month of January—men had money to spend but little to spend it on. Some caught up on their correspondence, visited nearby units, looked up old friends and buddies. This was the life—meeting and knowing the men of another platoon!

About one week of this and the Division began its movement to Aubel, where it was to assemble and be held in First Army reserve. As it arrived at Aubel it was promptly released to the VII Corps for use in the drive to the Rhine.

Aubel was the quaint Belgian town where the 99th Division received its first battle assignment when it arrived there as green troops in November. Now these heroes returned as veteran troops who had earned for themselves the sobriquet of "Battle Babies." This was their first real chance since leaving Aubel in November to clean up and rest. Inspections, showers, clean clothing, passes to visit Brussels, Verviers, Jayhawk Rest Camp of the VII Corps, and even Paris for some of the fortunate was the order of the day. Life was good, life was great, life was something to enjoy; and enjoy it they did.

There was some reorganization and considerable intensive training, which was entered into with a zest and determination far different from the simple instructive and competitive spirit of such training in the States. Here men wanted to "know how," for the "know how" meant life. It was undertaken seriously, intently and soberly.

Red Cross Clubmobiles popped in, and for the first time our soldiers enjoyed doughnuts, took in movies and G.I. shows, played ball, and just loafed. During free periods the men made friends with the Belgians, slept in strange barn-house combinations, and marveled at women who shoveled manure without losing their dig-

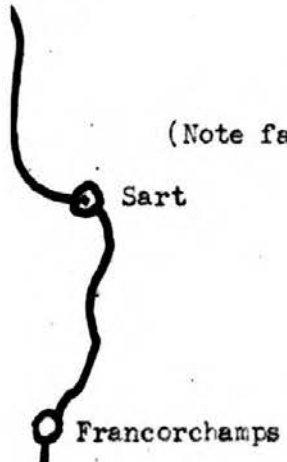


Route of the 99th Division

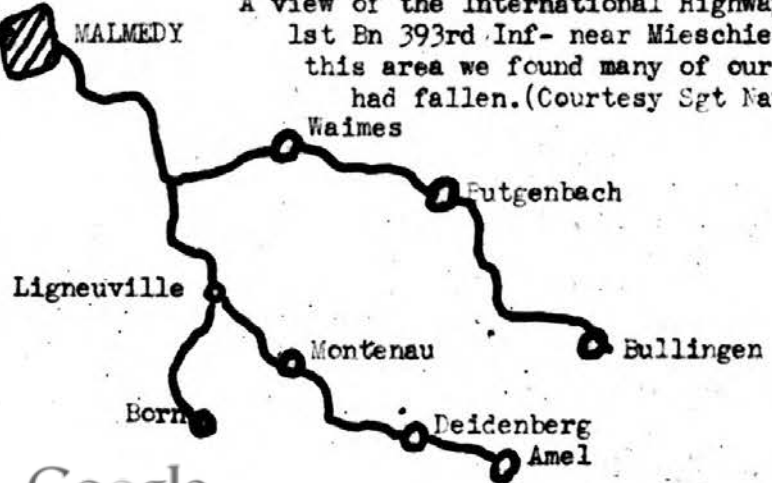
The first ten miles or so was afoot to Malmedy, where trucks rolled the men the rest of the distance to 'Aubel'.



3rd Squad 1st Platoon Anti-tank Co 395th Infantry
 Taken at 'Heppenbach' two days after relief from front
 (Note faces still weary and worn- courtesy J.A. Wiener Sgt 395, NYC.)



A view of the International Highway in front of the
 1st Bn 393rd Inf- near Mieschied. As we returned
 this area we found many of our dead still where
 had fallen. (Courtesy Sgt Nawrocki So Bend Ind
 Waimes)



nity—or charm. This was the life, but not for long. Big things were in the wind and coming along fast.

The month of February had been a light month of fighting for our men. They had suffered a few casualties (twenty killed, 117 wounded and fifteen missing in action), mostly caused by mines and booby traps. On the other hand, they had killed several hundred Germans, wounded many more, taken 185 prisoners of war, cleared their old front of the enemy, taken over the entire front of the XVIII Airborne Corps, and in passing had knocked out several forts in the Siegfried Line and advanced the front a good distance.

Eight days at Aubel gave us more than just a chance to relax, reorganize and get our feet under us again. It gave us an opportunity to find out what was happening on other fronts, what experiences other units had, what we could expect to encounter, and what to watch for and guard against.

It gave me the first opportunity I had had since the Division entered combat to visit all my units, see all my men and officers, meet them again and speak to them. It was a golden opportunity.

We had been fighting defensively most of the time, and our fighting had taken place in hilly, heavily wooded terrain. Our occasional cramped offensives had been conducted in the fortified area against the German Westwall. As a part of the VII Corps, I knew we would participate in the drive to the Rhine. That drive would be over relatively flat country. It meant we would have a chance (so fervently wished for) to go on the offensive, a real offensive, to fight in the open where we could maneuver and see to shoot.

I visited every company and battery and battalion in the Division, assembled the men in small groups—for even here in a rear area we were subject to air attack—and spoke to them. I told them exactly what to expect; that we had probably seen our last defensive action; that from now on we were to be on the offensive—attack and attack! I advised them to break out their manuals on the offensive and to review the basic doctrines of “Fire and Movement” and “Team Work.” I reminded them that, in spite of the feeling of being alone which each soldier and officer experiences in combat at some time or another, that it is not so—that there will always be nine other battalions of “Battle Babies” in the fight with them, plus all our artillery, tanks, tank destroyers and our fighting engineers—and in addition our staffs, continually planning and co-ordinating and working for the front line fighting man. I cautioned them never to forget the spirit of the offensive—to drive and drive hard—to attack—



The C.G. talks to a few of the new "battlefield appointed" lieutenants at Aubel.
(*Courtesy Cpl. John Rogers, Jr.*)

to knock out Boche, to kill or capture them if necessary, to carry the fight to the enemy and never to stop until their mission had been accomplished. I told them of the splendid deeds they had accomplished and the praise they had won. I reminded them of our own buddies who had been killed and wounded, of the ruthless sadism practiced by the Nazi beasts we were fighting, and cautioned them always to be on guard against booby traps and the treachery which they could expect to encounter more and more often as we carried the fight into Germany. I reminded them of our motto, to "Do it, do it now, do it right"—and never to quit until it was done right! And finally I adjured them to place their trust in God! I knew and now they knew we were headed for big events—and they came to pass!

We had encountered booby traps in the field. We had learned that nothing was safe until tested, even dead bodies⁹—our own dead and the enemy's too. The Boche were full of such dirty tricks. Our

⁹ Repeatedly our men encountered booby-trapped dead bodies, both of our own and the enemy's. The only safe way of removing a body was first to nudge



I talked to every unit in the Division. *Attack! Attack! ATTACK!*

men were instructed about others, the kind they would probably encounter as they fought into Germany proper and overran German towns. Time bombs in buildings, to blow up after we were in them; booby-trapped doors and closets in houses they would occupy—these were among some of the new things they learned to guard against. Yes, even the German women and children were dangerous, for as reported, the women were the most fanatical of the Nazi, yet could appear the most innocent, and were the ones who frequently employed children to seek information or to commit sabotage, like dropping sugar in the gas tank of a motor vehicle. We were in for a lot of new experiences and we were happy—happy because we were, at long last, to go on the offensive!

it with the blade of a bulldozer at the front of a tank. If it did not blow up, then it was safe to move.

CHAPTER IX

The Drive to the Rhine

LIKE ALL BIG EVENTS, this one started slowly and calmly, gaining in fury and tempo as it progressed. Since the fall of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) there had been no impressive gains on the Western Front. Soldiers under General Hodges sensed that the First Army was winding up for a Sunday punch, but there was no assurance that it would smash open the Westwall or that Germany would not defend every inch of *Der Vaterland*, as Goebbels had promised, "to the last man."

There was little indication that our forces would have a "walk-away" when the jump across the Roer River was made. The spear-heading 3rd Armored Division of the VII Corps threw a bridge across the Erft Canal near Bergheim, whose ancient gates stand astride the road to Cologne (Koln, as the Germans call it).

The "Battle Babies" had been attached to the VII Corps, and during the period 28 February-1 March had been called upon to send Regimental Combat Team 395, reinforced,¹ to the 3rd Armored Division to assist in forcing the Erft Canal. The Combat Team moved out of its assembly area at Clermont, Belgium, which was near Aubel, and after staging at the town of Stolberg, Germany, moved on to Elsdorf, where it was joined by its armored elements.

Early on the morning of 1 March the 2nd and 3rd Battalions 395th jumped off in an attack against Bergheim. The 3rd Battalion, on the right flank of the assault, moved without incident to the northern outskirts of Bergheim, where they overran and captured a small enemy outpost of ten men and pushed on into the town. Despite heavy small arms and mortar fire, including the fire from a few self-propelled guns, Bergheim was cleared of the enemy late that afternoon. Soon a sign appeared at the entrance to Bergheim which read: "WELCOME!—Courtesy 395th Infantry." Quickly thereafter the town of Kenten and the factory district nearby were taken over.

The 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry, operating in the left half of the attack zone, had rougher going. It encountered heavy hostile fire

¹ C.T. 395 consisted of: 395th Inf. Regt., 924th F.A. Bn., Co. C 324th Engr. Bn., Co. C 324th Med. Bn., Co. C 786th Tk. Bn., and Co. C 629th T.D. Bn.



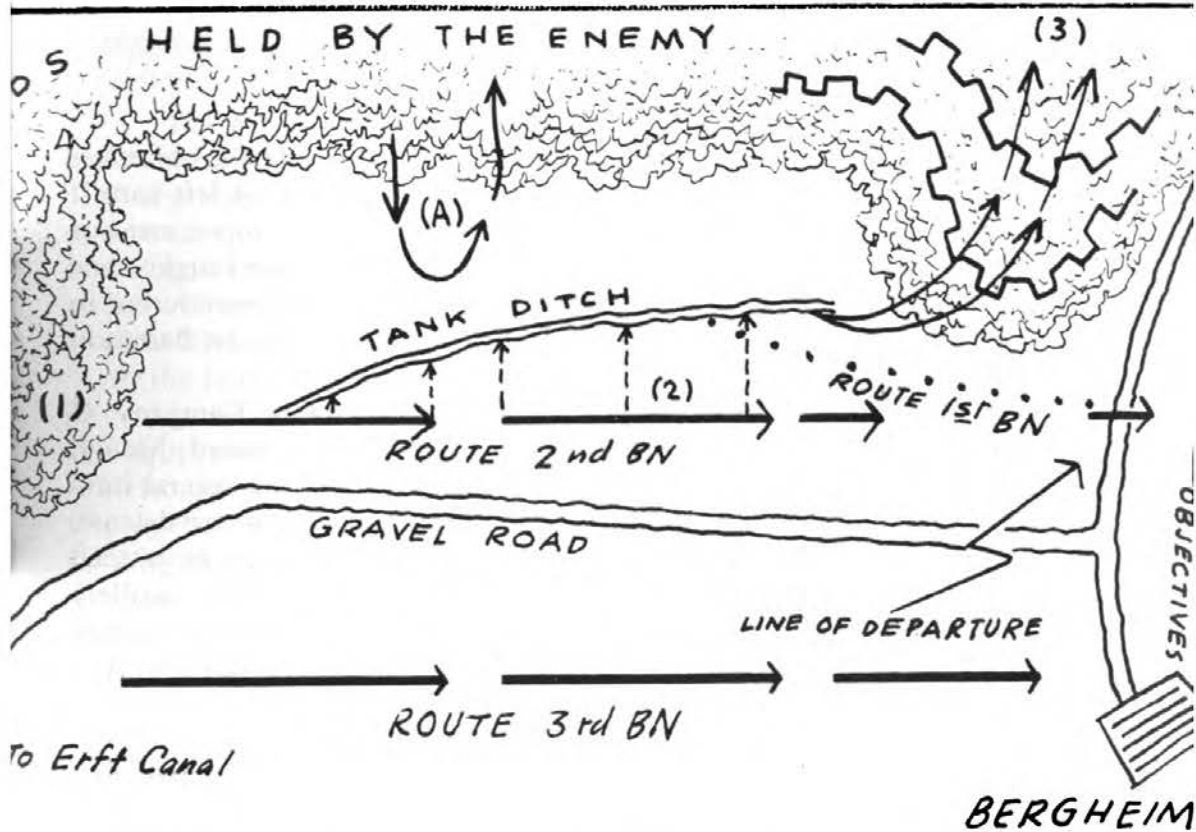
TOWN OF ELSDORF IN THE BACKGROUND

Men of Company F 395th deploy and march through a field toward the Erft Canal on 28 February. These are some of the men who were caught in the open and later cleaned out the woods as told in the story by Lt. Hysmith.

(U.S. Army photo.)

from a dense woods on its left flank, was pinned to the ground, out in the open, during the day, and eventually had to change its direction of attack and clear out the woods, while the 1st Battalion 395th Infantry was passed through it to continue on and seize the original objectives which were the high hills north of the town of Bergheim.

Combat Team 395 was operating under the 3rd Armored Division at the time, and in the words of Lieutenant Price E. Hysmith (Tillamook, Ore.), executive officer of Company F 395th Infantry, the 2nd Battalion stepped into a hornet's nest. "The battalion walked into it," he writes. "After a faulty reconnaissance under fire, the battalion was moved up at night and started out between 3:00 and 4:00 A.M. for its line of departure for the attack. It never reached its jump-off position. Daylight caught it out in the open, stretched out in a long column parallel to the edge of a woods held by the Krauts. A long, wide and deep tank ditch ran generally along the length of the column and between it and the Krauts in the edge of the woods. Caught out in the open, the only available cover was the tank ditch. The ditch was enfiladed by machine gun fire from a corner of the woods and was a target for the enemy's mortars. The battalion was stuck there all day."



- (1) Where the 2nd Battalion left the woods for its line of departure for the attack.
- (2) Caught in the open, the battalion sought cover in the tank ditch.
- (3) Companies F and G cleaned out the woods. (A) German Infantry and tanks attacked.

"Two German tanks," he continues, "loaded with infantry, came out of the woods and charged our position in the ditch. Our riflemen picked off the infantry, and when our bazookas opened fire the tanks turned tail and disappeared back in the woods again. We suffered a lot of casualties. Sergeant Pagilucia sacrificed his life to enable the men of his squad to get under cover of the tank ditch. He would rise up and fire so as to draw the hostile fire as his men raced for the ditch. As he got to the ditch he was hit in the chest. Lieutenant Hub Hyatt, who was commissioned just the day before, was killed as he was carrying a wounded man to cover. There were a lot of heroic deeds that day.

"Our artillery, P-47s and light tanks from the 3rd Armored bombed, shelled and machine-gunned the woods to help us, but we were stuck. The edge of the woods on our left flank was a strongly organized German position.

"The 1st Battalion came up the ditch with its battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles J. Hendricks, Cairo, Ill., leading,

passed through us and pushed on to the east to capture the objectives which had been set for the 2nd Battalion. To cover his left flank I led a patrol into the corner of the woods. Thirty feet in we met our first enemy—we knocked them out; sixty feet farther we caught some Krauts in a dugout. The place became too hot and we were forced to back up, but we had accomplished our mission and the 1st Battalion was clear.”

Lieutenant Hysmith's report continues: “Later Company G came up and with Company F now in the woods we pushed through and de-Krauted the area. After sweeping into the woods several hundred yards it became dark, so we stopped, formed a perimeter defense, and dug in for the night. At first light the next morning we pushed ahead. The Krauts had our position and plastered us with artillery and mortars which caused several casualties from their tree bursts. We kept picking up more and more prisoners during the day, and toward the end of the day we had secured the entire area. The next morning we were relieved and returned to Bergheim.”

Combat Team 395 collected about 150 prisoners of war that first day, most of them members of the 363rd Volksgrenadier Division. The next day the attack of the regiment continued with more satisfying results. By early afternoon the 1st Battalion cleared the towns of Kol, Fortuna and Bethlehem and captured Hill 140 against heavy small arms, artillery, mortar and *Nebelwerfer* fire. They added another 100 to their bag of P.O.W.s, captured three tanks, three self-propelled guns and one 75mm anti-tank gun.

All in all, the 395th opened the road in that area for the 3rd Armored Division in its drive for Cologne.

While the 395th was engaged in this operation, the remainder of the 99th Division began moving up to its newly assigned front between Duren and Julich. It left Aibel early on the morning of the 1st March in a drizzling rain. Extra motor transportation had arrived, and the Division, now fully motorized, rolled out of its assembly area, through the rubble of conquered Aachen, over the super-highway through Eschweiler where heavy fighting had once taken place, through Duren and on to the open plains near Elsdorf.

These open fields and plains were a great change to our men who had become used to fighting in what is termed in military parlance “close country.” No hills or extended forests, no muddy trails and tortuous roads—but open country, where men could see for hundreds of yards in all directions—see to shoot! This was a relief. Here one could attack and expect to get results. We did—both!

The general mission assigned our Division² was to force the Erft Canal and seize the low line of hills north of the canal called the "Vorgebirge Mountains," so as to punch a hole through the enemy line for the 3rd Armored Division to plunge through in its drive for Cologne from the north, and at the same time to cover the north flank of the VII Corps while driving to the Rhine. This placed the 99th Division as the northernmost division of the First Army and on the immediate south flank of the Ninth Army.

As we arrived at Elsdorf that night the weather cleared, a full, bright moon came out, and at about 11 P.M. a visit by Jerry planes welcomed us. They greeted us with enthusiasm, strafing and dropping bombs on our locations and all along the main supply route. They did a thorough job—just like a kid running along a row of houses ringing doorbell after doorbell—so did Jerry drop his bombs. Starting at one end of town, he came right down the line, from front to rear and farther out along the main road, laying eggs, one cluster after another, missing nothing. It was his welcome, to let us know that he knew where we were!

We took it. The question was, could he take it when we started to dish it out?

Early on the morning of the 2nd March the Division started its advance. The 393rd Infantry led out, with the 4th Cavalry Group, attached to the Division, preceding it. They crossed the Erft Canal near the town of Glesh and began their drive to the northeast, skirting along the canal.

Before noon the cavalry group had secured the little towns of Winkelheim and Buchholz. There the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry, in the lead, passed through the cavalry, and the two units jointly drove on to capture the town of Neurath³ which fell at 7:00 P.M.

Our troops were galloping ahead so fast that when a phone rang at a coal briquet factory in Neurath, with the home office at Dusseldorf calling to find out where the Americans were, a lineman from the 99th Signal Company offered first-hand information.

The town of Bedburg, naturally called Bedbug by our men, was

² Composition of the 99th Div. at this time: Organic elements (see p. 5); attached units—535th A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn., 786th Tk. Bn., 629th T.D. Bn., Co. A 90th Chem. Bn. 10-13 Mar.; platoon Btry. A 987th F.A. Bn. (S.P.G.) 12-25 Mar.; 170th F.A. Bn. (L.) 16-18 and 21 Mar.; 18th Cav. Sqd. 17-21 and 28-31 Mar.; 4th Cav. Grp. 2-3 Mar.; 667th F.A. Bn. (M.) 13 Mar.; 447th Q.M. Tk. Co. 27-28 Mar.

³ Our advance was so fast that our men captured a kitchen train on the hill above Neurath. Kitchen and wagon were still hitched, with hot carrot soup all over the road.

taken over and cleared by the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry, while the 2nd Battalion 393rd did the same to the town of Buchholz, so that the speed of our advance elements would not be slowed.

That first day netted us about 320 prisoners of war. Opposition was relatively light, consisting mostly of small arms, mortar and the direct fire of anti-tank weapons. The resistance which the low hills and open terrain of the "Vorgebirge" range west of the Rhine afforded the enemy to offer our advance was much less than expected. This type of fighting was a cinch for our men, who had been used to crawling over real, steep hills and through heavy forests.

Elements from five German divisions and a number of "cat-and-dog" outfits were encountered. There was only one conclusion to draw from this situation—the enemy was confused and surprised and trying to get away—he was fighting a spotty and haphazard rear guard action.

The remainder of the 99th Division had staged up from Aubel, and the 394th Infantry crossed the Erft Canal that day and went into an assembly area north of Bergheim and west of Weidenfeld, ready to jump off in an attack the next morning. Our Combat Team 395 was still operating with the 3rd Armored Division, immediately south of our zone, breaking out a hole for the armored division to plunge through in its planned drive for Cologne.

The morning of March 3 saw our drive really get under way. We started hammering away with two regiments, the 393rd and the 394th,⁴ and had the 4th Cavalry Group speed its armor along the east bank of the Erft Canal to cover the left flank of the Division.

The list of towns overrun and captured as the reports kept pouring in that day sounded like a railroad time schedule: Allrath, Heyderhof, Barrenstein, the Erftwerke factory area, Muchhausen, Fraumeiler, Rath, Vanikum, Rommerskirchen, Huchelhoven, Gill, Sinsteden, etc., etc. There was no doubt about it, our men had blood in their eyes, they were on the offensive, and they were enjoying this "ladling-it-out" for a change.⁵

P.O.W.s kept rolling in—351 were captured in action, and more were to be gathered in later who had fled, demoralized.

Our 324th Engineer Battalion did in twelve hours what was

⁴ The 394th Inf. was now commanded by Col. John R. Jeter, Inf., U.S.A.

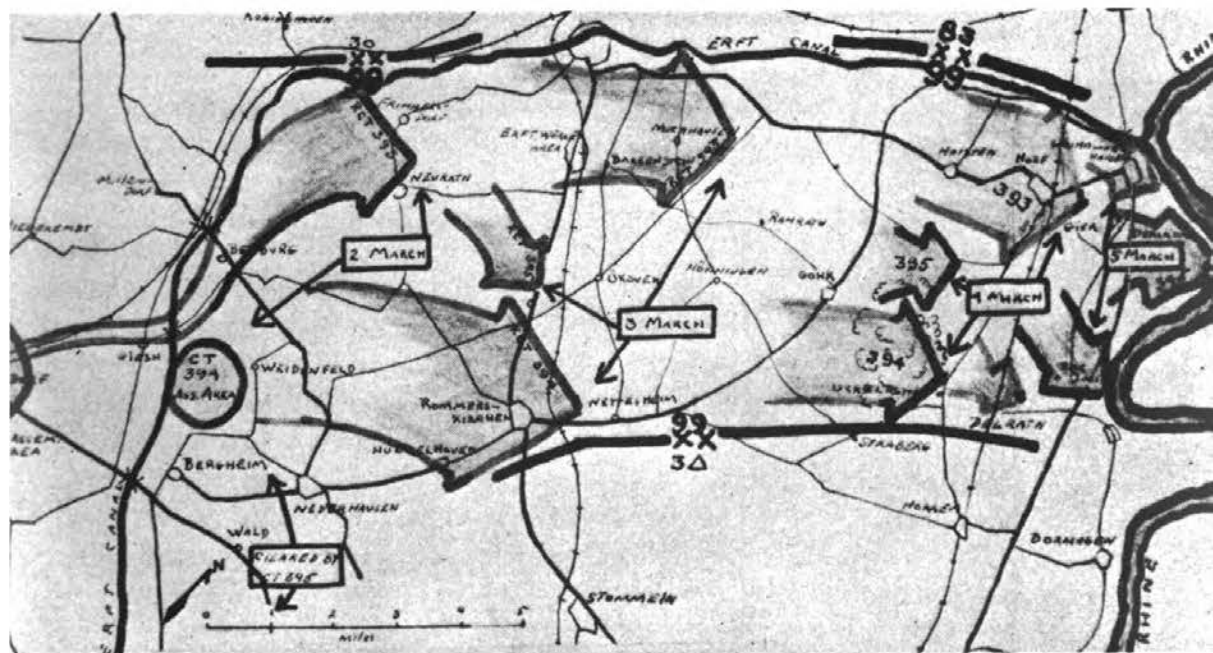
⁵ Our artillery was determined to keep close to the front to render the doughs close support. They selected forward positions where fighting was still going on and as the area was cleared rolled in their guns. Time after time within minutes after a town was captured the artillery was in there setting up their guns.

normally a two-day job. That morning they completed throwing two Bailey bridges across the Erft Canal near the town of Bedburg. Those bridges gave us the much needed security of additional crossings so that in the event hostile air attacks⁶ knocked out a bridge we would not be cut off from supply and evacuation and as a result be slowed down in our drive.

That day, too, our drive had opened the way to Cologne for the 3rd Armored Division, so C.T. 395 reverted back to the Division, but was held in reserve temporarily. We sent its 3rd Battalion, however, from Bergheim to Neurath, where it relieved the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry. The 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry, however, was in an offensive mood and launched an attack at 5:30 P.M. to capture the town of Sinsteden, which fell to them at 7:40 P.M. The German rear guard was collapsing fast.

The 4th Cavalry Group, which had been operating under the 99th Division and which under its doughty commander, Colonel John

⁶ Nine enemy air raids occurred during the day by individual planes. They did little damage. Our A.A.A. shot down one.



OPERATIONS 2-6 MARCH

After forcing the crossing of the Erft Canal the three combat teams of the 99th Division swept over the countryside like a tidal wave straight to the banks of the Rhine River.

McDonald, had gained the praise and admiration of all in the Division with whom it had come in contact, was pulled away from the 99th that afternoon to join the 3rd Armored Division. We regretted its loss, but that was not the last we saw of it during the operation. It continued to operate on our right (south) flank, and later still took over our entire front. The 4th Cavalry Group was a fine fighting outfit.

In its drive that day the "Battle Babies" had advanced over 9000 yards along the Erft Canal and swept east across the entire width of its zone, knocking out the enemy strong points established in every town and village overrun. Late that afternoon the resistance encountered stiffened considerably on the front of the 394th Infantry near Rommerskirchen, where enemy tanks and self-propelled guns reinforced the enemy strong points. Spotty resistance of this sort was to be expected. It was disorganized rear guard action. The Krauts were doing what they could to delay our advance and thereby permit the flower of their army a chance to sneak across the Rhine. The answer to that was to hit them twice as hard and fast. We did!

Intelligence reports indicated that we were faced by elements from seven German divisions: 9th Panzer, 363rd V.G., 361st V.G., 59th Infantry, 11th Panzer, 340th and 476th Infantry Divisions. Seven German *divisions* against two American *regiments*! Impossible—but true. There remained only one conclusion to draw: the enemy was disorganized, confused and probably demoralized. Whatever resistance we were to meet would be of a purely local nature, depending upon the character of the local commander.⁷ Our morale was high! Our wish was being answered! What a difference from dark, dismal December!

Starting an hour before sunrise the 4th March, the 99th Division hurled its whole weight at the enemy resistance. Before the day was done the Division had advanced 19,000 yards on an 11,000 yard front. Nothing could stop our men. They galloped over the countryside beating down all the small, isolated groups of the enemy which resisted their advance. The desultory small arms and mortar fire encountered gave evidence of the lack of determination on the part of the enemy. Hostile artillery fire from deep rear areas which fell

⁷ One Jerry tank commander captured was thoroughly disgusted. He said he got orders to "turn your guns around against the Americans and do not retreat another inch." He did, he said. He wheeled his guns around to face the enemy, then switched off the ignition and he and his crews went into a farmhouse where they slept until captured. Said he: "I followed orders!"

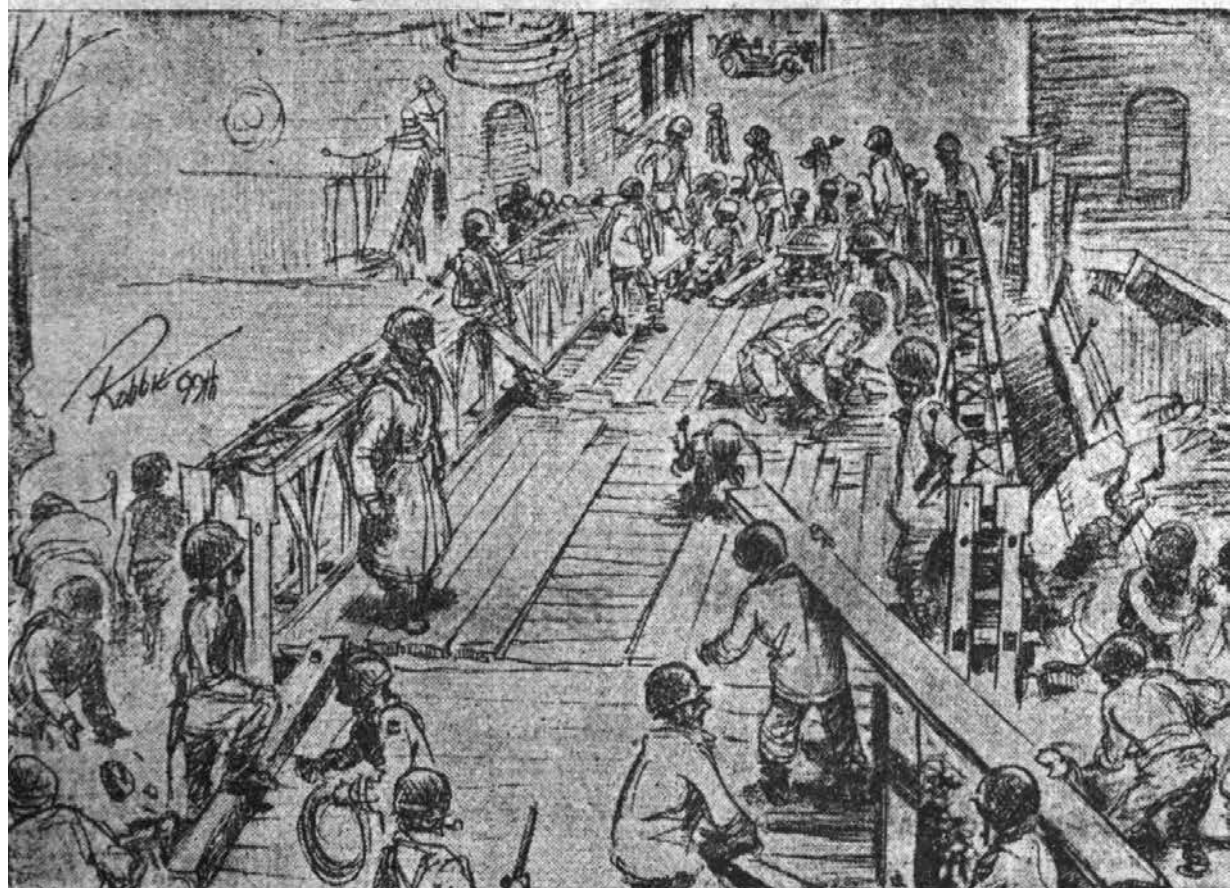


ELSDORF

The Command Post of the 393rd Infantry was hit—the S-2 and S-3 sections were wiped out. The 99th Signal Company lost a number of trucks and key men. (393rd photo.)

Our 324th Engineer Battalion threw two bridges over the Erft in twelve hours.

Engineers Work Fast to Bridge Erft



Artist Robert B. Robison sketched this view of the Erft Canal Bridge erected by 99th Inf. Div. engineers.



Toward the Rhine
by foot, by jeep,
by bicycle,
travel the doughs
of the 394th.
(394th History.)

Doughs of the
3rd Battalion
395th
stream eastward.

*(Courtesy
Ralph H. Brooks,
Graham, Ala.)*



The 2nd Battalion 393rd drives on over the "plains."

(393rd History.)



on the towns as we captured them was the chief obstacle encountered. Enemy morale was being broken. The Nazi could act with ruthless sadism when he was in the saddle and succeeding, but cowered and fled when the tables were reversed and our men advanced in straightforward fighting.

The regiments captured over 519 P.O.W.s, many of them sorry specimens of the *Wehrmacht's* supermen, during this second day of fighting.⁸ Fifty towns and smaller communities were overrun—to list them would be just calling the roll of all the towns in that area. Quantities of German equipment and arms started falling into our hands. For example, that day the 393rd Infantry alone captured and turned in three 88mm guns, three half-tracks, one personnel carrier, between 400 and 500 rifles, and a small arms ammunition dump. Another unit captured an enemy tank with its crew of five asleep in it. There was no doubt remaining, the Boche were running away, and with it all, fighting a poor rear guard action.

In this kind of fighting it was found that the regiments could operate better as combat teams, that is, each regiment organized as a complete fighting team within itself. To the 393rd Infantry was attached the 370th F.A. Battalion, 372nd F.A. Battalion (M.), Company A 324th Medical Battalion, Company A 629th T.D. Battalion, Company A 786th Tank Battalion, and Light Tank Company D 786th Tank Battalion. The 99th Reconnaissance Troop was also attached to the 393rd Infantry, and using this troop as the nucleus, the famous "Task Force Leuders" was organized.⁹ This task force consisted of the 99th Reconnaissance Troop of armored vehicles, Company D 786th Tank Battalion, and Company A 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion to give it heavy fire power. Mounted on these vehicles, riding wherever they could, was added an infantry company, Company C 393rd Infantry. "Task Force Leuders" thereby became a rapid moving, hard hitting force which accomplished the unexpected and extraordinary. For example, spearheading ahead of the 393rd Infantry

⁸ If anything, the P.O.W.s brought to the Division cage were more than a bit confused. Morale was generally low. One officer P.O.W. insisted that Germany would eventually win the war, another that the end of the war is "just a matter of hours." One batch of P.O.W.s came in looking very much like dirty, unshaven, hungry front line soldiers, while another batch came in with clean uniforms and clean-shaven faces—they were rear guard elements, ordered to defend to the last man, complained of lack of supporting fire, lack of ammunition, terrible food and lack of officers to lead them. Most officers had already taken off, according to the P.O.W.s.

⁹ Named after its commander, Maj. Roy C. Leuders.

on the 4th March, it made a lightning thrust to capture the town of Norf, close to the Rhine, then without stop quickly seized the town of Derikum farther east and thereby sealed off all chances for the Germans to slip out of the pocket between the Erft Canal and the Rhine River which our drive had created. Our "Task Force Leuders," "T.F.L." to us and the "Teufel" to the Jerries, was doing its best to corral all the Goebbel's men who were going to defend every inch of *Der Vaterland* to the last man. We wanted them all—to the last man—in spite of the fact that many of them had a good head start, running for the Rhine.¹⁰

Combat Team 394 consisted of the 394th Infantry Regiment, and attached in direct support were the 371st F.A. Battalion, Company B 324th Medical Battalion, Company D 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company B 786th Tank Battalion. It swept ahead along the southern flank of the Division, clearing everything out of its path. It was an irresistible force.



A part of "Task Force Leuders."

(Courtesy 1st Sgt. Bryant,
Pacific Grove, Calif.)

¹⁰ During this period elements from five more German divisions were encountered: the 176th, 183rd and 338th Inf. Divs. and the 116th Pz. and 130th Pz. Lehr Div. More of this last division later.

T.F.L. "Teufel" or Devil established an enviable record for itself at this time. The story is told of one of its men, Sgt. Cliff Etsitty, nicknamed The Chief, who was herding along a bunch of prisoners while riding on top of a tank. Artillery fire blasted the other men off the tank and The Chief lost his rifle but not his prisoners. He was unable to tell the tank commander about his situation because the tank was buttoned up. He held his prisoners by his ferocious gaze. Such is the humor of war.



Tank-riding
doughs take part
in the
lightning thrust.
(393rd History.)

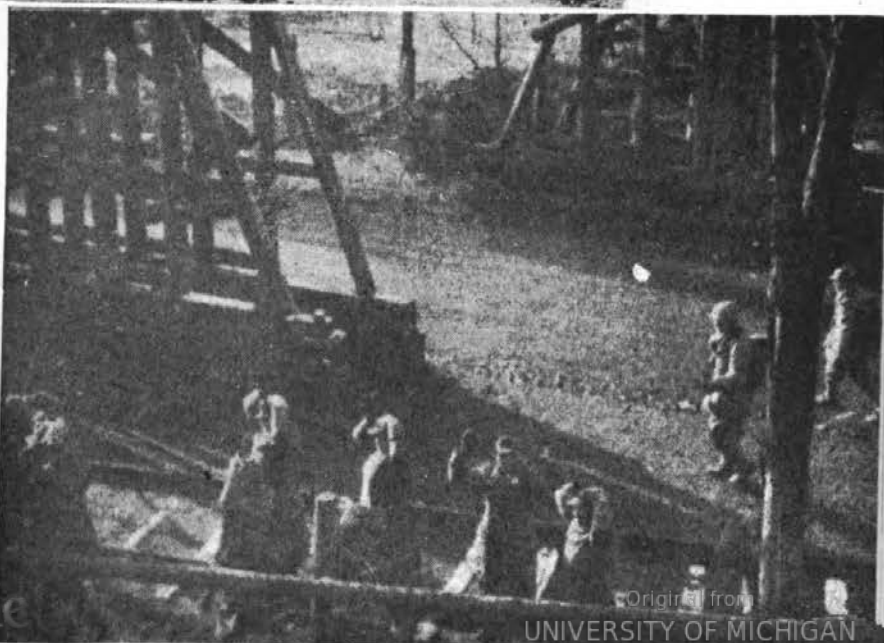


Waiting to
move up.
Artillery fire was
hot along this
road.
(393rd History.)

**FRESH
CAUGHT
KRAUTS**

A few of Goebbels'
"last men."

(By a 99er, Address
Box 76, State
College, Miss.)



Combat Team 395 was organized with the regiment supported by the 924th F.A. Battalion, Company C 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company C 786th Tank Battalion, and Company C 324th Medical Battalion. It was hard pressed to keep abreast of its teammates on its right and left, for while rolling along through the center of the zone it overran several large-sized towns which had to be cleared before pushing ahead.

These were strong, hard hitting teams—three of them—which, co-ordinated in their drives by Division headquarters, lashed out with full unrestricted blows. When these teams hit, something had to give. As a matter of fact, something did give way—just everything.

Early on the morning of the 5th March, Company K 393rd Infantry attacked and captured the town of Grimmlinghausen on the banks of the Rhine. They were the first infantry troops of the First Army to arrive at that world famous and war-famed river.¹¹

It was not all "easy pickings," as the saying goes, for C.T. 395, in the center of the Division zone of action, met heavy resistance in the town of Delrath, which it overran only after its supporting artillery laid into the town with a devastating and crushing blow.

On the front of the 393rd Infantry, overlooking the Rhine, our men were having themselves a time. A 370th F.A. Battalion forward observer noted two German ferries and a houseboat (believed to contain what was left of a German division headquarters) working their way across the Rhine and brought fire to bear on them, sinking all three vessels. It was the Division's first and only naval victory, although later in its history it was to capture a land-locked admiral.

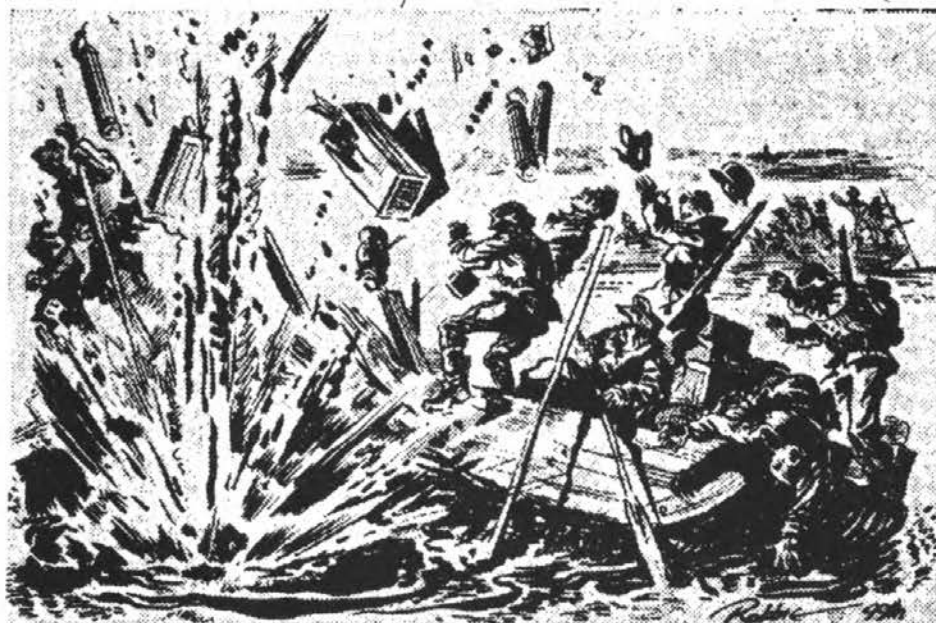
The artillery, however, was not alone in long range fire power, for the doughs having captured a few German 105 mortars and a supply of ammunition, amused themselves by lobbing a few across the Rhine at some of the Jerry entrenchments they could observe there, south of the city of Dusseldorf.

That day, the 5th March, the entire area west of the Rhine was cleared of all enemy resistance, with the exception of a small area stubbornly defended by a few of the "last men" who had holed up in a zinc works near the town of Stuttgart, on the banks of the Rhine. By 8:30 o'clock on the morning of the 6th March this last spot was

¹¹ I had served in the Army of Occupation in 1918-1923 and to celebrate the planting of the American Colors on the banks of the Rhine once again I had promised the unit first to send me a bottle of Rhine water a prize of six bottles of Scotch. Co. K 393rd, Capt. Felix Salmaggi of Brooklyn, N.Y., commanding, got the prize.

(From the *Stars and Stripes*)

Germans Make Perfect Water Bullseye



Gunners of the 99th Div. sent three German "naval vessels" to the bottom of the Rhine. Lt. Percy J. Pace, of San Angelo, Texas, forward observer for B Battery of the 370th FA Bn. saw Jerries crossing the river on two ferries and a houseboat. He called back to Maj. Robert L. McKenny, of Detroit, Mich., who sent messages to B and C batteries, and shells poured in, spraying the water with Jerries,

Men of the 393rd captured a German 105 mortar and lots of ammunition. They lobbed them over the Rhine.

(393rd History.)



cleared out by the men of Combat Team 395. Thereafter the Division devoted itself to screening the entire area it had overrun.¹²

Farther south, the 3rd Armored Division in conjunction with the 104th and 8th Divisions, all with the VII Corps, were attacking Cologne. Having fought their way into Cologne on the 5th March, the enemy was finally forced out of the city and all resistance mopped up after a day and a half of street fighting.¹³

The 99th was doing its mopping up too. Before the last resistance had been overcome, the entire area which had been conquered was divided into sectors and assigned to units to de-Kraut. Screening of a civilian populace was a new duty for our men, who thought war was just a matter of fighting. While the screening was conducted primarily to apprehend members of the German *Wehrmacht* and to collect or locate all German military equipment in the area, our Military Government and Counter-Intelligence Corps also used that opportunity to accomplish their missions in the area.

Each infantry regiment was assigned a zone of responsibility for screening. The regimental zone was further subdivided into smaller zones, and the actual screening was accomplished by teams composed of two or three squads of infantry with a Military Government representative and a Counter-Intelligence representative.

Before the actual screening began, each assigned zone was effectively sealed off by placing guards and patrols on all roads leading in and out of the zone. Upon entering each town, the *Bürgermeister* was ordered to assemble all the inhabitants and to instruct them to turn in all firearms and weapons at a designated place in the town. While they were assembled, the inhabitants were also read a proclamation by the Military Government representative to the effect that retention of firearms constituted a serious offense, and unless all firearms and other military equipment was turned in at that time, the offender would be severely punished. All hiding members of the *Wehrmacht* were also ordered to surrender themselves as prisoners of war.

While the people were assembled, patrols searched the town for stragglers. The civilian population co-operated with the screening

¹² During this drive the 99th took 1559 P.O.W.s. Casualties in the Division were very light.

¹³ Cologne was the largest German city to fall into American or British hands. Berlin, the largest, was captured by the Russians; Hamburg, next largest, was declared an open city. The ruins of Cologne and the ruins of Hamburg appear little different—one is just as bad as the other.

parties in all the towns, turned in weapons promptly, and led our soldiers to hidden stores of military weapons and ammunition, and in some instances turned in deserters from the *Wehrmacht*. The populace as a whole seemed most anxious to obey all orders and commands issued by the screening parties.

The screening produced in part: eighty-six prisoners of war and eighty more individuals, former members of the *Wehrmacht*, unable to produce satisfactory identification; considerable military equipment, chiefly mortars, machine guns, rifles, shotguns, machine pistols, Panzer Fausts, bayonets, knives of various descriptions, and quantities of ammunition. Eight hundred displaced persons were uncovered. They presented a problem which later in our operations became a serious one.

The people were "nice" people—poor, misunderstood farm folk who were glad the war was over for them and blessed their American liberators. That is what they told our patrols while tears ran down their cheeks and they wrung their hands and lamented the horrors of war. Bosh! and more bosh!—which should be spelled "Boche"—the term they detested. They could not be trusted, and were not trusted.¹⁴ This attitude of the German populace was nothing new to me, an old hand in German occupational duties. It was the old, old story: "The king is dead—long live the king."

On the 7th March, while screening operations were proceeding, we held the decoration ceremony for the 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry, which had been awarded the Presidential Citation for its heroic stand during the Battle of the Bulge. We held that ceremony in sight of the Rhine, with alert air guards all around in case a hostile plane came over and caught the whole battalion in mass formation. The entire battalion was decorated, and the ceremony was ended by raising "Old Glory" and having our band play the "Star Spangled Banner." I believe that was the first time, since our troops withdrew from occupation of Germany in 1923, that an American army band played our national anthem on the banks of the Rhine. The last time I heard the national anthem on the Rhine was when "Old Glory" was hauled down from Fortress Ehrenbreitstein, opposite the city of Coblenz, at the end of the American participation in the occupation of Germany after World War I. In its small way this was truly an historic event.

¹⁴ During 3 Mar. a house in the town of Carsdorf blew up for no reason. Six of our men were killed. Probably a delayed time bomb of which we had been warned. Nice people (?).

The screening was just about completed when word came in that elements of the 9th Armored Division of the III Corps had seized intact a crossing over the Rhine—the Ludendorff railway bridge at Remagen. The crossing was in good condition and convertible to vehicular use, and the news further indicated that the III Corps there had more than a battalion of infantry on the other side!

What were we waiting for? Our job was finished here. We were free and ready and anxious. Why delay? Higher headquarters were of the same opinion. That same day orders were received to turn over our area to our old friends of the 4th Cavalry Group. Quickly the 4th Cavalry Group took over and our units were assembled. Spirits rode high. Would we be used to exploit the surprise gift to which the 9th Armored had fallen heir? The Division was as impatient as a spirited race horse, champing at the bit, waiting for the gate to fall. At last the word came. Yes! Join the III Corps! The "Battle Babies" were on the offensive again!

No time was lost. Early the next morning, 8 March, the Division started rolling south by motor—destination Remagen!

There was no time for courtesy calls by commanders, but a short time later the following letter was received from "Lightning Joe" Collins,¹⁵ who at that time commanded the VII Corps:

HEADQUARTERS VII CORPS

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

11 April 1945

Major General Walter E. Lauer
Commanding General,
99th Infantry Division
APO 449, United States Army

Dear General Lauer:

Only the press of events has prevented my acknowledging your recent letter and expressing to you, and to the officers and men of the 99th Infantry Division, my gratitude and appreciation for the fine job the division did while attached to the VII Corps.

The difficult crossing of the Erft River and the Vorgebirge Range, by the 3d Armored Division in the vicinity of Bergheim, was greatly assisted by the attack of the 395th RCT of your division which seized the dominant heights over-looking the Erft. Thereafter, the 99th Infantry Division seized the key centers of Bedburg and Delrath and advanced rapidly east of the Erft to the Rhine. This advance permitted the 3d Armored Division to swing to the south and, in conjunction with the 104th Division, seize the City of Cologne.

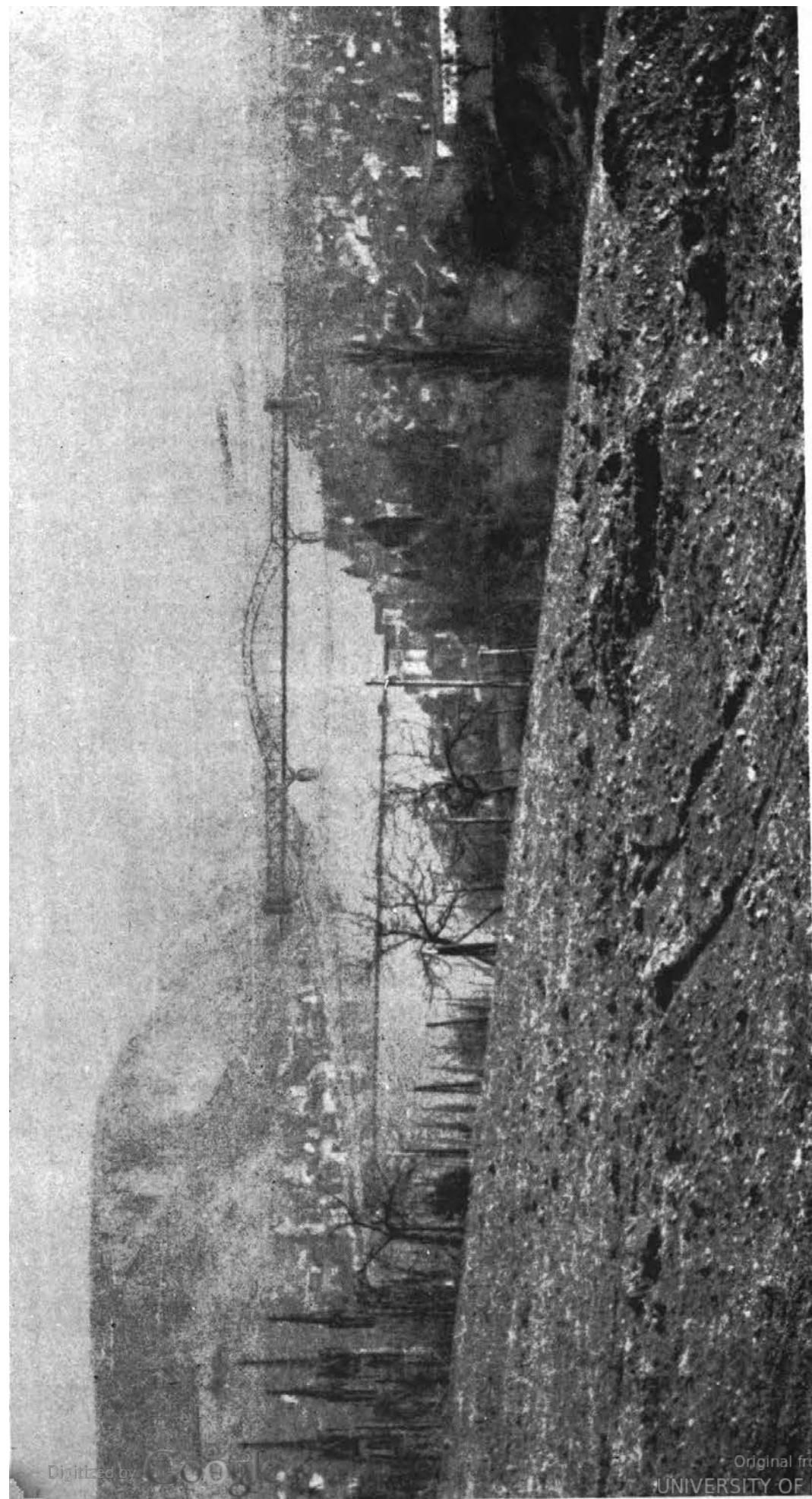
¹⁵ J. Lawton Collins, at present chief of staff, U.S. Army.

The division can well be proud of its part in the drive which broke the last German defenses west of the Rhine River.

I hope that our paths will cross again farther along the line to final victory. You and your fine division will always be given a welcome in the VII Corps.

Faithfully yours,

J. LAWTON COLLINS,
Major General, U.S. Army



THE LUDENDORFF BRIDGE

In the foreground the Treadway bridge; right, the town of Remagen; left, the town of Erpel; beyond the bridges on the left, the 99th Division bridgehead area. Note the steep hills facing the bridges.

CHAPTER X

The Ludendorff Bridge-Remagen Bridgehead

BY EVENING the 9th March the 99th Division had closed its motorized columns into an assembly area between Stadt Meckenheim and Remagen, and was ready to cross over the bridge.¹

There was a terrific traffic jam on the roads leading to Remagen. The commander of the III Corps² wanted the 99th Division over the river at once. We got a priority on the roads, and by evening 10 March our leading regiment, the 394th Infantry, started over.

The story of the crossing of the Rhine by the 99th Infantry Division is one of men scared stiff but brave, of whole units dauntlessly marching into what appeared as sure death, of individual heroism unsurpassed, of men repeatedly risking their lives to keep traffic flowing over the bridge, to treat and evacuate casualties, and to rally shell-dazed soldiers.

Shells came in at the rate of one every thirty seconds the night the 394th Infantry crossed.

All during that night and the next day, the men of the 99th stoically breasted that inferno of hostile bombardment from huge guns, aircraft and observed fire from the high hills overlooking the bridge.³

From "Dead Man's Corner," the intersection at the bridge approach where military police directed traffic, across the wet, slimy pathway of the bridge, shot full of large, gaping holes, some of which

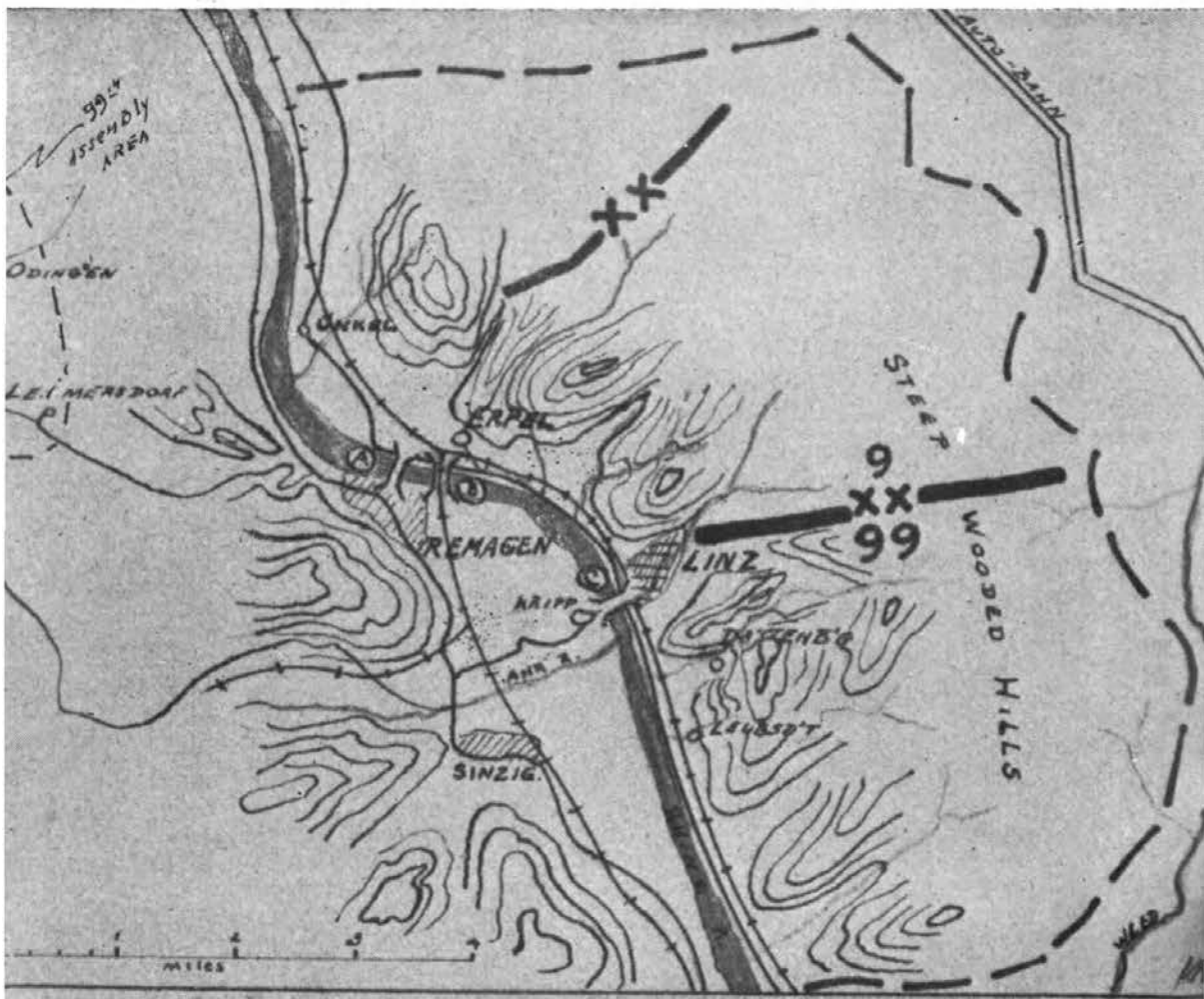
¹In detail the units of the division moved as follows: 393rd Inf. from Grevenbroich-Hulchrath and Norf to Arzdorf, 394th Inf. from the area Gohr-Nievenheim to Leimersdorf, 395th Inf. from the area Delrath-Allerheiligen-Kuckhof-Gier to Fritzdorf, the division artillery from Gohr to Fritzdorf, the 786th Tk. and the 629th T.D. Bns. from Horr and Krahwinkle to Adendorf, the 324th Engr. Bn. from Allrath to Overich and the 99th Rec. Trp. from Gubisrath to Stadt Meckenheim.

²Maj. Gen. John Millikin commanded the III Corps at this time.

³The III Corps engineers had constructed a Treadway bridge over the Rhine north of the Ludendorff Bridge. They started it 9 Mar. and opened it for traffic on the morning of the 11th Mar. It was 1032 feet long. Ferries and D.U.K.W.s were also used, the latter primarily for the evacuation of wounded. Many of our men crossed on this bridge, as did most of our heavy motor vehicles, although some of these vehicles were taken over by the ferry. (See III Corps Report Mar '45, p. 27).

were covered by loose metal sheets, across that long, endless expanse suspended in the air, with only the sky overhead and the river far below, with no place to seek shelter from the incessant shell bursts except the distant stone bridge buttress at the other end—across that inferno, across that hell, walked the "Battle Babies."

As one M.P. fell at "Dead Man's Corner," another took his place. Their job was to stand there and direct traffic. They did, those



OVER THE RHINE

The steep hills rose abruptly from the narrow east bank on which was crowded a highway and a railway.

In the face of devastating fires hurled down from the high hills overlooking the bridges, the "Battle Babies" crossed into "Germania" on the 10th-11th March over the Ludendorff Bridge (B) and the treadway bridge at (A). Later a pontoon bridge (C) was constructed.

heroes—unsung heroes truly, for they did not even have the doubtful satisfaction of being able eventually to close with the enemy to pay him back. They had to stand there and endure it.

Of individual heroism, innumerable tales can be told. Typical was that of one soldier who, hearing that the bridge had been made impassable by a direct hit, dashed across the span under constant shelling, determined that traffic need not be held up, then guided the vehicles past the dangerous spots. There, too, repeatedly, leaders fearlessly exposed themselves to the devastating fire to inspire their men on across the deadly span.

They had to get across and get across quickly, for as soon as they arrived on the other side they were scheduled to launch an attack to drive the enemy farther away from the bridge, to enlarge the hold on the other side from a toehold to a foothold and eventually to a full fledged bridgehead. The quicker that could be done, the sooner the heavy hostile fire could be reduced, probably even eliminated.

Around the camp fires later, when a discussion of that crossing was brought up, invariably an argument arose as to whether it was worse crossing at night or in daylight. I crossed in daylight, and when I finally arrived safely at the far end I offered up a silent prayer. For those who crossed at night, with the only illumination that of bursting shells—for during those two days it rained intermittently and the sky was dark and overcast—the terror of the unseen and the utter separation felt in the pitch blackness must have added to the feeling of a living hell.

Moving up to cross over. A few doughs of the 393rd Infantry, unconcerned, eating a K ration en route.

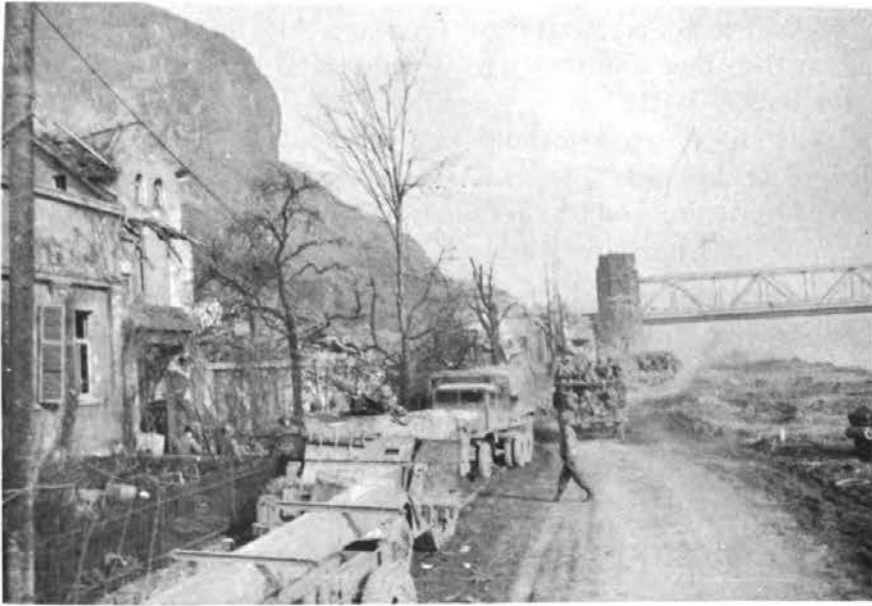
(393rd History.)





Some of our heavy vehicles crossed over by ferry.

(Courtesy Ed Ward, Pine Bluffs, Wyo.)



Shore Road, far side, 11 March. Trucks loaded with 99th men crossed on Treadway bridge and sped to their sector. Note men crossing on Ludendorff Bridge.

(Courtesy P. E. Weesner, Tampa, Fla.)

2nd Battalion 395th men speed along road to a reserve position north of the bridges.

(Courtesy R. Johnson.)





A few of the A.A.A. guns augmented by tanks and T.D.s for anti-aircraft protection. Later the sky was filled with captive balloons also.

We got across. The luckiest break of the war had fallen to the First Army. Our men had to get across promptly, and through their courage and bravery they did. Early on the morning of the 11th March the first Treadway bridge downstream from the Ludendorf railway bridge was completed, and some of our Checkerboarders crossed on that structure. Both bridges received continuous attention from the enemy, whose artillery and air activity increased tremendously. Several times work on the Treadway bridge was halted by direct hits, and traffic on the railway bridge was halted because of

artillery hits. In spite of all the enemy could do and did, our men kept valiantly pushing across.

During December and January many of our men had developed "fox-hole" religion, but I know that every man in the Division who crossed the Rhine during those two days developed a deep "bridge-head" religion.⁴ I can still see that narrow, slimy route, shot full of holes, suspended in the air by a few steel girders, twisted and bent, and at the other side the sheer, steep hills rising abruptly straight in the air.

From the crest and every crag and nook on the hillside, the enemy poured death and destruction down on our heads as we crawled over the bridge. We still had to fight our way up those hills and drive him off. After having passed through the inferno of the river crossing, the perilous fighting ahead held relatively little fears for our men. That fight was joined in a spirit of relief, of further successes to come, and with the firm conviction that what had happened and that which we had endured had brought the war closer to its desired end.

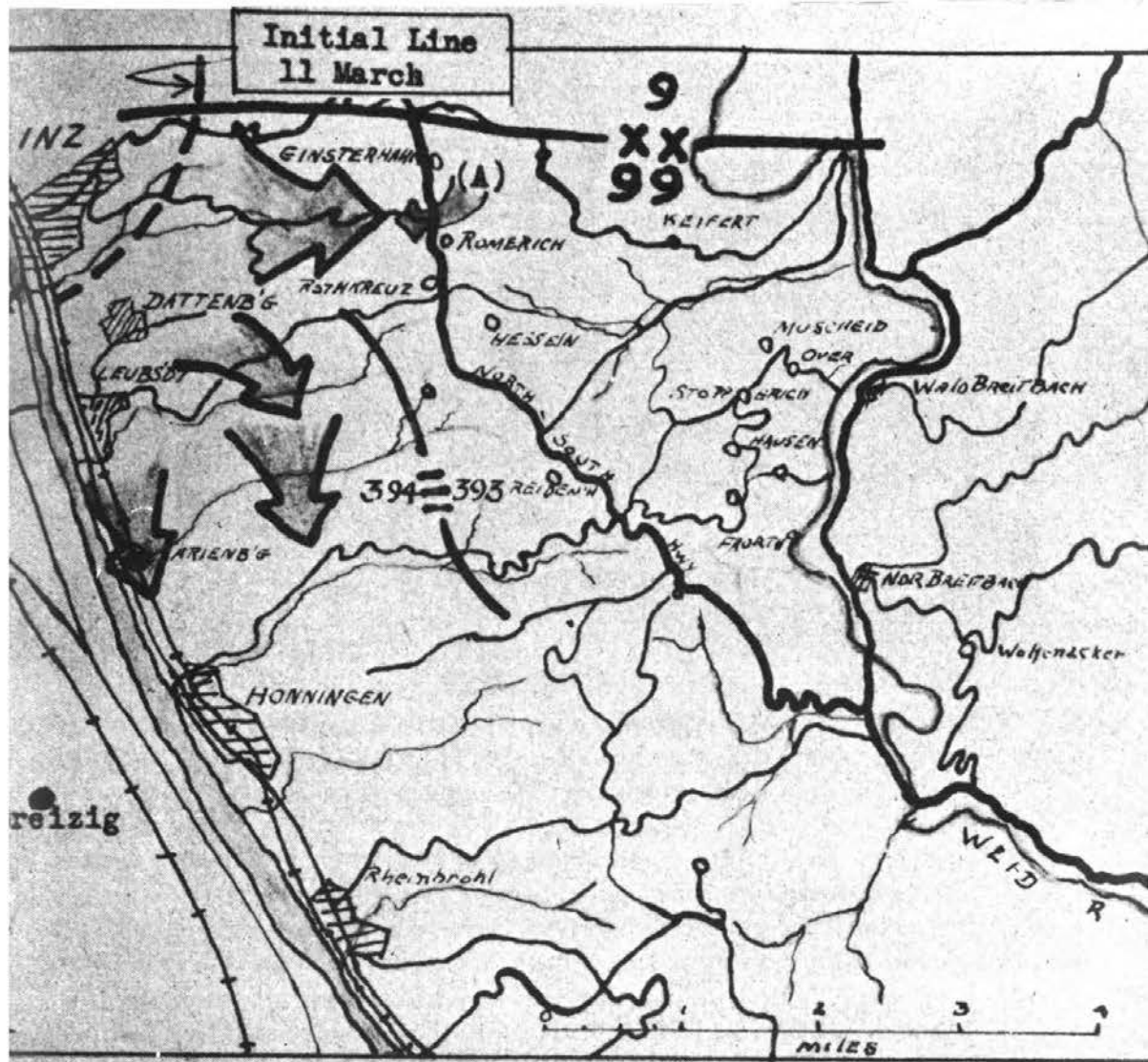
The 11th March saw all the infantry of the Division across the Rhine. Early that morning, the 394th Infantry, already across, started its attack south along the east bank of the Rhine.

While the 394th Infantry, our first troops over, were attached temporarily to the 9th Infantry Division which had its forward command post, some of its troops, and elements of the 78th Division east of the Rhine, the next day, as the remainder of the "Battle Babies" rolled over the river and the division command post was established at Linz,⁵ the 394th reverted back to my control.

III Corps directed that the 99th take over the southern sector of the area, while the 78th Division was to take over the northern sector, and the 9th Division was to hold the center. We got over and immediately started enlarging our sector of the bridgehead area. Our attacks to enlarge the area progressed slowly on the 11th March

⁴ First Sgt. V. A. Selders (South San Francisco, Calif.), Co. L 393rd Inf., summarized the feeling. In his words, "The closer we got to the bridge the more scared I got. . . . I wanted to run across, but couldn't. The captain ahead of me had to walk. It was too slippery to run. I had to walk. Every man behind me had to walk. I'd heard of fox-hole religion—well, I believe that day I had bridgehead religion."

⁵ The division command post was set up in Linz on the 11th Mar. in the winery of the Gebruder Blumenthal. The deep cellars offered excellent protection. To get office space, one small cellar had all the racks of champagne in bottles pushed to one side. There were about 10,000 bottles of champagne in this small cellar alone. It was all green. Plenty of good wine and brandy was available just the same.



FIRST DAY OF OPERATION—11 MARCH

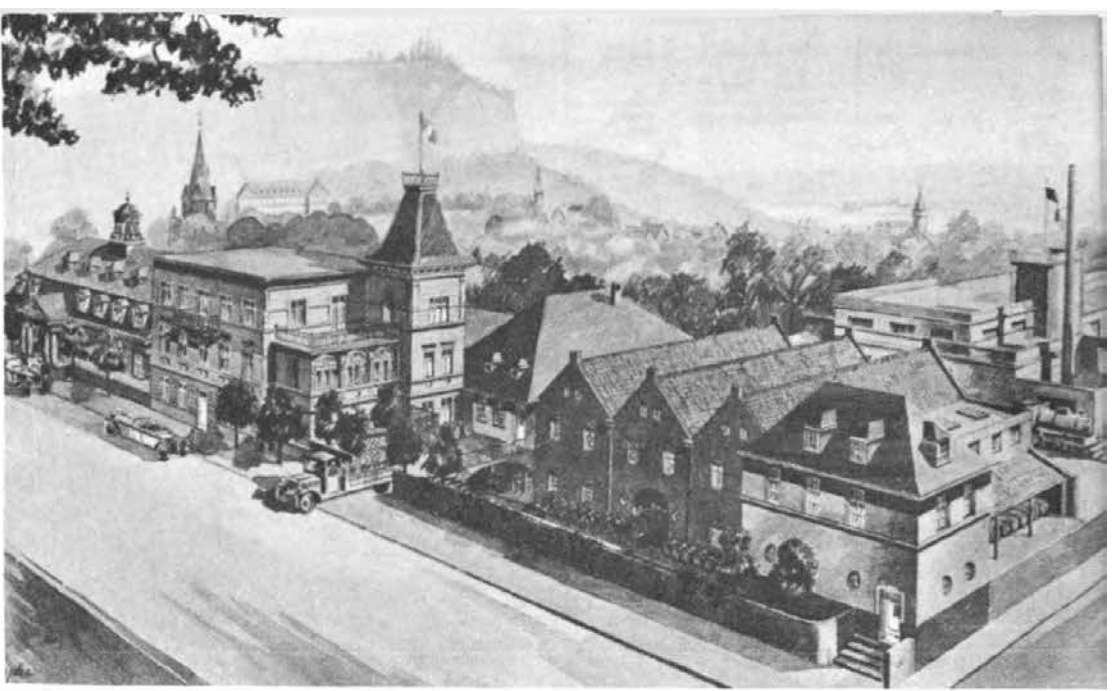
The enemy stoutly resisted our advance to clear the river bank and seize the ridge line along the north-south highway. The 394th Infantry advanced 3,000 yards against artillery, machine gun and heavy small arms fire.

(A): The site of two enemy counterattacks at 3:25 and 6:30.

against stubborn resistance. Few gains were made in the northern and central sectors.⁶

The 394th Infantry, after it crossed the river, had passed through Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division and had driven to the south, advancing about 3000 yards to capture the towns of Leubesdorf and Ariendorf, along the east bank of the Rhine. It then launched an attack to the east to expand the bridgehead. The enemy resisted strongly, counterattacking twice during the afternoon,

⁶ III Corps Report Mar. '45, p. 29.



Kellereiansicht

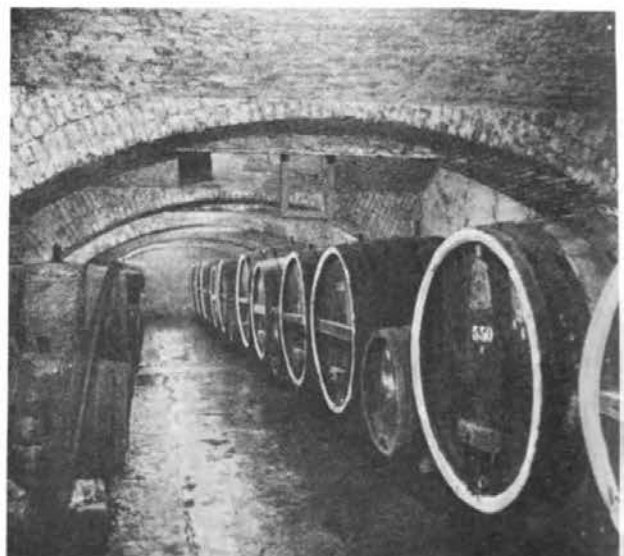
A PEACETIME VIEW OF LINZ AM RHINE

The winery of the Gebruder Blumenthal. The division command post was in the building at the extreme left. Note the high, steep hills in distance.

each time with infantry and about six tanks. Our men knocked down each counterattack and took fifty-seven prisoners.

The 393rd Infantry crossed the river during the 11th March and promptly moved up to relieve units of the 60th Infantry, 9th Division, who were holding an area in the newly created sector of the 99th Division. Hardly had they taken over when they were hit by a German counterattack. They took over the front at 3:25 P.M. and repelled their first counterattack at 4:00 P.M. Another attack by infantry and

Another view of the winery—a source of "Linz souvenirs."



Teilansichten der Laßkeller

tanks was repulsed at 7:30 that night. Our men had not crossed the bridge to be turned back by any counterattacks. They, in turn, attacked and advanced their front about 300 yards.

During that period the 395th Infantry crossed the river and at 6:00 o'clock that night closed into three areas near the east end of the bridge where they were held as a temporary bridgehead reserve. Close on the heels of the 395th Infantry, our 324th Engineer Battalion crossed over, and its companies were on arrival parcelled out to the three infantry regiments so as to render them closer engineer support.

Division headquarters set up its command post that day in the town of Linz, initially but a few hundred yards from the front lines. The men of the 99th soon cleared that area of small arms fire as they continued to drive south and east up into the hills, steadily expanding the bridgehead area.

The east bank of the river offered only a narrow strip of flat ground along which ran a railway and a highway which we used as our main supply road. Narrow roads led up into the steep hills, where the heaviest fighting took place. Our first objective in enlarging the area so as to create a foothold in the process of building a real bridgehead was the high ground overlooking the river. We had to deny the enemy this direct observation of the crossing sites as quickly as possible—so, up the narrow roads and steep gorges our men stormed.

The continual roar of our artillery firing from the west bank of the river was hurled back by the hills, which acted as a sounding board and created the effect of double the amount of firing actually involved. Each gun blast, each bursting shell, was heard twice. Added to this never ending roar of our own fire was that of exploding hostile shells being poured into the area.

Across this background of never ending deep bass drum blasts, and frequently drowning it out completely, would flash like a streak of lightning from one flank to the other along the river bank, the screaming hail of our anti-aircraft guns and multiple-mounted machine guns in an ever increasing crescendo. It would rise and rise in its shrieking howl as though it would burst all bounds. Anti-aircraft dual mount after dual mount along both banks of the river was joining its fire to those already firing to down or drive off some hostile plane running the gauntlet in an attempt to blow out our bridges over the Rhine.

Thumping through this cacophony of blasts to emphasize the power of destruction and the anger of an enemy caught napping



THE PONTOON BRIDGE NEAR LINZ

Steep hills almost down to the water's edge ran all along the far bank of the Rhine. The raised trestle through the center of the picture is a railroad. The highway ran close alongside. The town is part of Linz.

(393rd History.)

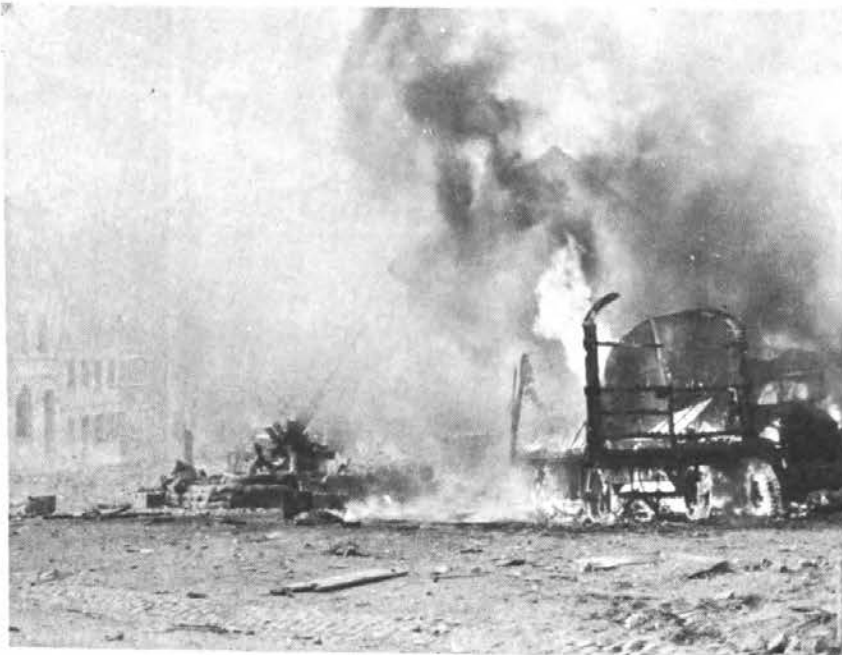
would come an occasional deep boom as an extra heavy hostile shell landed to shake the ground like an earthquake.⁷ Relentlessly our men kept driving farther and farther south and deeper and deeper east up over the steep, densely wooded hills. This type of treacherous terrain of woods and hills was no new fighting experience to our men, who had grown up on the teething ring of woods and hills fighting in the Ardennes.

March 12th saw the Division really increase the size of its sector. It spread out in an increased arc over 3000 yards deep as the 393rd Infantry attacked to the south and east and the 394th Infantry continued to push south along the river bank and east over the hills. By evening that day (5:35 P.M., to be exact) our units had seized every initial objective. The towns of Ginsterhahn and Rothkreuz on the summit were captured at 2:25 P.M. that day by the 393rd Infantry, and sixty-three prisoners of war were taken. They repelled three determined counterattacks by the enemy which, supported by tanks, intense small arms fire and heavy mortar fire, were hurled at these

⁷ V-2 bombs were dropped in the area but the heavy shells which landed were from the tank mounted 540-mm. Karl Garret, according to III Corps Report Mar. '45, p. 73.



The town of Kripp. Approach to the pontoon bridge was battered and bombed by German artillery and air raids. Linz in the distance.
(393rd History.)



The Luftwaffe scored a direct hit on one of our A.A. guns and a few trucks in Linz.
(393rd History.)



Support for the 394th rolls through Linz. Our medics were always in close support.

(Courtesy Ed Ward, Company D 324th Medical Battalion, Pine Bluffs, Wyo.)



The "Krauts" gave up after a stiff fight at Ginsterhahn.

positions three hours later. The 394th Infantry had hopped off in its drive early that morning and by early afternoon had seized its objectives north of the town of Honningen, approximately 3000 yards deeper in the enemy's territory.

The effect of these drives was promptly felt in the decreasing amount of observed artillery fire delivered on the bridges. In fury the enemy retaliated by making fifty-eight air raids, using ninety-one planes, during the twenty-four hour period 6:00 A.M. 12th to 6:00 A.M. 13th March in his attempts to destroy the bridges. Our anti-aircraft shot down twenty-six of these planes and damaged eight others. These raids, however, did not stop traffic on the bridges, and they remained open and functioning throughout the day.⁸

As our drives carried us farther and farther into the hills, our infantry began to lose the close support which our artillery could no longer give them while remaining west of the river where the

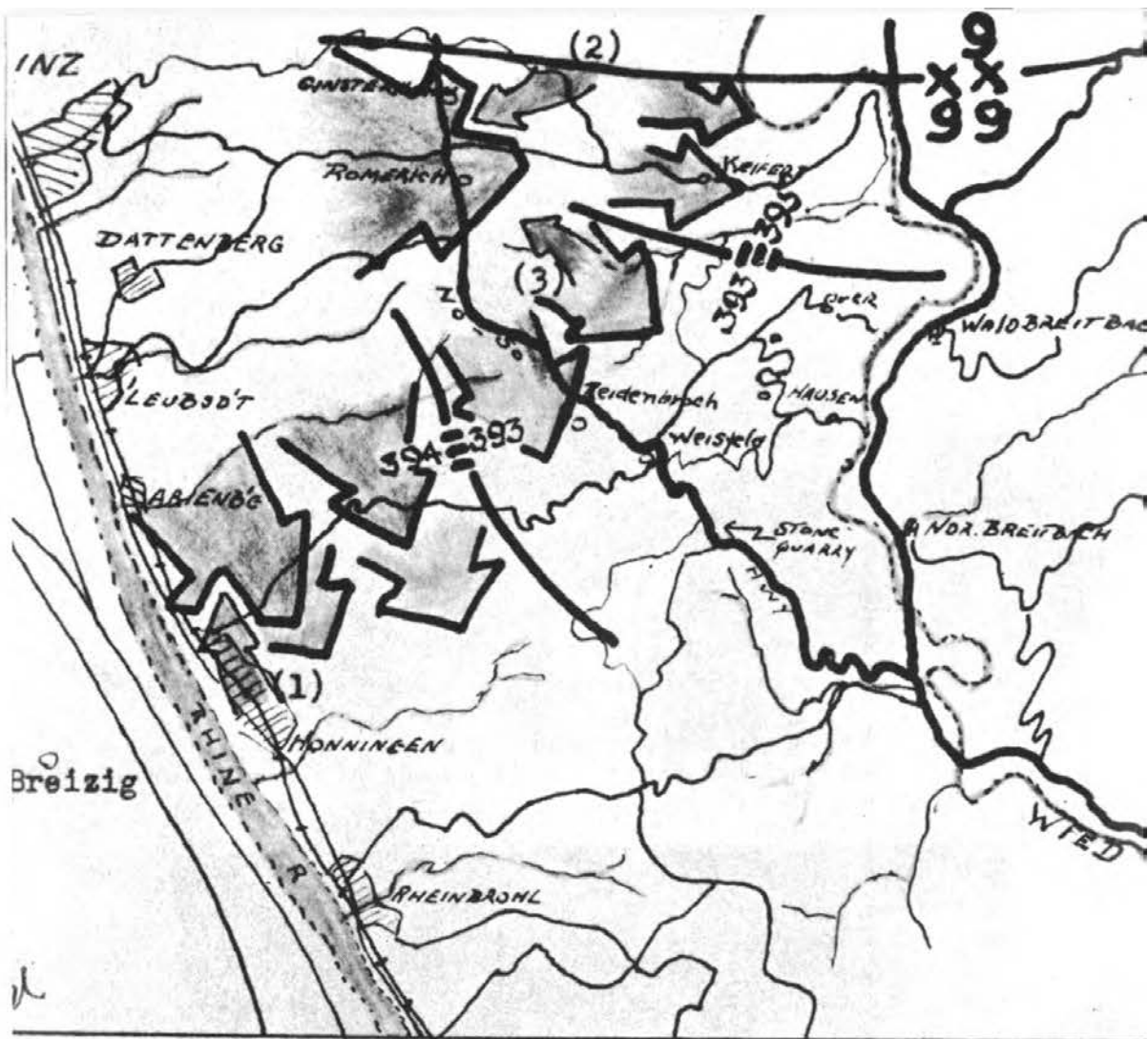
⁸ III Corps Report Mar. '45, p. 33. Decrease in artillery fire on bridges and data on air raids verified.

problem of ammunition supply did not enter into the problem of their firing. The time had come when this matter of ammunition supply had to be solved. It was met promptly and successfully. D.U.K.W.s, or motor-propelled landing craft, carried the ammunition over the river, and an ammunition dump was established on the east shore of the Rhine where it could be easily reached by our ammunition trains. Our Divisional light artillery crossed the bridges between air raids that day. The first to cross, at 2:45 P.M., was the 370th Field Artillery Battalion, followed shortly thereafter by all the other battalions of light artillery. They went into positions close behind our front line troops, and our "doughs" again had, reinforcing the fire power of their own regimental cannon companies, the entire blasting power of the divisional artillery. That winning combination of battle, the infantry-artillery team, was now east of the Rhine. That afternoon, as the 99th Reconnaissance Troop rolled into Linz,⁹

⁹ The last element of the division still west of the Rhine was our medium artillery battalion, the 372nd. From its position, however, its fire could reach every part of our front.



Men of the 1st Battalion 393rd take cover in a draw from an artillery barrage.
(393rd History.)



THE REMAGEN BRIDGEHEAD 12-15 MARCH

Expanding the Foothold

Dark arrows indicate progress made on 12-13 March; light arrows indicate progress made on 14-15 March with all three Combat Teams of the 99th abreast.

Numbers indicate counterattacks. (1): Site of two counterattacks, the first at 3 P.M. the 13th when the enemy penetrated our lines but was driven off, and the second at midnight the 14th which was destroyed. (2): Infantry and tanks attacked toward Ginsterhahn and were repulsed. (3): Another attack by infantry and tanks took place on the 14th and was destroyed. (Both by the 393rd Infantry.)

Enemy forces consisted of the following units as they appeared on our front from Honningen east and north:

394th Front: 989th, 981st and 980th Infantry Regiments and 24th A.A.A. Battalion.

393rd Front: 403rd and 990th Infantry Regiments, K.G. Beck and elements of 2nd S.S. and 102nd Panzer Divisions.

395th Front: 908th, 901st Panzer Grenadier Regiments and 209th Battalion Engineers.

all but one unit of the 99th Division was on the east bank of the Rhine.

During the 13th March our front line troops were primarily engaged in repelling enemy counterattacks which were hurled at them, one after the other, to drive them off the commanding ground they had seized the day before. The 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry repelled a daring counterattack at Ginsterhahn staged by a mass of infantry and six tanks. Our men held their fire until the armor and pickaback infantry were sure targets, then opened fire with such murderous effect that the tanks turned tail and fled. Few hostile infantry escaped. One Mark VI Tiger tank was destroyed by our 629th Tank Destroyers. The 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry received and repelled an attack hurled at its position near Rothkreuz, also on the crest, and meanwhile a repeat performance took place at Ginsterhahn, where the Germans had to be convinced again, the hard way, that our troops were up on the ridge to stay and were going to hold the important north-south road along the summit.

The 394th Infantry had its share of hostile opposition in the form of counterattacks that day too. Late that morning, a strong enemy attack of about 200 infantry, supported by heavy automatic weapon fire, penetrated the regimental position for a distance of about 150 yards before our men drove out the enemy and restored the line. It was the indication on that flank that the enemy had been reinforced. Elements of the 272nd Volksgrenadier Division had arrived, attacked, and been driven off.

Each day brought about contact with more and more hostile non-divisional units. Anti-aircraft battalions on ground defense, engineer battalions fighting as infantry, *Kampfgruppe*, anti-tank battalions, and every type of element the enemy could scrape together to stem the expansion of our bridgehead were encountered. It could be sensed that no high-level, fully co-ordinated defense had faced us up to this time. It had been the dogged, fanatical, last ditch resistance of a number of small units, fighting on *Festung Germania* in the Goebbels tradition, which we had at first encountered. The fact that regular divisional units had arrived and were now in contact with our troops strongly indicated the probability of harder fighting in the near future.¹⁰

¹⁰The "Battle Babies" were feared by the German commanders. The following extract from Headquarters Third Army's Tactical I.P.W. Report, dated 13 Mar. '44, is highly indicative of this fact, particularly since the 99th Div. was operating with the First Army. The report reads: "The P.O.W. (a high ranking one) was mostly

Honningen, a fair sized town on the east bank of the Rhine, had to be captured. Our artillery had difficulty in reaching it with its fire, and so arrangements were made for our supporting air to bomb the town so as to soften it up before our men moved in. Sixteen 500 pound bombs were dropped on the town, plus a few napalm fire bombs. One of the bombs must have hit an ammunition dump, for a violent explosion occurred during the period of bombing. We kept pounding away at the town all day.

The night of the 13th-14th March brought the 395th Infantry back to the Division. It had been held, up to that time, in bridgehead reserve back of the 9th and 78th Divisions. As it rejoined, it was promptly assigned an attack zone on the left flank of the divisional area, and early on the morning of the 14th March it lashed out in a vicious up-hill drive over the steep, wooded hills and against heavy enemy resistance. It drove hard and advanced its front over 1200 yards, overrunning the town of Keifert. Early that afternoon it decisively repulsed a strong enemy counterattack by infantry and tanks. It, too, had come to stay, and was out to convince the enemy the hard way if necessary.

The 393rd and 394th Infantry Regiments held their positions that day and got everything in readiness to lash out in another powerful co-ordinated drive the next day.

It was during the afternoon of the 14th March that an event took place at Honningen which was to be encountered more and more frequently as our troops pushed into the heart of Germany.

Our air had bombed the town and our artillery was lacing into it to soften it up before our infantry attacked. One of our air observers reported having seen two large German army trucks and an enemy staff car move south out of Honningen that morning. Shortly thereafter our troops reported white flags hung from several houses in the town and from a chateau north of the town; also, that a civilian walked to the edge of the river and planted the staff of a large white flag in the sand. Less experienced troops may have fallen into the

concerned with the U.S. divisions opposing him. Of those he knew best were the 99th Division and the 2nd Division. He stated that the U.S. 99th Infantry Division was definitely the finest and best trained American division he had encountered. Soldiers of that division were well-trained riflemen and excellent scouts. At one time he saw ten German soldiers shot through the head by a single sniper. This was repeatedly the case on the whole sector of the 99th Division. He stated that soldiers from other U.S. units often gave their units and other military information but that none of the men from the 99th U.S. Division ever told more than their serial numbers."

error that the Germans wanted to surrender, but our men had learned their lesson in the Ardennes, when the Boche had used that ruse of white flags so as to maneuver themselves into more advantageous fighting positions.

Our men looked the entire area over most critically. They observed, by actual count, thirty-two enemy soldiers moving about in the town, a patrol of twenty men near the chateau, and still another twenty to thirty man patrol in a draw near the town. They did not fall for the fake surrender. That night the enemy actually attacked our positions near Honningen, only to be disastrously repulsed before he even reached our lines.

Experience taught us later, as we encountered this situation more and more frequently, that what we had observed was a conflict between the German military authorities and the civilian government. The staff car was probably that of some high ranking German army officer who had decided that the fight must go on in the town, the town being used as a strong point. The townsfolk, whose property was being shelled and destroyed, wanted to call it a day and quit. The military defied the local government and were going to fight on. Result—white flags, bed sheets, hanging out of the windows of houses; "Shirt Tail Alley," as our men nicknamed the display put up by the civilians in full evidence while fighting was going on.

The hostile artillery fire directed at our bridges fell off still more during the day. We had seized the commanding hill crest and driven off all enemy observation, but the enemy was still determined to blow out our bridges—if he could. He used ninety-eight planes to make fifty-seven raids on the bridges that day. All failed. He used jet planes in these attacks, and only about eight of his planes were shot down, even though our anti-aircraft defenses had been increased. We now had a total of four gun battalions and nine automatic weapons battalions along the river banks. Each time they opened up full blast on the raiders, as they did fifty-seven times that day, it sounded as though the skies were being ripped apart by the clanging open and shut of the gates of hell.¹¹

¹¹ The division psychiatrist was conducting his class of fifteen to twenty combat exhaustion cases in a school room in Linz, giving these men a dose of "reassurance psychotherapy" and explaining the intricacies of how to handle fear. A Jerry jet plane found it necessary to jettison a 500-pound bomb about a half block down the street. The concussion blew out the windows in the class room. It is said the division psychiatrist *led* his students out of the class room with more speed than usual. (Maj. N. L. Sharp, M.D., Anderson, Ind.)

Like a big man dashing through a rapidly spinning revolving door, so the big guns of the 372nd Field Artillery Battalion dashed across the bridge between air raids that day. They left their firing positions at the town of Westum, near Remagen, at 5:30 P.M. and went into position near Dattenberg, east of the Rhine, by 6:00 P.M. They lost no time. Promptly they began dropping their heavy 155 shells into the town of Honningen, while zeroing in their persuaders on targets along the entire Division front.

The entire Division was now east of the Rhine. It is claimed that the 99th Infantry Division was the first entire American division in the European Theater of Operations east of the Rhine and firmly established on *Festung Germania*.

Hours before daylight on the 15th March, the "Battle Babies" hurtled out all along their front in another co-ordinated drive to further enlarge the bridgehead. They advanced 2500 yards that day, captured four fair sized towns, and took 215 prisoners of war.

The 393rd Infantry started out at 5:00 A.M. By 9:00 A.M. its 3rd Battalion had captured the town of Hesseln, south of the ridge road, and at 10:00 A.M. met and repelled with heavy casualties a 100-man enemy counterattack. It then continued to drive on to capture Hill 330 against stiff artillery and small arms fire and then captured the town of Krumscheid at 6:10 that evening. That was not enough for this outstanding battalion, for at 11:00 o'clock that night it was again attacking farther south to capture the town of Girgenrath. These steady advances began to produce signs of loosening in the enemy's defensive system.

The 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry drove south that afternoon and captured the town of Reidenbruch and the important high ground to the east of that town.

The 395th Infantry started out at about 6:30 A.M. to enlarge its area. Its 2nd Battalion captured the town of Hahnen by 10:14 A.M. after its Company G maneuvered around and attacked the town from the northwest. Its Company E then ran into a stiff fight in a rock quarry west of the town, where the enemy had built a strong point supported by rocket and artillery fire. By 4:25 P.M. Company E knocked out all enemy resistance and cleared the quarry, destroying a Mark V Panther tank with bazooka fire while doing so.

The 1st Battalion of the 395th Infantry drove hard through its assigned zone against continuous stubborn enemy resistance, taking all its objectives, and finally, at about midnight, sat on the outskirts



INFANTRY
Can Go Where
TANKS
Can Not!

Through the
Wald near
Rothkreuz on the
top of the ridge.
Driving out the
enemy and
mopping up!
(393rd History.)





T.D.s and Tanks accompanied the doughs—a common method of fighting found most effective.

of the hill town of Steinhardt, only about 500 yards from the Wied River.

In front of Honningen, the 1st Battalion 394th Infantry had pushed ahead slightly to better its position for its final jump into that town. Farther east, the 2nd Battalion 394th had that afternoon attacked through the hills east of the narrow plain along the Rhine on which the town of Honningen is located, so as to cut off any help the enemy might have received from that direction. Toward the close of the day it arrived on its objectives after battling through stiff artillery and small arms fire.

Sometimes with disasterous results like this one just north of the town of Romerich.

(393rd History.)



North of our 99th Division, the 9th Infantry Division and the 78th Infantry Division were also making good headway. They, too, had met with strong resistance which toward the end of that day was showing signs of weakening. More of our troops were being brought into the bridgehead area. The leading elements of the 1st Division of the VII Corps crossed to the east bank of the river that day.¹²

Among the 215 prisoners of war we captured that day, a gold mine of information was discovered by the Interrogation Team with the 395th Infantry when a Major von Koeller, commanding officer of the 403rd Engineer Regiment, was ferreted out of a cellar in Hahnen, along with his adjutant. Probably the greatest importance of this find was the information contained in the fat briefcase the major carried. Among the maps and documents were the enemy plans for operation against our bridgehead—but—the major furnished one choice bit of information on—at that time—a burning question of interest to the whole world: Who was the unfortunate who bungled at Remagen? Who was the man who failed to destroy the Ludendorff Bridge? The major was to appear as a witness at a courtmartial at German headquarters of Army Group B the next day in which our benefactor, one Captain Friesenhan, 12th Company, Landespionier Regiment 12, was to explain why he should not be shot for failing to destroy the Remagen railroad bridge.

The identification of the prisoners taken at various places along our front indicated that we were faced by still another hostile division, the 340th Volksgrenadier Division. What would appear to be a formidable array of enemy divisions faced our troops. From left to right there were the 11th Panzer, 340th V.G., 277th V.G., and the 272nd V.G. Divisions. The 403rd Engineer Regiment also had a

¹² The plum which suddenly fell into the hands of the First Army undoubtedly "upset the apple cart" of Gen. Montgomery's detailed plan of a Rhine crossing. Supplies and great reserves had been piled up for this great effort. It was given wide publicity, airborne troops were to be used, assault boats, bridges, tremendous artillery concentrations, etc., etc. It was to be one of the great if not the greatest event of the entire war. While he was talking and planning it happened. The III Corps crossed the Rhine—the bubble burst—it was over. The planned crossing by the American Third Army of Gen. Patton was also a lost cause.

The enemy had concentrated against these two crossings—one north, the other south—and he was not prepared for the actual accidental crossing in the center. He was thrown off base and so was the Allied army, caught unprepared to quickly exploit the Rhine crossing windfall.

It appeared for a while as though the handful of troops over the Rhine would have to hold that position for a long time all by themselves. The actual arrival of other First Army troops to help exploit the crossing and establish a real bridgehead was a great morale booster for those on the ground at that time.



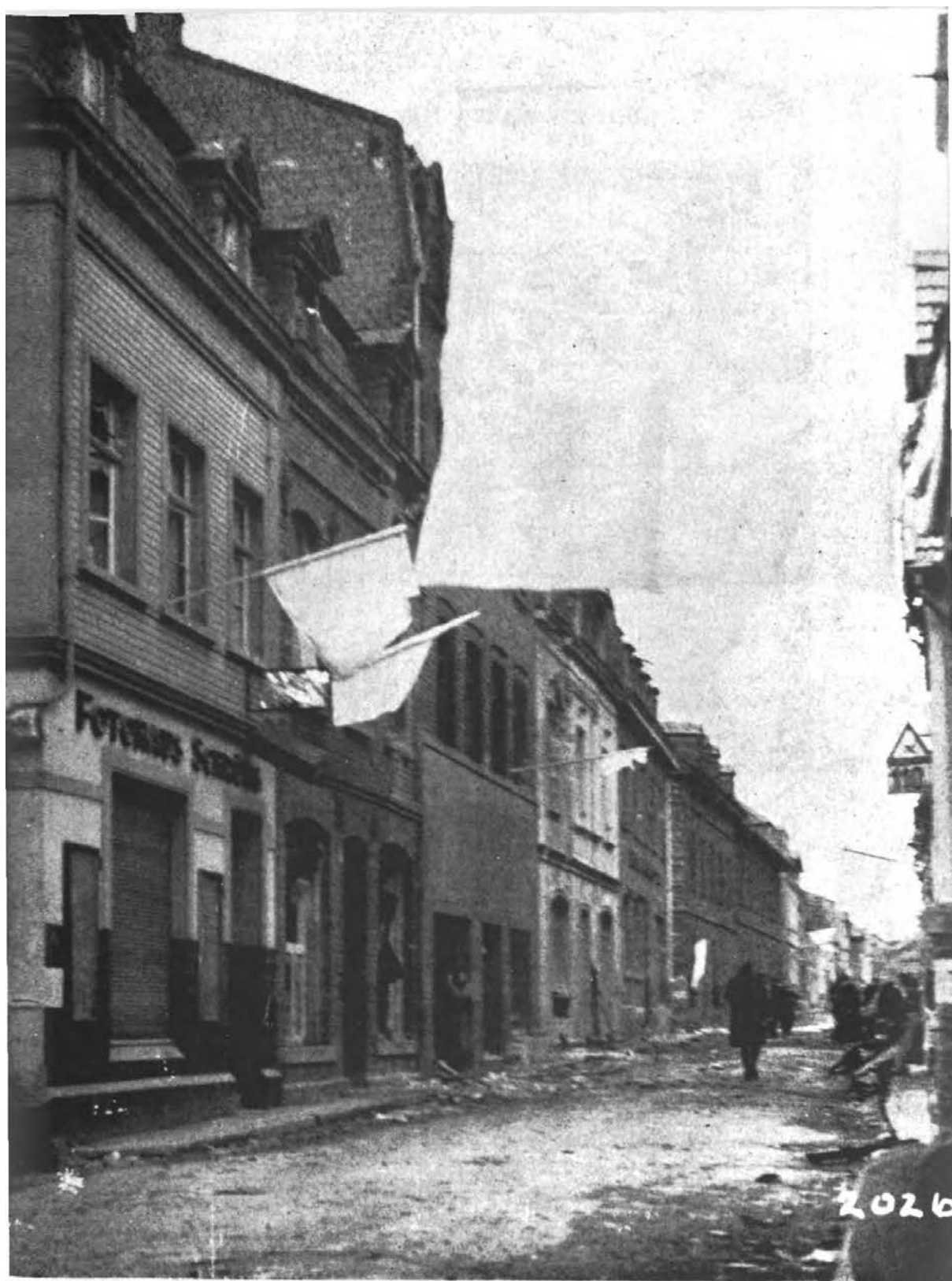
HONNINGEN
 Taken from the west bank of the river while
 the town was being shelled Mar 15th.
 (US Army Photo)

finger in the situation by controlling the many miscellaneous anti-aircraft and engineer troops committed on our front. Despite this array, information from the prisoners and from captured documents indicated a sore lack of infantry and reserves. The best the enemy could do was to organize small *Kampfgruppe*¹³ to hold towns and strong points on key terrain and by stubborn and tenacious fighting extract a maxi-

¹³ *Kampfgruppe*: A term applied by the Germans to hastily organized units from recruits, stragglers, replacements and everything obtainable and loosely formed into a command—usually of battalion size, three rifle companies of sixty to seventy men and a weapons company of four machine guns—literally a “combat group.”



First clearing station over the Rhine.
 (Photo by Ed Ward, Company D, 324th
 Medical Battalion, Pine Bluffs, Wyo.)



"SHIRT-TAIL ALLEY"

The 1st Battalion 394th Infantry takes over Honning.

(U.S. Army photo.)



A few men of the Negro platoon Company E 393rd take a well-earned rest. Company K 394th praised the Negro platoon which helped them clean out Honningen. The platoon with the 395th Infantry gained the same reputation.

(393rd History.)

num of delay to our advancing troops. He fought stubbornly, but was pushed back steadily and unremittingly.

On the 16th March the Division continued the determined offensive it had started the day before. It advanced approximately 4000 yards, captured twelve towns and 331 prisoners, and secured all the high ground west of the Wied River within its zone.

The stiffest fighting took place in the towns of Honningen and Weissfeld. Honningen was no walkaway. It was a methodical, bloody battle for the doughboys of Company C of the 1st Battalion 394th Infantry who first gnawed away the hard outer crust of the Nazi defenses of the town and who later, joined by Company K 3rd Battalion, continued to grind on through the town, step by step, to de-Kraut the area.

The white flags displayed by the inhabitants meant nothing.

Every building, every cellar had to be cleared. Before our armor could get into the town, our mine detector crews first battled it out with snipers and then swept the roads. Tanks of the 756th Tank Battalion then rolled in with our infantry pickaback. Snipers were blasted out of houses. By placing a shell just below the Jerry's position, the wall would cave in and Jerry would come tumbling out.

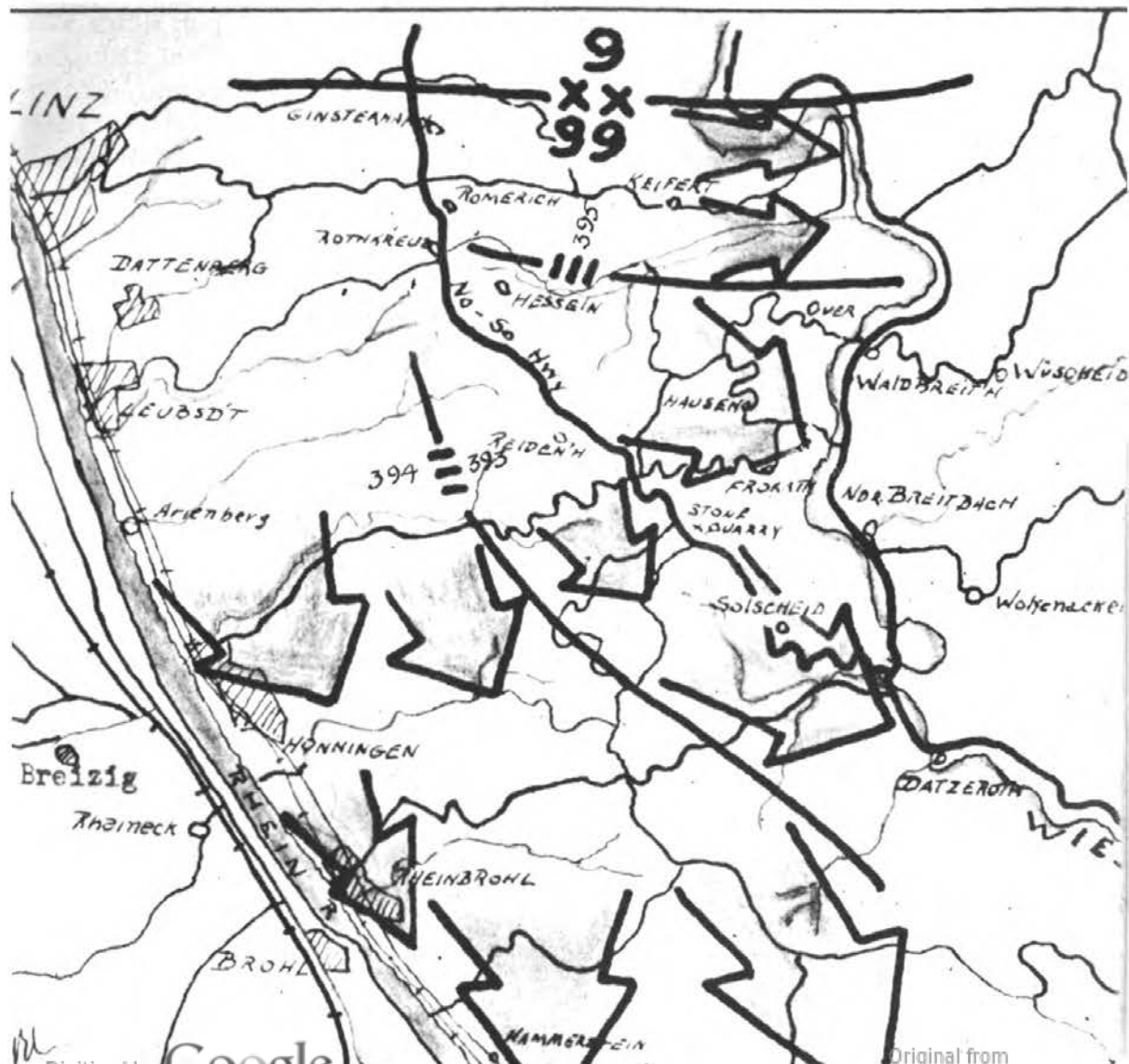
Driving through the eastern third of the town, the Negro platoon of Company K, which had already distinguished itself in its few days of battle, accounted for the major portion of the 300 prisoners

BRIDGEHEAD ESTABLISHED

On 16 March, the 395th Infantry and part of the 393rd Infantry reached the Wied River (see first row of arrows).

On 17 March, the 394th Infantry cleared the town of Honningen after a bitter house-to-house fight.

From 17 to 21 March (see second row of arrows), while the 395th and 393rd Infantry Regiments held the high ground along the Wied River, the 394th Infantry Regiment cleared its area extending two miles south of the edge of the map.



taken. Sweeping through the town, it bagged a colonel and his staff of four, and killed many others.

Most divisions, when they had received their quota of Negro combat troops, had sent them to rear areas for further training. Having once been the assistant division commander of the 93rd Infantry Division of Negroes, I decided against such action. Based on the fact that all these men had had much service and training as infantry, and that they had volunteered for infantry action, many of them giving up high ratings to become doughboy privates, I decided to use them immediately in combat. The first real fight they entered was this one at Honningen. They proved their worth!

This platoon was under Lieutenant Richard A. Ralston (Long Beach, Calif.), with Technical Sergeant Oliver A. Sacco (Wheeling, West Va.) as platoon sergeant. In its first action, the leading squad of the platoon, sparked by scout Private First Class James Oliver (Nyack, N.Y.), slithered up in back of a machine gun which had been holding up the advance and captured it and its crew intact. The platoon then knocked out a 20mm flak (anti-aircraft) gun which was being used on ground defense, and captured its crew. That night the men crept up on a Jerry patrol and disposed of it quickly and silently. During the fighting in the town they charged into building after building, cleaning out Jerries and collecting a number of "civilians" as prisoners who were caught in cellars with radio sets signalling the Kraut artillery. Private T. C. Williams was about to enter a building when a burp gun opened from a darkened doorway. The bullets tore through his jacket, knocking an oil can out of his pocket. "T.C." emptied a clip into the darkness, then followed up the shots to find a dead German "flak-wac," her gun still clutched tightly in her hands.

These men went through the town like a scourge. Resistance was stubborn,¹⁴ and fighting continued all during the day and night and late into the next afternoon. That second day the entire town was taken, including the main crossroads south of the town, and our troops also sat on the commanding hills looking down on the historic little town of Rheinbrohl on the bank of the Rhine.

The American fighting soldier's sense of humor could always be counted upon to pop out even under conditions of the most serious kinds of fighting.¹⁵ The capture of Honningen was no exception.

¹⁴ Regularly organized units from the 26th V.G. Div. were established in the town.

¹⁵ Co. E 395th Inf. was proud of the bravery and often amused at the antics of the Negro platoon attached to their company. After capturing and cleaning out

Hardly had the town been cleared when a large sign scrawled on a piece of paper appeared at the entrance to the town: "HONNINGEN—Officially Annexed to Texas." The C.O. of Company C, whose company had done a good part of the fighting in capturing the town, came from Texas, and he could not help but indicate his sentiments by annexing a part of the beautiful Rhine to his native state.

During the 16th March the 393rd Infantry advanced about 4000 yards against tough resistance and captured eight towns. Its 3rd Battalion hopped off right after midnight and took the towns of Girgenrath and Bremscheid by early morning, repelling en route a counterattack hurled at them at 4:00 A.M. Later during the day they captured the towns of Over, Stopperich and Frorath. Its 1st Battalion attacked at 6:00 A.M. and captured the town of Hahnen and then advanced on Weissfeld. Here a small *Kampfgruppe* of about seventy men organized in a strong position and supported by machine gun, mortar and Panzer Faust fire, offered stiff resistance. It took about two hours to capture the town. After softening up the hostile position with artillery fire, the town was attacked at 10:40 A.M. and it fell at 12:30 P.M. There was no enemy left.

The 395th Infantry was not to be outdone. It attacked with two battalions. Its 2nd Battalion hopped off before daylight that morning (3:30 A.M.), and by 8:15 had captured the towns of Heeg and Reifort. Its 1st Battalion attacked at 5:30 A.M. and shortly thereafter took the town of Steinhardt following a short, stiff fight. With these advances the regiment sat on its assigned objectives for the day overlooking the Wied River. Anticipating the next tactical operation, the regiment promptly sent patrols out along the river bank looking for good crossing sites.

During these attacks on the 16th our troops learned a new trick practiced by the enemy. Before being forced back from each successive ridge—for this was mostly hill fighting—the enemy would light

the resistance in a little mountain town, one of the colored platoon was seen riding a liberated motor bike down the street. This was strictly against orders but did not bother him in the least. His fun was soon stopped by one of the officers. This did not dampen his spirits—twice more during the day he was stopped and finally he was reprimanded by the company commander. About sundown those at the company command post heard snatches of a colored voice singing as only they can sing. Strolling down the street came this same boy now dressed in formal attire—spats, striped trousers, tail coat, white bow tie, tall silk topper and swinging a cane, singing "I'm Making Believe." To all outward appearances he was back home and not in a battle-scarred town of Germany. (Courtesy R. L. Wilson, Manhattan, Kans.)



OUR MORTAR MEN DID THEIR PART

393rd "How-men" lob 'em into the town of Weissfeld.

a smoke pot which they would leave in their old position. This directed their artillery and mortar fire, which would invariably land there just as our troops reached the ridge line. Our men countered by keeping close to the enemy and frequently cutting around the ridges in their forward advances.

The next morning, Saint Patrick's Day, the 393rd Infantry continued its drive. It advanced over 2500 yards and secured all the commanding ground in its zone west of the Wied River. In this drive its 3rd Battalion captured the town of Hausen (taken by Company K)¹⁶ after a hot hour and a half fight, and took 223 pris-

¹⁶ The incident in Hausen which led to the capture of his entire company was not the first unpleasant encounter that Herr Lieut. Bemener, C.O. 2nd Co. 753rd Volksgrenadier Regt., had had with the 99th Div. He was in command of the 5th Co. 753rd V.G. Regt. (326th V.G. Div.) at the beginning of the Ardennes offensive, and as such, part of the 2nd Bn. of that regiment which had the mission of attacking and taking Hofen. The 5th Co. was to attack our 3rd Bn. 395th Inf. strong point on the night 18-19 Dec. '44 at its northern approaches. Although the approaching German soldiers were a perfect target, our troops allowed them to advance to within ten feet of our defenses. A sudden burst of rifle, machine gun and mortar fire nearly eliminated the German company and only a very few were able to get away, leaving their dead and wounded behind. This was the information Herr Lieut. Bemener gave our interrogation team at the time of his capture. The interrogation report continues; "At the conclusion of the interrogation when Lieut. Bemener was ready to leave he turned to ask casually if the interrogator knew what unit had held Hofen, and added: "They must have beer

oners. Its 1st Battalion stepped out that afternoon, and by dusk captured the towns of Solscheid and Longscheid against light artillery and small arms fire.

That day the fighting netted us over 580 prisoners. Resistance was breaking rapidly, and the enemy appeared content with pulling back over the Wied River. All along the front our troops scouted the river bank for crossing sites. Every unit had tales to tell of our patrols bravely wading out into the river, in spite of enemy fire from the far bank, to find places where our troops could cross by wading or our trucks could cross by fording. While most of this testing was done under cover of darkness and in secret, some of it had to be done in daylight, and what better time than immediately then and there, while the enemy was still off balance after hastily withdrawing to the far bank?¹⁷

It was also on the 17th March that the Germans became desperate in their attempts to blow the bridges over the Rhine. They had failed to destroy the Ludendorff Bridge on their withdrawal, their artillery fire was ineffective after their observation had been driven off the high ground now held by our troops, their air attacks were all unsuccessful, their bombers having suffered exceedingly heavy losses in their persistent air raids, and their jet planes had also failed—even dive bombing had failed. Now they threw in their last card—an amphibious demolition team.

Clad in waterproof rubber suits with webbed feet and hands, these S.S.ers, members of an amphibious team of "Gamm Swimmers," as they were called, looked like something out of "Flash Gordon" as they swam downstream, pushing floating T.N.T. blocks toward the pontoon bridge and the railway bridge. Alert machine gunners on shore, with orders to shoot at anything in the river, opened fire. The T.N.T. and the Nazi hopes went "blooey." The ersatz fish were captured by members of the 18th Cavalry Group attached to the 394th Infantry of the 99th Division.

With their capture, the last desperate hopes of the enemy to blow up our bridges were washed up. The "Gamm Swimmers" were too

one of your best formations.' When asked what reason he had for this opinion he answered, 'Two reasons; one, coldbloodedness; two, efficiency!'

¹⁷ To determine the feasibility of fording the river at one spot the division engineer, Lieut. Col. Justice Neale, took off his coat and waded out into the stream while the enemy shot at him and our men gaped in amazement. "The only way to do it!" was his reason.

ONE OF THE CAPTURED
GERMAN "GAMM
SWIMMERS"

(III Corps Report)

The seven men who set out to blow the pontoon bridges were: Untersturmfuehrer Schreiber, Rottenfuehrer Kretschmann, Sturmmann Egelhoff, Sturmmann Holzmanhofer, Schuetze Vogelsang, Schuetze Westbelt, Sturmmann Weidemann.

Lieutenant Schreiber was a typical fanatical Austrian Nazi, a member of the notorious *Skorzeny "Jagdverband"* as a "*Kampfschwimmer*" (combat swimmer) under orders of Admiral Heye, commander of the *Kleinkampfmittel der Kriegsmarine* (auxiliary combat methods of the navy).

The seven men, each equipped with a specially prepared explosive charge, were to take the water at Hammerstein at 11:00 P.M. 17 March. They were to distribute themselves along the four bridges, two in front and two behind the Remagen span, which had been reported by German observation. The pontoon bridges were to be blown simultaneously at 1:30 A.M. 18 March, for which time the fuses on the charges were set.

Things went wrong from the beginning for Lieutenant Schreiber when he tore his rubber swim suit, whereby he was hindered by the weight of his wet clothing beneath it and by cramps in his legs resulting from the cold water. In trying to bypass the floodlighted bridges, his companion was sighted from shore and fired on. A bullet hit and detonated the explosive charge. Schreiber aided his companion, who was wounded, ashore, where they were captured. Lots of things went wrong with their plans. He admitted all this after a gruelling six hour interrogation during which answers were elicited from him only by trickery. All were captured.

late in any event, for the principal object of their attention, the Ludendorff railroad bridge, weakened by partial demolition, artillery fire, near misses by bombs and heavy traffic, tired and weary, collapsed at 3:00 o'clock that afternoon. The bridge had served its purpose and at the time had been closed for repairs for several days.¹⁸

¹⁸ Two companies of corps engineers were working on the bridge at the time of its collapse. They suffered about ninety casualties. (III Corps Report Mar. '45, p. 116.)



I saw the big structure fall. The big center span appeared to buckle and then to swing out to the south and pull the other smaller spans with it. The whole bridge then collapsed into the river. There were men of the Corps engineers working on the bridge at the time, but no enemy fire was coming in. I think the old bridge simply had taken all it could, and wearily settled down in the river to rest. The thought struck me at the time, of old General Ludendorff of World War I fame, in whose honor the bridge had been named, bowing his head in deep gloom and collapsing because he could foresee what was to happen to the mighty *Wehrmacht*. Yes, the "*Wacht am Rhine*" had failed.

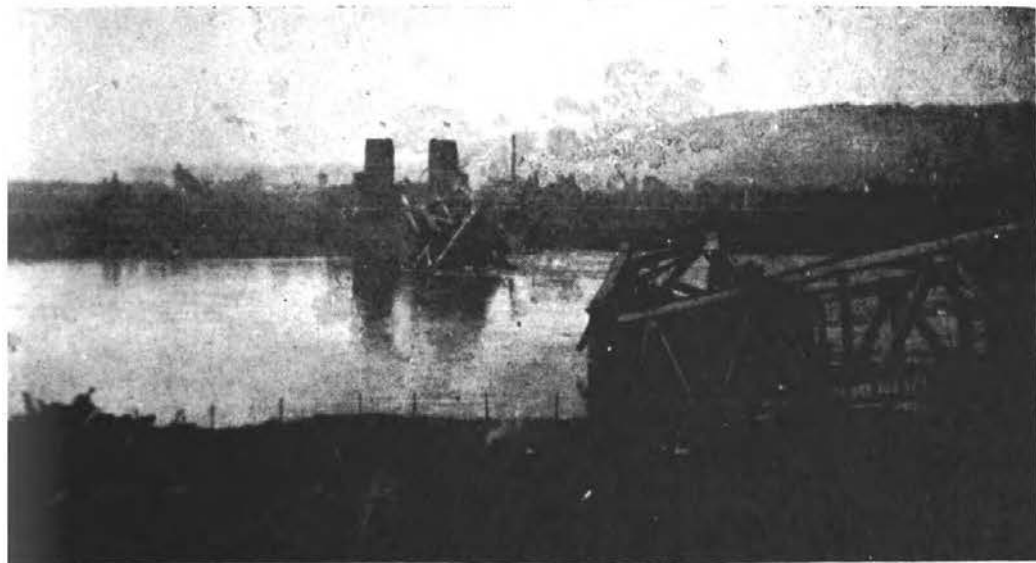
Our fighting was conducted not only by the infantry elements of the Division. Our tank destroyers blew up two Mark V German tanks and destroyed a hostile plane caught on its landing field, while the cannon company of the 393rd Infantry chalked up a direct hit on a German self-propelled gun and our artillery recorded the destruction by fire of three armored vehicles. Every unit in the Division was hammering away at the enemy. Ours was a great team, fighting always in the honored style of "One for all and all for one!"

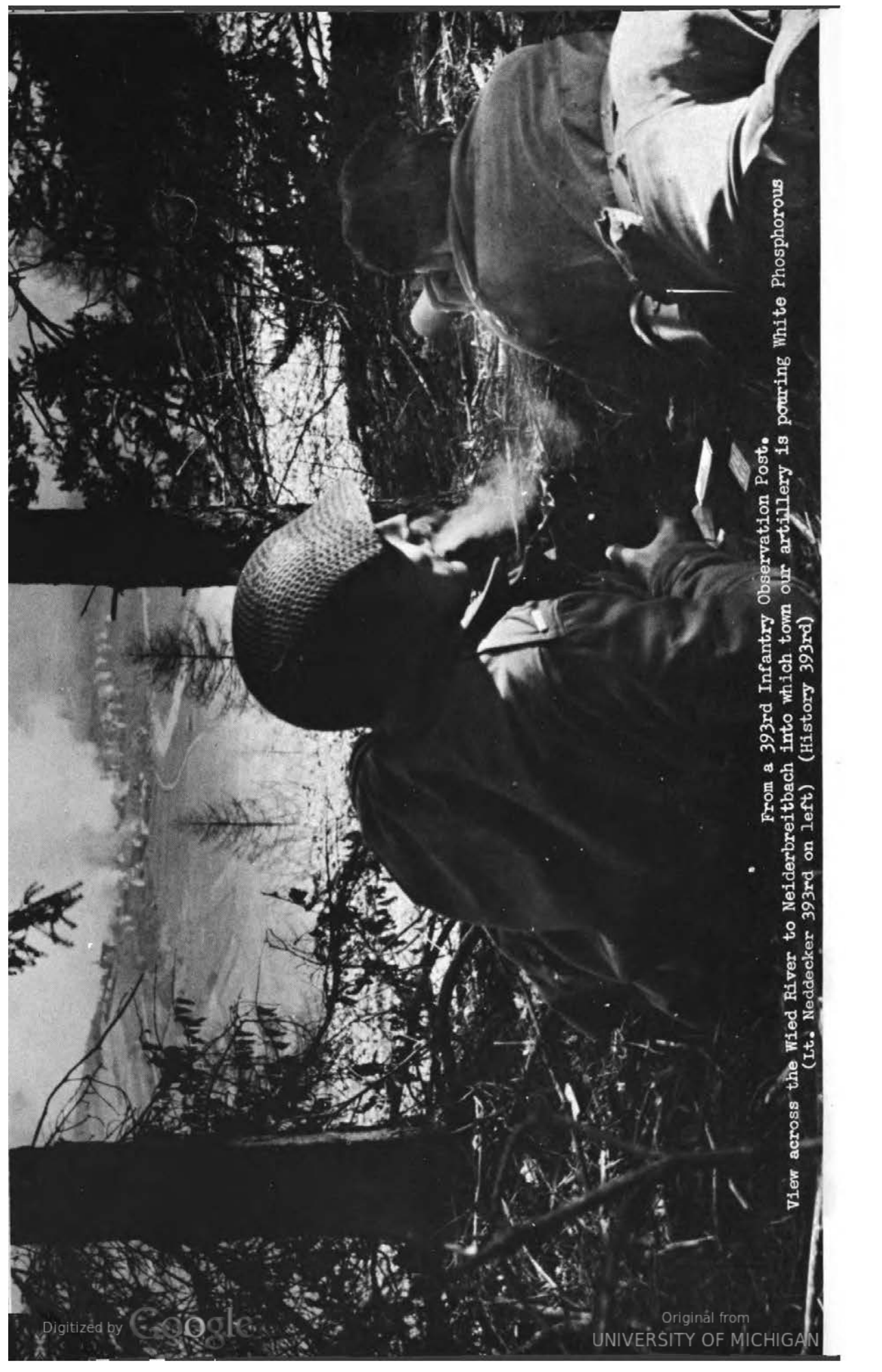
On the 18th March the "Battle Babies" sat on their assigned objectives on the perimeter of the bridgehead and devoted themselves to screening the areas they had overrun and getting ready for the next drive. We had established the bridgehead!

A grim sort of fun was being had by our artillerymen in rounding

TIRED AND WEARY, THE LUDENDORFF BRIDGE COLLAPSED

(A. M. Leban, 395th, Baltimore, Md.)





From a 393rd Infantry Observation Post.
View across the Wied River to Neiderbreitbach into which town our artillery is pouring White Phosphorous
(Lt. Neddecker 393rd on left) (History 393rd)

up hostile groups of the enemy, who, bypassed during our rapid advance the day before, were trying to sneak away over the hills and through the woods and cross to their lines east of the Wied River.

In crossing over the hills, many of these groups were spied by our artillery observers, who would lay down around them a box barrage of artillery fire and herd them back to our lines, where they surrendered without resistance.

The artillery was not the only versatile unit with the "Battle Babies." The 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which had been attached to the Division for some time and had come to be recognized as part of the Division, had its fun too. During this week of fighting it had participated in every fight, and by itself had destroyed two general purpose vehicles, four machine guns, one M.E.-109 airplane being towed on the ground toward the *Autobahn*, four Mark V tanks, three S.P. guns, four pack horses, two anti-tank guns, and had helped knock out thirteen enemy strong points, including one castle on the Wied River, brought down five raiding enemy planes, and to top it all, collected 113 prisoners of war.

Our fighting infantry had pushed ahead steadily. The resistance offered had been sticky in places—scattered places—and our men were happy to be able to "dish it out" to the enemy under conditions somewhat similar to that when they were on the receiving end and had to "take it on the chin" in the Ardennes. There was a difference, however—a great difference. When the Nazis had our men at a disadvantage, they rode over them in a ruthless, sadistic fashion, covering cruelty with the thin excuse of, "the expediency of war." Our men fought, fought hard and for keeps, but without vengeance or cruelty.¹⁹

The results of our fighting were more effective, as evidenced by an order issued at the time by Model, Generalfeldmarshall of German Army Group B. No such order was ever issued by our command. No such entreaty or veiled threats were ever employed—none were ever needed. Its translation follows:

THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMY GROUP

Hq 9 March 45

Soldiers of the Army Group!

Fighters on the Rhine River and in the Eifel!

In the tremendous battle on which the fate of Germany and of every single German depends, the German soldier is fulfilling his

¹⁹ Our medical battalion furnished medical supplies and equipment to several

difficult duty courageously and faithfully. But there are a few individuals who betray their own people in these grave days of emergency by shirking their duty. They loaf around behind the front line and present themselves as stragglers.

Therefore the following will be announced to all troops with the greatest possible speed:

BASIC ORDER

In the future stragglers or men lost from their units do not exist any more!

If anyone shall have lost contact with his unit in the course of action, he will attach himself within 24 hours to the nearest unit committed in the front line. This unit can always be easily found by the noise of battle. The soldier that fails to do so is an evil traitor to the community of the German people and will be treated as a state criminal. Excuses that he has lost his unit and is now looking for it will not be accepted any more.

For the period of transition I order:

Until the 16th of March all stragglers will report to the nearest unit in or behind front lines. These units will put them into their ranks regardless of the arm or branch of service to which they belong. There will be ample time for their return to the original units and this will be taken care of at a later date.

MODEL

Generalfeldmarshall

To what a sorry state the vaunted *Wehrmacht* had fallen! We saved their personnel sections a lot of headaches, I'm sure, for during our fighting we took a good number of these men out of circulation. From the 1st to the 18th March we gathered in 3262 of these potential headaches. Our score later was so great it was fantastic.

The next two days, the 19th and 20th March, saw the 394th Infantry, with the 18th Cavalry Squadron attached, continue its offensive along the east shore of the Rhine. In rapid succession, after having broken the backbone of the defense at Honningen, this splendid regiment captured the towns of Rockenfeld, Rheinbrohl and Hammerstein, and then drove another 2500 yards farther south to seize the ridge line overlooking the town of Neuwied on the bend in the Rhine. They gathered in over 600 prisoners during this advance against sporadic fighting and occasional strong artillery and mortar fire.

The remainder of the Division sat on its assigned objectives,

hospitals overrun in the area around Linz. These hospitals were filled with German soldiers and civilians, but all the German attendants had fled. Our medics were truly bearers of the Red Cross, for in addition to their heavy combat duties, they took care of and evacuated these deserted patients.

carefully reconnoitering for suitable crossing sites over the Wied, while our artillery began working over the towns on the other side.

Another instance of the peculiar fight which was being conducted between the German military and the German civil government occurred at this time on the front of the 393rd Infantry.

Our artillery was dropping W.P. (white phosphorous) shells intermingled with H.E. (high explosive) shells into the town of Waldbreitbach, across the Wied River, to soften it up before attacking. The W.P. was used to start fires to buildings after they were knocked down by the explosive shells. Observers reported that the town suddenly blossomed out with white bed sheets displayed from many windows but that German soldiers could be observed going around ripping them down, only to have the display reappear. Soon thereafter, under a white flag, a priest and a nun approached our lines. They came with a warning to us from the German troop commander of Waldbreitbach to the effect that we were to stop firing W.P. into the town *at once*, or else—or else he, the German commander, would have 200 civilians of the town lined up and executed as a reprisal! Apparently that German commander had forgotten where he was fighting or believed Americans were really gullible. Our reply was a double dose of W.P. to make him happy.²⁰

On the 21st March, elements of the 2nd Division came east of the Rhine to relieve our 394th Infantry and the right flank (2nd Battalion) of our 393rd Infantry Regiment. This relief marked the decision of higher headquarters to exploit the Remagen bridgehead. We could anticipate another great offensive to be launched in the near future.

A new boundary was now created on our right flank. It was no longer the Rhine. The 2nd Division, reinforced with Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division, took over that area we had seized, and so history repeated itself for the 99th Division. The "Battle Babies" once again found themselves fighting side by side with two of the finest regular army divisions—the 2nd and 9th—the same ones and in exactly the same relative positions in which they had fought during the trying days of the "Bulge"—the 9th Division

²⁰ The phone rang in my C.P. in Linz while I was in conference with the corps commander, Maj. Gen. Van Fleet. This event was recounted to me. I asked what answer had been given. Col. Woolnough told me what they proposed. I approved. I told the corps commander about it and we both just shook our heads in astonishment, wondering at the depths to which the German army had fallen. (Col. Woolnough commanded the 393rd Inf.)

on their left and the 2nd Division on their right. It was a winning combination once, and it was to prove itself a winning combination again.

Late during the 21st March another delegation under white flags appeared in front of the 393rd Infantry from the same harassed town of Waldbreitbach. This time a plea was made for a truce—a six hour truce to evacuate invalids and orphans from the orphanages in that town and the town of Ober Buchenau near by.²¹

We approved. Details were arranged, and the next day, under close scrutiny of our air observers, who flew the area the entire time to be sure no overt act was committed, the orphans and invalids were permitted to move out of the towns on foot and proceed over the hills to the *Autobahn* and eventually to—God knows where! We wondered at the time if the German command would have been as considerate had the conditions been reversed—and we doubted it.

During the 22nd March our two front line regiments continued to get ready to force the crossing of the Wied River. The 394th Infantry, which had pushed down along the Rhine in tremendous strides, was relieved by the 2nd Division and was now resting in reserve for a change and given a chance to catch its breath. Everything was ready for the BIG DRIVE.

²¹ The following sidelight of this event was reported by one of the N.C.O.s who participated in it: "The delegation consisted of a German lieutenant and a sergeant. They were very friendly and expressed the wish that the war was over. Later they were escorted back to their lines. Before arriving at their lines the lieutenant asked our men to leave him or his *green* soldiers might start shooting. Later when we forced the Wied, the German sergeant's body was found as one of the German casualties at a small foot bridge outpost."



Machine gunners
move up to
provide
close support

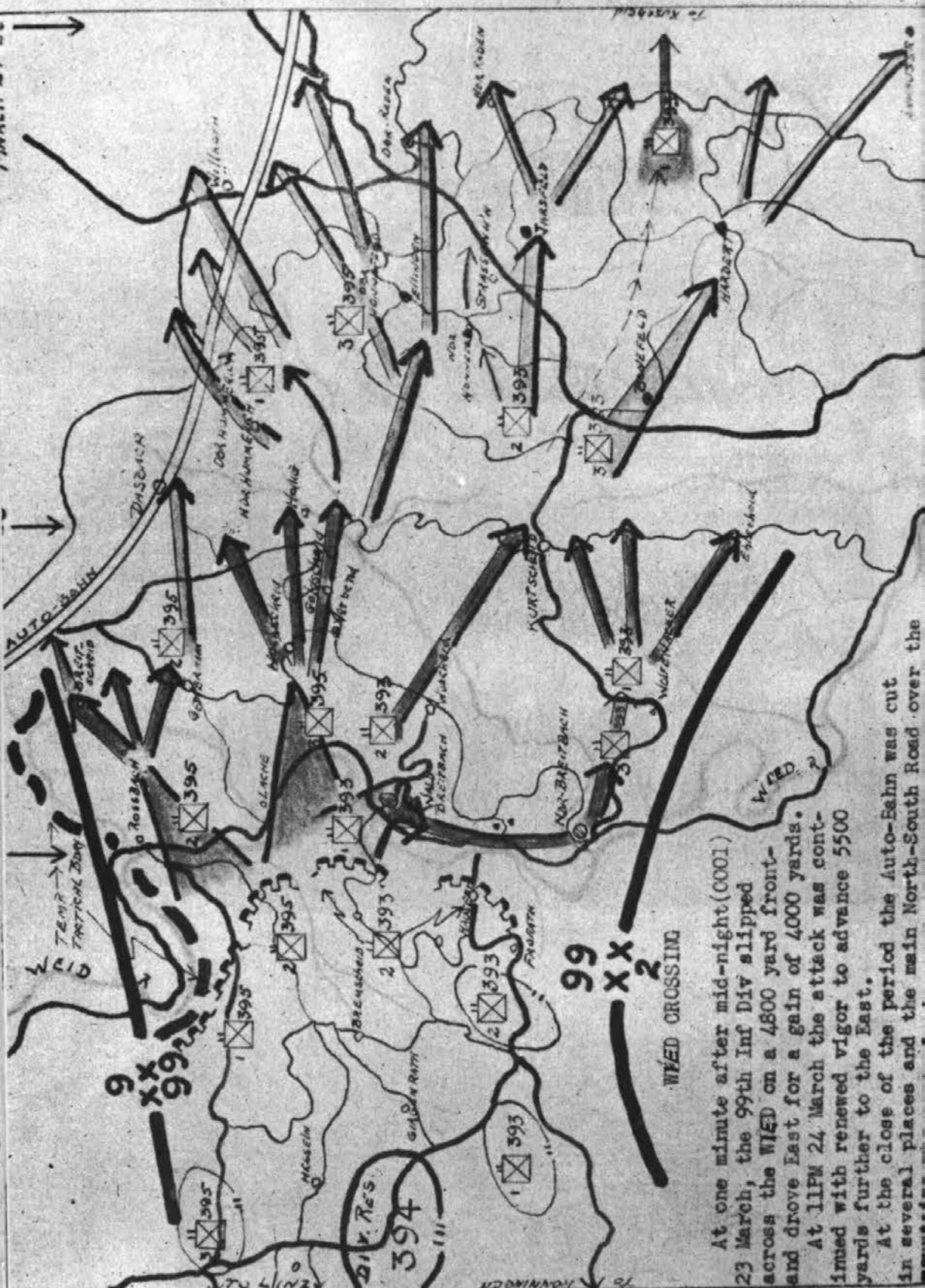


... followed by
more infantry in
support to
clean out by-passed
enemy resistance,
snipers, etc.

*(Taken near
Wolfenacker.)*

... they in turn
are closely followed
by our aid men
who were
always up front!
(393rd History.)





At one minute after mid-night (0001) 23 March, the 99th Inf Div slipped across the WIED on a 4800 yard front- and drove East for a gain of 4000 yards.

At 11PM 24 March the attack was continued with renewed vigor to advance 5500 yards further to the East.

At the close of the period the Auto-Bahn was cut in several places and the main North-South Road over the

CHAPTER XI

The Breakout and Drive to Giessen

THE NIGHT WAS CALM, slightly cold, moonless but fairly clear, with patches of fog in the hollows, when we hopped off in our "Breakout" from the Remagen bridgehead and crossed the Wied River.

The question had arisen as to the time and method of our attack. Should we hop off just prior to daylight, at midnight, or before midnight, and should we precede our attack with an artillery preparation or make it a pure surprise attack?

I knew the Germans expected us to attack. They had been worried about it for some time, for they sent up flares, off and on, every night. I also knew that most of the enemy liked their sleep, keeping just a few men on alert. Why wake them all up with an artillery preparation and warn them of an impending attack? Similarly, it would be far safer for our men to cross the Wied River under cover of darkness than in daylight when the enemy could see to shoot. We needed more time than an attack just prior to daylight would give us, and so I decided to make it a surprise attack and to have all units jump off simultaneously along the whole front at one minute after midnight—0001 hours, 23 March. Why waste time!

Crossing sites had been carefully selected, routes fully decided upon, and precise objectives set for each unit. The die was cast—a sneak attack at midnight. The hour arrived.

At one minute after midnight the 393rd Infantry and the 395th Infantry Regiments quietly slid down from their positions on the hills overlooking the Wied River, waded across, and started up the hills on the other side. We took the enemy by surprise!

In front of the 395th Infantry, all initial objectives were taken without much trouble by 9:30 A.M. In front of the 393rd Infantry, the enemy recovered a bit more quickly and put up a stubborn defense which lasted throughout the day. Even here, before the Germans knew what had happened, our men had galloped over the first important ridge line and were driving up into the higher hills toward the village of Kurtscheid, their objective.

The 395th Infantry attacked with its 2nd Battalion in the lead. Before the enemy was really awake, our 395th men overran Rossbach,

on the east bank of the Wied, where they captured three artillery pieces. Without halt they drove up into the high hills. The towns of Rossbacher-Baubchen, Gesterhahn, Elsbach and Breitscheid all fell in rapid succession. By 8:00 A.M. this battalion had secured all its assigned objectives and was ready to push ahead still farther to the east. The 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry crossed the Wied at the town of Lache, which fell quickly, and then rushed ahead and surprised the Germans in town after town. Bleischeid, Verscheid, Hochscheid and Goldscheid all fell by 9:30 A.M. The battalion then continued its long drive up and over the steep, uninhabited terrain to the town of Hollig, which fell early that evening.

The 393rd Infantry slipped across the Wied at Waldbreitbach with its 1st Battalion in the lead. Quickly Waldbreitbach fell. Company A was left in the town to clean up while the remainder of the battalion turned sharply to the south to seize the town of Neiderbreitbach and the high ground between these two towns. The 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry crossed on the heels of the 1st Battalion, passed through the town of Waldbreitbach, and promptly started directly up the steep slopes to capture the hill town of Kurtscheid and its important road center. The 3rd Battalion 393rd followed the 1st Battalion as clean-up unit.¹

Here on the front of the 393rd Infantry small groups of the enemy put up a stiff, flexible fight. Using the steep slopes, commanding ground and small hillside villages as points of resistance, they valiantly fought to delay our advance. In turn, our men doggedly fought their way up, step by step, against the small arms and automatic weapon fire of these small hostile groups, and drove them off each key terrain feature and out of the little villages clinging to the steep mountain trails. Each small group, when they were driven out, fell back to their next rearward position. While our men had become mountain goats and knew many tricks of woods and hill fighting, they nevertheless were faced with the arduous task of rooting out these groups, one by one, and that took time.

¹ Cleaning up was no simple task or process. Snipers and sleeper machine gun nests frequently opened up on troops in rear of the assault elements. These had to be cleaned out, and it usually took guts and time to smoke out this resistance. For example, a machine gun on a steep hill overlooking the first dorf east of Neiderbreitbach, passed through by our leading assault elements, continued to fire into the town. It had to be eliminated. The C.O. Co. L detailed Sgt. Huff to get it. The sergeant did—alone—and actually brought the gun back. Assault elements are ready for and expect a fight while clean-up elements have to ferret out all sleeper and by-passed resistance.

Meanwhile, two groups of the enemy, bypassed in the darkness during the initial attack, caused us a few moments of trouble. Between the villages of Waldbreitbach and Neiderbreitbach was a ridge on top of which sat two hospitals: Marienhaus and Antoniushaus. One was a county hospital and the other an insane house. They were both well marked with large Red Crosses and flags to indicate their purpose. During the period when we shelled the towns, these two hospital areas were scrupulously avoided.

When the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry crossed the river, it quickly overran Waldbreitbach and turned south along the river bank on the west side of the ridge line and captured Neiderbreitbach. While it was still dark, the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry passed through Waldbreitbach and drove directly up into the hills, completely bypassing the ridge line. Shortly after daylight our supply and evacuation personnel operating in that area were fired on from the vicinity of the hospital area, and considerable fire from the same area was received by our men engaged in bridging operations nearby. Some of our troops had to be turned aside to clean up this completely unexpected resistance.

Our men turned back enraged. This hospital area which they had conscientiously avoided firing on was being deceitfully used as an enemy strong point. They would clean it out, to be sure. They did, too, in quick order!

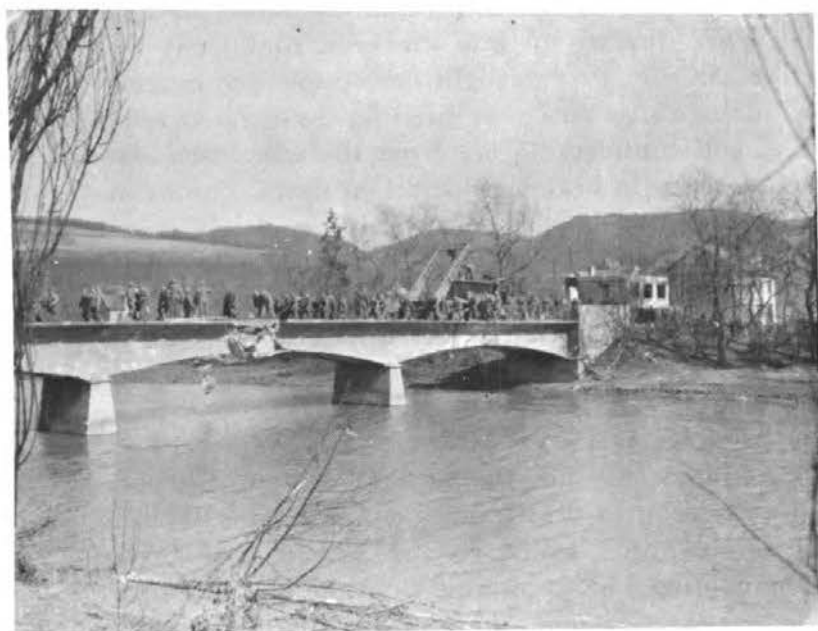
Later, the few prisoners taken revealed the story of what had happened. It appeared that the hospital area of Marienhaus and Antoniushaus was in the sector of two German captains named Lesser and Bartel. Both emphatically denied having abused Red Cross immunity during the fighting when fire came from the hospital area. They stated that the strategic (?) importance of this area necessitated a defense, but that positions were planned which, though in proximity to the hospitals, did not make use of them as cover for German troops or as points of vantage for aggressive acts. Their very words, "If you want to see the space we left between ourselves and the hospitals, go out and look at the fox-holes," was indicative in itself of the twisted caliber of mentality of these men.

They did not use the buildings as strong points—but they did use the grounds around the buildings. It was just another instance of the fanatical concept some of these "*Wehrmacht* heroes" had of warfare—like the one who was going to kill 200 inhabitants of his own town in reprisal if we did not stop firing white phosphorous into the town.



KURTSCHIED

On top of the captured ridge the "push" continued as fast as doughs could cover the terrain. Here part of Company K 393rd advances on smoking Harget.



Company I 393rd bringing back a few of the first P.O.W.s captured. They are crossing the bridge over the Wied at the town of Waldbreitbach as the 324th Engineers repair the damaged bridge.

(Below)

S.O.P.: Captured, searched, then sent on their way to a camp for P.O.W.s. These are some more of the first ones captured.

(393rd History.)



Of the approximately 350 enemy infantry holding Waldbreitbach and Neiderbreitbach, 261 were captured. All in all that day we captured 571 prisoners and overran sixteen towns and villages plus a great number of smaller hamlets. The resistance facing us still came from the 277th, 326th and 272nd Volksgrenadier Divisions, augmented by a number of miscellaneous small units.

As we had hoped, hostile artillery fire initially was very light. The volume of this fire increased considerably during the day. The bulk of this fire fell on the front of the 395th Infantry, but only after they had secured their objectives. This was further proof that the enemy had been caught napping. There was no doubt about it—the Boche were off balance, disorganized and confused.

We had not acted in the preconceived and set manner which the Germans thought was a fixed American system.² We had sneaked across the Wied at midnight without an artillery preparation. That was unheard of—unprecedented—therefore not according to rule—not fair—it was bad! Yes, indeed—bad for them!

We started the attack at one minute after midnight the 22nd-23rd March, and at 11:00 o'clock that night we were still on the prowl. We were giving the enemy a dose of day and night fighting. Having caught him napping, we were taking advantage of that fact, and advanced day and night to continue to keep him off balance. It was effective. At no place along our front did we encounter a real, organized, strong defense.

The 24th March, while we kept on pushing, was devoted primarily to consolidating our gains and in planning the offensive which would permit the 7th Armored Division to pass through our front line of infantry troops and burst out along the *Reichs Autobahn* and its adjacent road net in a "blitz" to the Lahn River and the big city of Giessen. Our infantry could then follow, cleaning up and backing up the armor.

To utilize the *Autobahn* and its road net, the whole Corps zone had to swing slightly to the northeast. The 7th Armored Division was brought across the Rhine in preparation for the "blitz," and our troops closed up to the front more tightly, in preparation for the next drive, to take place the 25th March. Our 394th Infantry, which was in reserve, reconnoitered for and moved into a forward assembly

² A high ranking German artillery commander who was captured was giving us gratuitous advice to the effect that "We know where the American main attack comes by the artillery concentration which always precedes." Little did he know American methods.



THE GENERALS CONFER AT NEIDERBREITBACH

Left to right: Hasbrouck, C.G. 7th Armored Division; Van Fleet, C.G. III Corps; Lauer, C.G. 99th Infantry Division. Other two officers aides, and driver in foreground Sergeant Elliott, chauffeur, 99th Division.

area east of the Wied and in a location generally between the two attacking regiments. My Division command post jumped forward from Linz to Neiderbreitbach.

Before the 7th Armored could get rolling, our troops had to cut the *Autobahn* and secure the only passable road over the hills which ran through Linz to Neiderbreitbach to Kurtscheid, through Strassenhahn and on to the *Autobahn*. To do this, we started our attack on the extreme left of our line. The 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry launched out at 10:00 P.M. on the 24th March, and before daylight 25th March had seized the high ground just south of the *Autobahn* near the town of Dasbach. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 395th Infantry drove east over the steep and heavily wooded hills to overrun town after town. That afternoon the 1st Battalion of the 395th Infantry cut across the *Autobahn* at Willroth and captured that town, while the 3rd Battalion 395th secured the exits of the best road over the mountains to the *Autobahn* by seizing the villages of Ellingen and Ober-Raden just before midnight the 25th March.

The 393rd Infantry started out at 3:20 A.M.³ the morning of the 25th March and by early evening (5:30 P.M.) had cleared all resistance out of the remainder of the area of the good mountain

³ They took 144 P.O.W.s during the early part of this attack, including the entire staff of the 981st Regt. (272nd V.G. Div.) who were captured during the latter phase of our night attack. The regimental commander and his staff had no idea that Americans were closing in on his command post until our troops went about the pleasant task of waking the personnel. The colonel during interrogation staunchly answered "Nein, nein" to every question dealing with military information, but gravely paid his respects to our well trained infantry and indicated his surprise at the "faultless execution" of our night attack, in his words, "an art for

road. Its 2nd Battalion drove straight east, overrunning village after village, finally to seize Neider-Raden that afternoon, while its 3rd Battalion seized the town of Bonefeld at 8:00 A.M. and by early evening had penetrated deep into the east mountain area to seize the town of Hardet and then without respite continued on toward Anhauser, another 4000 yards away.

The front of the 393rd Infantry was expanding so fast that its 1st Battalion, which had been held in reserve, was committed to action late that day and passed through the left flank of the 3rd Battalion and attacked due east to seize an objective near the town of Ruscheid.

All in all, the Division had driven ahead 5000 yards all along its front, and had seized and secured the break-out route for the 7th Armored Division. Fighting had been spotty. Road blocks—felled trees usually accompanied by mine fields—were encountered in a number of areas. In the town of Ellingen a short, stiff fight during the early morning hours routed the enemy, but only after the 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry destroyed two of the enemy tanks and two of his light armored vehicles. A small counterattack by infantry and a couple of tanks made a half-hearted attempt to delay the men of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry just north of Bonefeld. A brief fight and the enemy quickly withdrew to the southeast. During the morning our attacking troops met considerable small arms and artillery fire from villages and key terrain features, but as the day wore on and town after town was captured, the resulting disorganization of the enemy was reflected in the marked decrease of his artillery fire. The 1st Battalion 395th Infantry ran into a short, stiff fight just after noon when it cut across the *Autobahn* and pushed on to seize the town of Willroth. The enemy had taken up a position in a quarry near the town. He defended fiercely with small arms fire, but after suffering a number of casualties he quit. Willroth fell, and the *Autobahn* was definitely in our hands.

We took a total of only 659 prisoners that day, and even the uncertain resistance the enemy initially presented was almost entirely broken before the end of the day. The mountains cleared and the good road secured by our "doughs," all that remained was the matter of clearing mines from the roads to prepare a clean approach for the armored division to hurtle out and deliver its "blitz." This was quickly done.

which the American army is not generally noted." (Taken from After Battle Action Report, 26 Mar. '45.)



99th Division armor, loaded down with infantry, rolls along.

Note clearing station set up in background. Ambulances are dispersed against air attacks and bombardment.



A Mark V German tank knocked out by the first round from a bazooka (*below*).



Before daylight on the 26th March, at 4:00 A.M., to be exact, in a light rain, the 7th Armored passed through our front lines. It flashed out almost thirty miles against a confused enemy. The Krauts were getting a taste of American tactics played on their home grounds, *Festung Germania*.

The armor was able to roam almost at will, bypassing some small centers of resistance and overrunning others. As planned, our infantry trotted along behind and mopped up in its path. Foot-sloggers became marathon runners.

The 393rd Infantry advanced over 7000 yards that day. Its 1st Battalion continued on over the hills due east to capture Ruscheid by 11:00 o'clock that morning. At about noon the 2nd Battalion 393rd passed through its 1st Battalion, and making a wide detour out across the *Autobahn*, came in from the north and west to capture the town of Grosse-Maischeid at 5:00 o'clock that afternoon. Its 3rd Battalion had continued on to the south and east to capture Anhauser by 10:30 A.M. and then pushed on to capture Klein-Maischeid later that afternoon. They galloped over the countryside, cross-country, these doughboys, up hill and down hill, through woods and across valleys, but always farther and farther east, eliminating or driving out all enemy resistance. The armor could speed down the roads, but the doughboys were needed to route out the enemy in the hills.

In anticipation of the great strides the armored division would make, we brought the 394th Infantry forward from its assembly position in reserve the night before, and at 1:30 o'clock the morning of the 26th passed them through the 395th Infantry which, in turn, went into reserve. The 394th Infantry advanced over 10,000 yards behind the 7th Armored, encountering no resistance worthy of mention. "Where the hell are they? Why don't they come out and fight?" yelled the men as they jogged through town after town without seeing a Jerry soldier.

This was a new kind of warfare for our Checkerboarders who had blunted the spearhead of Von Rundstedt's winter offensive, pushed the Boche to the Rhine and then chased them across. Morale was high! They slogged and double-timed along, taking objective after objective with monotonous regularity. It got to be a joke! Urbach, Uberdorf, Dernbach, Gierhofen and on and on rolled the names of towns and villages passed through and secured. It was a sightseeing trip, afoot and in high gear. This was, however, not fast enough to keep up with the enemy who disappeared faster.

On the 27th March our units somehow or other motorized themselves and sped down highways after the 7th Armored for an advance of 19,000 yards. Our men rode everything that could roll. Tanks and tank destroyers crawled with infantry. Jeep trailers carried six men and the Jeep six more. Soon every vehicle had a trailer, and many captured vehicles appeared in our columns, carrying our doughboys. Almost overnight the Division had motorized itself.

The 393rd Infantry advanced about 7000 yards from its positions near Gross-Maischeid. It did not follow the armor. It had a cross-country mission to accomplish. It had reduced all resistance in the mountainous area clear to the *Autobahn* and then moved into an assembly area to reorganize and get ready for its next really long jump, motorized, the next day.

The 394th Infantry rolled ahead during the day, passing through town after town, until finally, toward the close of day, it seized and captured Sainscheid. It had advanced over 14,000 yards or about eight miles. The 395th Infantry, starting at Morgendorf at 7:00 A.M., advanced over 19,000 yards, or about ten miles, along the right flank of the Division zone. Toward the end of the day it was established near the towns of Neider Zeuzheim and Frickhoven. The "Battle Babies" had captured all the objectives set it by III Corps.

There was no fighting to speak about. Mopping up, taking over towns, liberating displaced persons, slave laborers and political prisoners took up most of the energy of our troops.

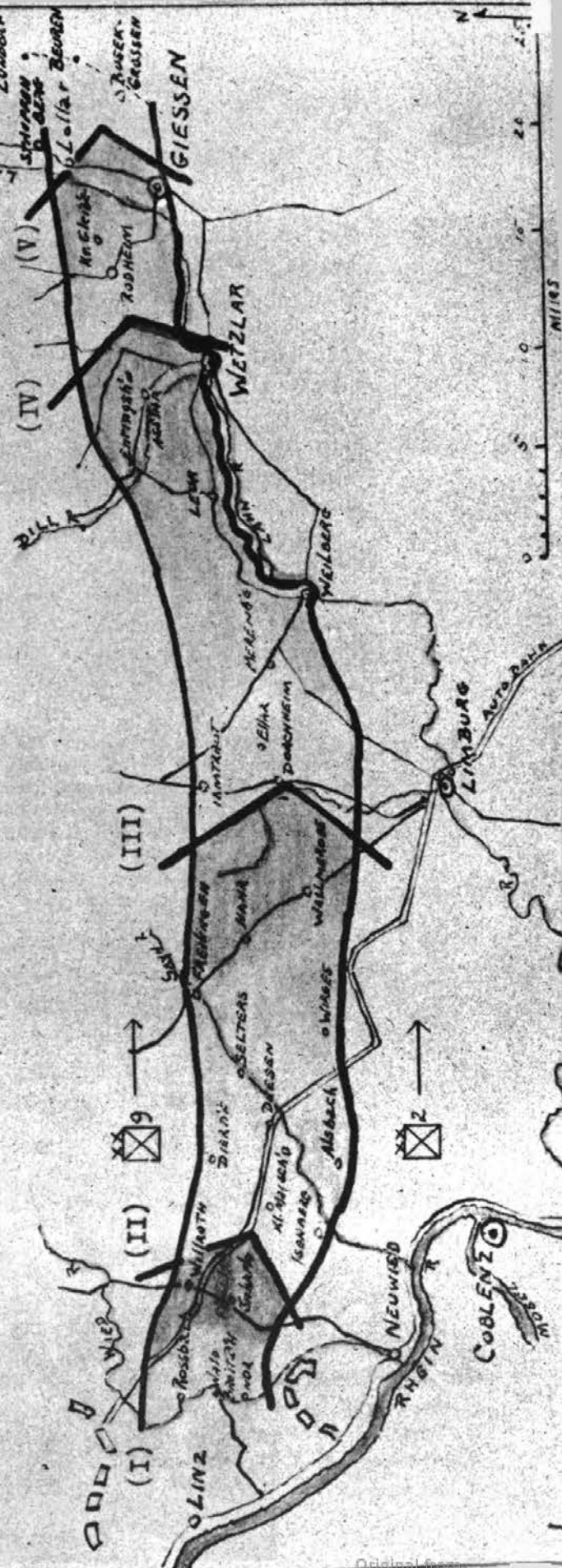
Just about the happiest people in the world those days were the



395th A.T.
Company
with an
assist by our
artillery
knocked out
this
Nazi tank.

(Photo by Alex
M. Leban,
395th,
Baltimore,
Md.)

- I -23 March Crossed the Wied River. Enemy forces: 272, 277 VG, 320, 321st Div
Miscel AA and KC Units
- II -24-25 March Attack continued day and night. Auto-Bahn cut. Route for Armored units opened.
- III -26-27 March Advanced 20 miles. Difficult terrain and road blocks. Enemy demoralized. Resistance same as above plus 26VC, 11 Pz, 167VG, 18 Div 130 PzLehr and 340 VG
- IV -28 March Advanced 32 miles. First mass liberation in First Army at EURGSOLMS Captured 2 large Ammunition Dumps, 25 RR Cars w/AA Guns etc
- V - 29 March Advanced 7 miles to final objectives. GIESSEN cleared and occupied. Division moved to KROFDORF-GLEIBERG to prepared for next operation.



liberated persons, slave laborers—French, Belgian, Polish, Dutch, Italian, Russian, etc. They lined the roads and streets, and cheered and saluted the Americans as they sped by with hands raised and fingers spread in the sign of the victorious "V." Russians with smiles as big as Russia itself stood smack in the middle of the road and shook hands with a G.I. in every passing vehicle. Laughing, hilarious Frenchmen grabbed surprised doughboys and planted humid kisses on their cheeks. Uncontrolled enthusiasm, joy, relief, gaiety, gladness and rejoicing were evidenced by these poor souls who had given up all hope of redemption. Many stories could be told about those days when these various peoples greeted the Americans as heroes and liberators.

The advance had been so rapid that our artillery had a hard job keeping up with the doughboys. They didn't fire a shot that day nor the next. Resistance was nil. As one tired foot-slogger put it, "What the ---- kind of war is this, when we advance mile after mile through Germany without having to fire a shot or having a single casualty? Supermen? Fight to the last man? Bah!"⁴

⁴ The following extract from the report of Btry. A 370th F.A. Bn. may give an idea of the rapidity of this operation:

Mar. 12—Crossed pontoon bridge over Rhine to new positions in Linz. Crossed at 445 hours. First artillery battalion over the Rhine. A lot of air activity.

Mar. 16—Moved three miles east of Linz. Fired total of 1891 rounds today from Linz just before moving up the steep hills.

Mar. 22—Moved to Gergenroth—500 yards from front lines.

Mar. 24—Moved to Breitbach—crossed the Wied River.

HARDET

Town overrun,
screening and
military
government
starts.

Note only old men,
women and
children;
all look worried
and anxious.



On the 28th March the Division, now completely out of the mountainous area, overran thirty-two miles of enemy territory. We moved up and relieved elements of the 7th Armored Division which were holding crossings on the Dill River.

Our 99th Reconnaissance Troop, with Company D 786th Tank Battalion attached, our own spearhead, followed closely in the wake of the 7th Armored Division, taking over supply dumps, motor parks and military arms depots as they were overrun, holding them, and turning them over to our infantry columns as they arrived.

This operation was an "exploitation of a break-through" and a "pursuit of an enemy" who could not be found in organized force. We kept gathering in prisoners—every day a fair sized group—620 on the 27th March, 300 on the 28th, and 1032 on the 29th March. The number of liberated personnel ran into the many thousands. They started to become a real problem and to hinder our operations.

As fast as we overran an area these poor souls would move out, putting distance between themselves and the German army. They would drift back toward our rear areas. First a few individuals would be seen on the road, each with all his belongings in a small bag on his back. Then, as they kept drifting rearward, they would organize into small groups and pile their bags on a small hand cart which they pulled along. Farther to the rear, they became crowds of fifty to a hundred, walking down the highways surrounding a wagon which they had confiscated and onto which they had piled all their baggage. Sometimes the wagon was pulled by hand, other times by a few half starved horses. They created traffic hazards, housing and feeding problems. If not controlled and policed, they would rob and steal to provide themselves with their needs as they tried to get farther and farther away from their former German slavedrivers.

This action of theirs was appreciated, but the situation they were creating was hindering our military effort. Stringent orders were issued. Wherever found, these wandering groups were stopped and

Mar. 25—Moved to Kurtscheid.

Mar. 26—Moved six miles east of Kurtscheid.

Mar. 28—Moved to Maischeid to Wilsenroth, trying to keep up with 7th Armd.

Mar. 29—Moved to Niederible—no firing—no front lines.

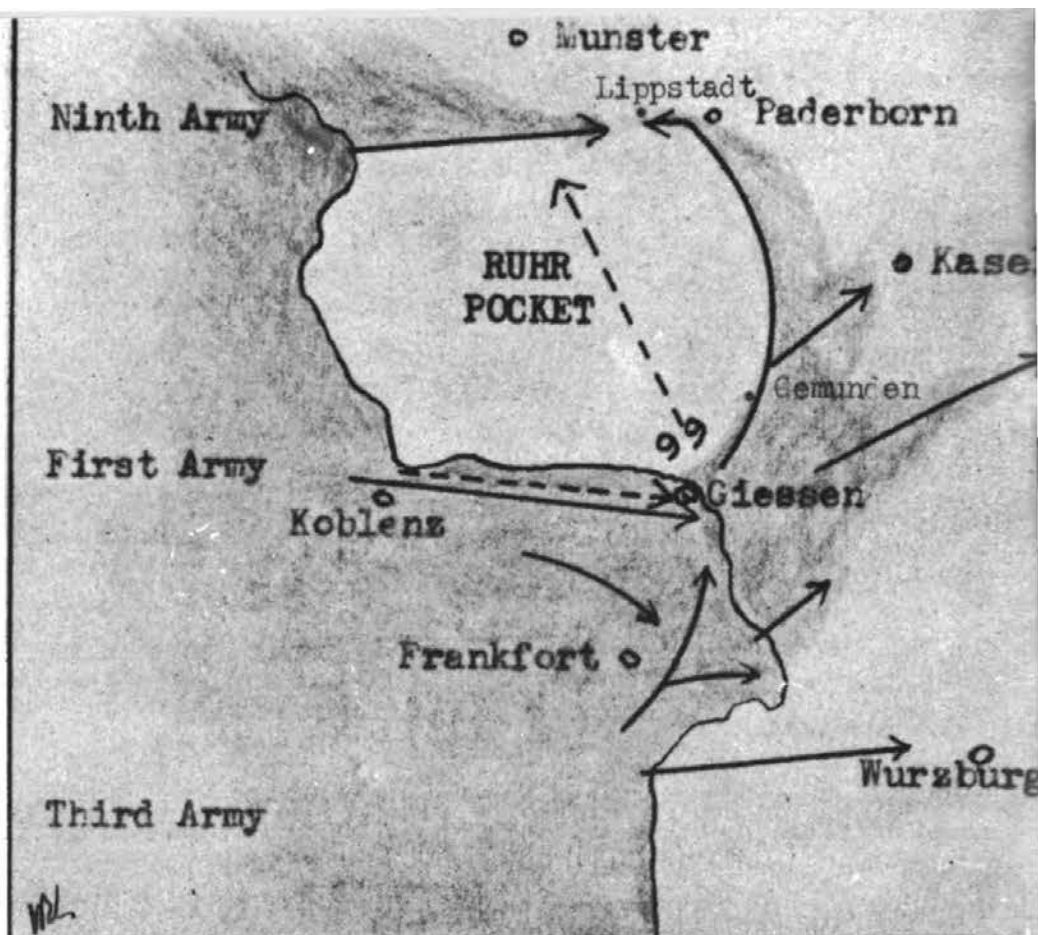
Apr. 1—Moved one and one-half miles from Wetzlar—no firing.

Apr. 2—Moved to Mellnau—still no firing.



Apr. 3—Moved to Overasphe, to Schwarzaneau.

Apr. 4—Moved to Dotzlar.

Apr. 5—Moved to Berghausen—fired first time since Mar. 26. This is beginning of our fight in the Ruhr pocket.



THE BIG PICTURE

-  Operations of First, Third and Ninth Armies.
-  Part played by 99th Infantry Division.

held immobilized, frozen, in whatever town they were encountered. The Burgermeister of that town was made responsible for their housing and feeding until other arrangements could be made. This was actually the beginning of the displaced persons camps which we later administered among other occupational duties.

To get back to the record of events: Our III Corps had been ordered by First Army to seize Giessen and the crossings of the Lahn River between Marburg and Giessen within its zone, and then to dispose itself for operation toward Marburg. It was also directed to halt for about twenty-four hours along the general line of the seventy-seventh grid, which was about 5000 yards east of the Lahn River. It was evident that First Army was cooking up a new "Sunday Punch."⁵

On the 29th March we needed to advance only about seven miles to sit on the objectives set us by First Army, and awaited the decision

⁵ III Corps Report Mar. '45.

as to our next move. The 393rd Infantry during that day drove on east from its positions west of the Dill River. It met some resistance in the town of Wetzlar, the site of the famous Leica camera factory. After a brief fight it cleared that town, left one battalion there to hold it, and then pushed on another four miles to seize and hold the village of Kinzenbach, its final objective for the day.⁶

The 394th Infantry rolled up behind the 7th Armored Division at Giessen and took over the reduction and occupation of Giessen from the 7th Armored, which had encountered considerable resistance from anti-aircraft guns protecting the railroad yards of the city. It attacked and quickly reduced all enemy opposition. Shortly before midnight that day it occupied and outposted the city.

The city of Giessen had a prewar population of 48,000, and therefore presented a difficult problem for one regiment to administer. The regiment was saved that trouble when our old friends of the V Corps, operating on our right flank, moved in and relieved us.

The 395th Infantry rolled ahead about 30 miles from Merenberg, where it had been pinched out the day before by the 393rd Infantry, to the town of Wissmar, close to the Lahn River, and then established an outpost line generally along the seventy-seventh vertical grid line to protect the Division's right (east) flank. It mopped up all enemy resistance in Forst Krofdorf before going into an assembly area nearby.

First Army changed its directive during the 28th-29th March, and III Corps found itself assigned the mission of attacking almost due north to capture the Ederstau See, a large lake. Here the III Corps would halt and be pinched out, as the VII Corps on its left and the V Corps on its right would continue on in their attacks to the north

⁶ At Wetzlar at about 4:00 P.M. the afternoon of the 28th Mar. one of our light tanks of the 786th Tk. Bn. operating with the 99th Recon. Trp. was knocked out by S.S. men armed with panzer fausts operating in the town of Wetzlar as partisans. Heavy sniping was encountered along the river bank road leading to the town. A platoon (3rd) of the reconnaissance troop was engaged in a fire fight in the town of Altenberg about three miles from Wetzlar. The south bank of the Lahn River was the focal point for snipers harassing the reconnaissance troop's movement to Wetzlar. It was on this road that the reconnaissance troop rescued the assistant G-3 of the division, Maj. Thomas S. Bishop (San Antonio, Tex.), who had outdistanced the foot elements of the division. He had his car shot out from under him and was pinned to the ground in a ditch for over three hours. The withdrawal at about this time of the reconnaissance troop and its attached light tank company of the 786th Tk. Bn. from Wetzlar was accompanied by more sniping, apparently by civilians. This was the last time the German populace ever attempted to carry out Der Fuehrer's order "to strike back in the lessons Russia taught us—partisan warfare."

to complete the encirclement of the German forces in the Ruhr pocket. The Ederstau See operation was conducted on March 30th by the 7th Armored Division, reinforced by a battalion of Infantry from the 9th Infantry Division. The 99th Division was alerted to render help if needed, but was not called upon. We devoted our time to mopping up the area overrun and in concentrating our units between the Dill and Lahn Rivers, ready for any future action.

The 394th Infantry remained in an assembly area near Giessen, outposting a line eight miles east of that city, while the 395th Infantry closed up, assembled near Wissmar, and outposted a line about eight miles east of the city of Stauffenberg. The 393rd Infantry pushed ahead and assembled near Waldgirmes, midway between Wetzlar and Giessen, where it continued to screen the south flank of the Division.

The 30th March found the 28th Infantry Division moving into our area, and our fighting companion division, the 9th, departing to join temporarily the VII Corps.⁷

Our screening operations and mopping-up action that day uncovered a prisoner of war camp at Dollar, containing 334 British field officers and fifty enlisted men. Included in the group were sixteen general officers of the British army. The eleven German officers and 196 men comprising the cage guard were taken by our troops without resistance. The P.O.W.s were grateful and were quickly evacuated. Some had been prisoners since Dunkirk.

A small German horror camp, where political prisoners were sent after first being judged insane, was uncovered at the town of Hadamar. The latest executions had been performed that very day, in spite of the fact that our forces had overrun the area several days before. According to preliminary reports which were received that day, that chamber of horrors, with a housing capacity of 300 inmates, had buried over 500 persons during the past month. Only the truly insane could contrive the tortures performed in this medieval torture chamber.

It was hard indeed to realize at times that we were fighting a war against a people who claimed to be members of the enlightened Twentieth Century. Their acts belied that fact. Their thoughts, even in defeat, were not of the "rights and wrongs" of their acts, past and present, but of their participation in the next war to come.

⁷ The 2nd Bn. 393rd Inf. was relieved of its mission of securing the town of Wetzlar by the 271st Inf. of the 28th Div. late the night of the 30th Mar. The battalion then rejoined its regiment in the assembly area near Waldgirmes.

That there would be another war and that Germany would be in it was an accepted fact by all the high ranking German officers captured by the western allies—but more about that later.

Screening operations within the Division area and outposting the line Londorf-Beuren-Grossen Buseck netted us about 680 prisoners. In the natural course of events, these prisoners eventually landed in the Division prisoner of war cage. A description of a cage on the 31st March follows: "374 P.O.W.s were processed through the cage; 116 miscellaneous units were identified. If it were not that the uniforms were dirty and of every conceivable type, if the soldiers had not been a heterogeneous mixture of most of the grades and services of the German forces, one might for a moment have mistaken the cage for a review area of the *Wehrmacht*. German non-coms, and a few German officers, were calling out orders, assembling the men of their various units into formations. Gradually the confusion resolved itself, and the spectator saw what, carrying arms, would have looked like a substantial force."

"The illusion could not long be sustained. Shuttling back and forth among the hundreds of German soldiers were a few M.P.s and a few interrogators, the only ones in this crowd who bore arms, and to whom, with utter disregard of their own security regulations, German non-coms and officers were giving their units, the number of men from these units captured, and whatever other information was wanted. There were a few exceptions, but for the most part these erstwhile soldiers had an astounding meekness.

"The largest group of them all were hospital cases and men on recuperation furloughs, whom we were still bringing in. They were in bad shape, and many were anxious as to when they could get back under medical care. More than one amputation case was in the group. Many captured from combat units were in no better health than the hospital cases. One man suddenly collapsed, and when he had been revived enough so that he could talk, we found that his weakness was caused by advanced tuberculosis, which in no way prevented the German army from considering him fit for duty. Others were suffering from heart trouble or other diseases which would disqualify our men from even rear line duty. Yet here they were members of training battalions who in this emergency had hurriedly and vainly been committed to active fighting operations.

"There were many men recently transferred from the air force and still wearing their blue uniforms. There were some who, still members of the air force, had been captured in anti-aircraft positions.

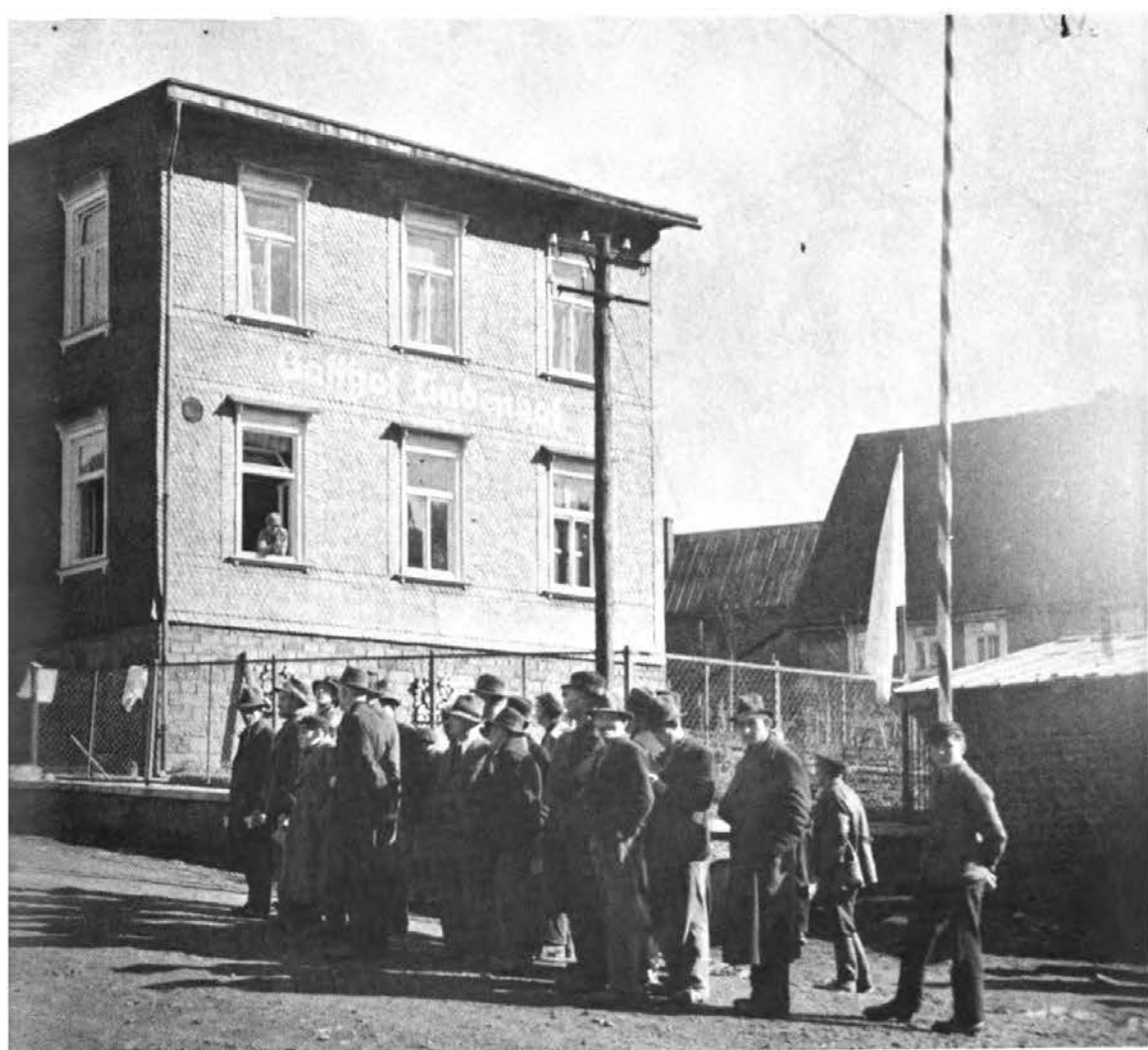
German civilians in
Wingeshausen
are examined by our C.I.C.
to find any Nazi soldiers
attempting to escape.

*(U.S. Army photo,
1 April '45.)*



There were the complete forces of all sorts of odd little units, like the military dental laboratory at Giessen, and there were some sixteen-year-olds, pathetic in their uniforms, as they gave their units in unchanged voices.

"Suddenly there was a roar of greeting from the cage. We turned, to see what looked like a couple of girls getting out of a Jeep. They looked like Red Cross girls, but the color of the uniform was deceptive. What we saw was a couple of girls who had been serving with an A.A. battery—flak wacs, I suppose—and their welcome came from the male members of their battery, who had arrived in the morning. Some confusion was caused by their arrival: Who searches Wacs, even German Wacs? Who interrogates them? Nice looking girls they were, too. . . . And there were civilians with various C.I.C. troubles—some of them under definite suspicion, others victims of the general confusion, like one man who had moved out of his house, which now billeted Americans, so fast that he had left his discharge papers and other identification in his desk drawer. That was straightened out without much trouble.



“Meanwhile the Russians, with considerable pleasure, stood as close to the cage as they were allowed and witnessed the humiliation of their enemies. Some French prisoners wandered by, applauding. Many of the German prisoners were relieved that it was all over, and quite cheerful over their fate, and there was a grotesque holiday mood to the whole affair.”⁸

It became a common, everyday sight, as German town after German town and village after village was overrun, to see white flags, bed sheets mainly, waving from housetops and windows in abject surrender, and to see German civilians line the streets to gape in craven fear and awe at the might of the American forces as they sped through in hot pursuit of their overly-vaunted *Wehrmacht*.

The vileness and heartlessness to which German *Kulture* and professed superiority had fallen is well illustrated by the following event:

The 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry was mopping up isolated enemy

⁸ 99th G-2 Report, 31 Mar. '45.



SCREENING
THE TOWN OF
GROSSE-MAISCHEID



WETZLAR
The home of the
Leica camera
captured by the
393rd Infantry.
Some resistance was
met but quickly
overcome!

(Below)

A view of the hospital
train we found on
a siding—
deserted!

(393rd History.)





First contact with the
wounded men on
the hospital
train.

The Germans were great
humanitarians—they
marched all the walking
wounded away and left
the others unattended.

We found them
several days after they had
been deserted.



99th Division
medical men
promptly evacuated
them all.

(Below)

One of our chaplains
holds a
thanksgiving service
for those rescued.

(393rd History.)



resistance in its advance toward Wetzlar when one of our air observation posts tipped us off about a train which Company C 393rd Infantry found at the town of Bergholms. It was a trainload of American prisoners of war; 277 wounded and sick Americans, all of them suffering from malnutrition and bearing large, festering sores from the filth and lice they had been forced to live with. These prisoners had been deserted by the retreating Germans and left in boxcars on a railroad siding, after a desperate attempt to remove them from their confinement in Limburg as other liberating American columns swept eastward. Evacuation of the severest cases was begun immediately by our battalion and regimental medical sections, and every aid and assistance was promptly sent them. It was a day of thanksgiving to those recaptured soldiers, particularly by those among them who were former members of the 99th Infantry Division who had been captured in the Ardennes in December and suddenly now, after giving up all hope, found themselves rescued by their former buddies. It was heartbreaking to see their condition, it was heartwarming to greet them again and bring them succor.

The tragic way in which they had been treated, the cruel and inhuman handling they had received, induced the regimental chaplain to conduct services then and there, thanking God for their delivery from further Nazi abuses.

Near Wetzlar, too, a prisoner of war enclosure containing 145 Americans and British airmen was overrun and evacuated. It happened this way: One of our artillery liaison planes, observing panels on the ground, landed and contacted some of our American officer P.O.W.s at this German air force prisoner of war camp. The prisoners had overpowered their guards, put signal panels out on the ground for our air men to see, and were awaiting the arrival of American troops. We arrived!

It was at this time, too, that a column of about 700 American prisoners of war, being hurried away by the Germans, was overtaken in the vicinity of Giessen. They were brought back to Wetzlar, where they were first deloused and then evacuated.

Our medical personnel were kept busy every hour of the day. While our casualties were light and easily evacuated, more and more attention was being required for the thousands of released allied prisoners of war who needed emergency medical attention. This was given them and they were promptly evacuated. The joy, the rejoicing, the fervent prayers of thanks offered God by these released prisoners

was a reward our men received and appreciated more deeply than any type of decoration.

On the 31st March the division began its move to the north to assemble near Germunden, about fifteen miles northeast of the city of Marburg. This was our first step in the now historic reduction of the Ruhr pocket.

During the month of March, the 99th Infantry Division, starting at Aubel, Belgium, had attacked as part of the VII Corps and driven the enemy across the Rhine. It had then joined the III Corps, crossed the Rhine on the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, helped build a bridgehead out of a toehold, and then without letup had broken out of the bridgehead area to drive southeast deep into *Festung Germania*. It cleared out all hostile resistance and then turned again, this time to the north, to drive into the Ruhr pocket, which it had helped form.

It had actively attacked twenty-four days out of the thirty-one days of March. It had conquered 495 square miles of enemy territory, taken over 200 towns, and captured a total of 8542 prisoners of war. It had crossed the Erft Canal, the Rhine River, the Wied River, Dill and Lahn Rivers and their many tributaries to make history as no invader had done since Napoleon's white-gaitered grenadiers. Indeed it had made history—but the cost was high. The price? Three hundred fifty-four of our men were killed in action; 1310 wounded in action, and another 154 missing in action—a total of 1818 Americans killed, missing and wounded to prove not only to the power crazed German leaders but to their military minded German masses that they were not a superior race.⁹

While the "Battle Babies" assembled near the small town of Germunden, the First Army's other units continued their drive to the north and made contact with units from the Ninth Army near the little village of Lippstadt. The encirclement of the German forces in the Ruhr pocket was now complete.¹⁰

⁹ One frequently hears today, from apparently good Americans, the time-honored lament of the German military caste: "Yes, the Americans won the war, but they were lucky! Wait, next time . . . !" Luck had no part in the winning of the war, either World War I or World War II. It was just downright hard fighting of a better, more intelligent, more determined and more righteous kind that won the battles and so won the wars.

¹⁰ First Army adopted the name "Rose Pocket" for the operation which isolated the Ruhr. Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose, who commanded the 3rd Armd. Div. and was well known to the men of the 99th, for the "Battle Babies" broke out the 3rd Armd. Div. in its drive for Cologne, was killed in action on the 31st Mar. while leading his "Spearhead Division" near Paderborn just as the encirclement of the Ruhr was completed.

It was a crushing blow to Germany. It isolated the Reich's largest industrial area and the thousands of troops defending it. It bagged 5000 square miles of industrial area and over 350,000 enemy troops, all units of German Army Group D. It was one of the greatest operations of its kind in history. Sitting around the perimeter of this pocket were the 78th Division, the 8th Division, the 9th Division, which had just recently left us, the 104th Division and the 1st Division, plus the 4th and 3rd Armored Divisions, all from the First Army, holding the south and east sides of the pocket. Units from the Ninth Army held the north side of the pocket, and the Rhine River formed the left or west side of the pocket.¹¹

Having encircled this great force, it remained now to force its surrender. In that operation, the "Battle Babies" were called upon to play an important role.

¹¹ During the month of March the following units operated with and were attached to the 99th Inf. Div. Dates indicate date attached and relieved:

| | |
|---|--|
| 535th A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn. (M.) entire month. Was with division so long it was accepted as a permanent part of the division. | Co. A 90th Chem. Bn. 10 Mar. to— |
| 786th Tk. Bn. entire month. | 1st Plat. Btry. A 987th F.A. Bn. (S.P.G.) 12-25 Mar. |
| 629th T.D. Bn. Same remark as for 535th A.A.A. | 667th F.A. Bn. (M.) 13 Mar. to— |
| 4th Cav. Grp. 3 Mar. (7 A.M.-6 P.M.) | 170th F.A. Bn. (L.) 16-18 Mar. and 21 Mar. |
| | 18 Cav. Sqd. 17-21 Mar. and 28-31 Mar. |
| | 447th Q.M. Tk. Co. 27-28 Mar. |

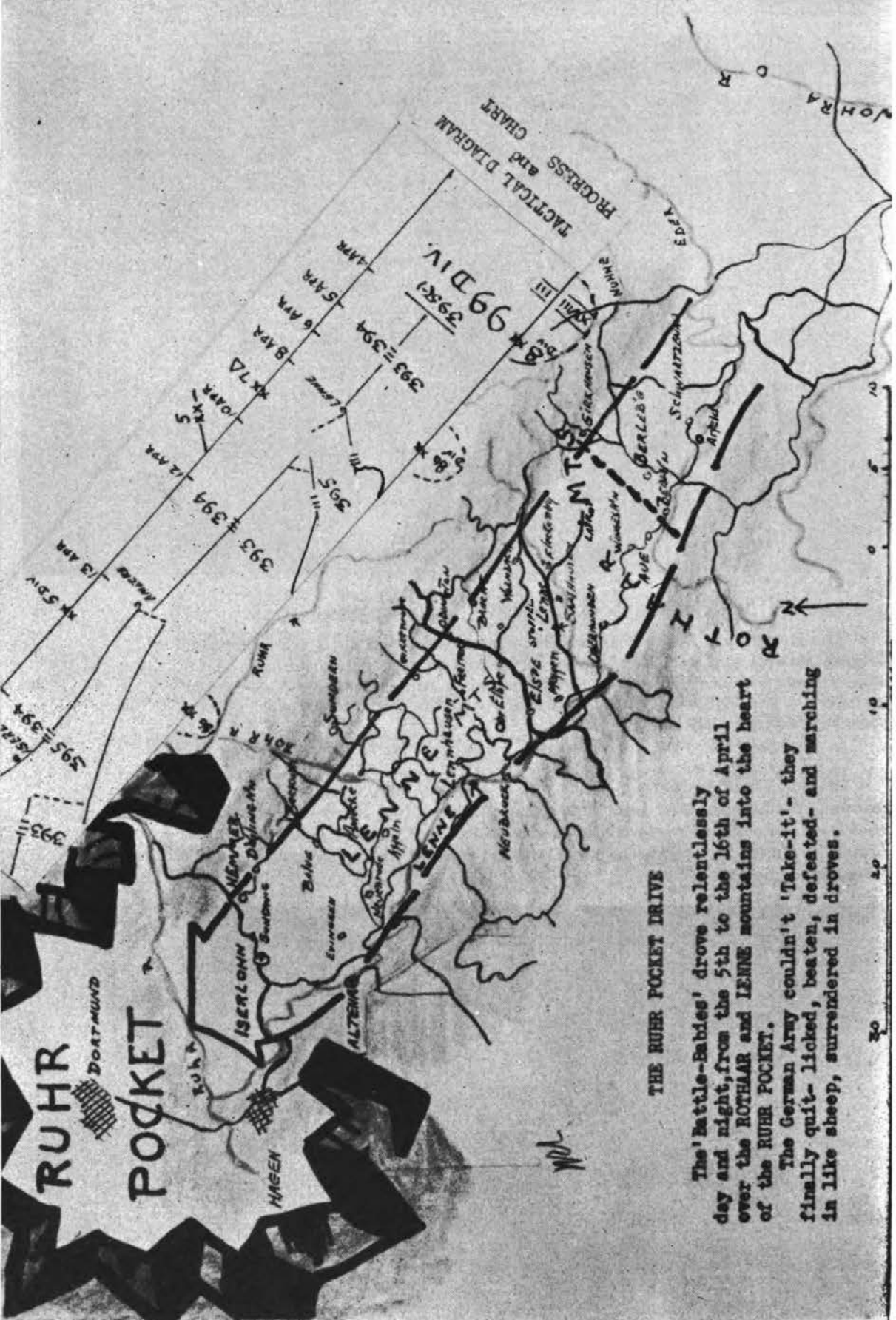


EASTER SERVICES, 31 MARCH, AT KROFDORF

The church was built in 1513. The picture was taken by a newly-liberated English P.O.W. who was taken captive at Tobruk in 1942, while working on the film, "Desert Victory." Fighting was going on only a mile or two away. Men are all members of the 99th—the central figures the C.G. and his chief of staff, Colonel Robert B. Warren, U.S. Army.

Division Chaplain Henry B. Koon (St. Louis, Mo., now dead), extreme right, standing, conducted the services. This picture, taken during the December fighting, shows some of our men who were lost and collected by "Chappie" Truesdale (upper center), warmed, fed—at least a hot "C" if not some of his famous pancakes—and returned to the fight.





THE RUHR POCKET DRIVE

The 'Battle-Babies' drove relentlessly day and night, from the 5th to the 16th of April over the ROTHAAR and LENNE mountains into the heart of the RUHR POCKET.

The German Army couldn't 'Take-it' - they finally quit-licked, beaten, defeated- and marching in like sheep, surrendered in droves.

CHAPTER XII

The Ruhr Pocket

THE STAGE WAS SET. The 99th Infantry Division, as part of the III Corps, had halted as ordered and assembled around the little town of Germunden to catch its breath and get ready for the next blow.

Around us as a pivot swung the VII Corps on our left and the V Corps on our right as they changed the direction of their drives from eastward to the north and completed the encirclement of the Ruhr pocket. (See map, p. 236).¹

As we waited, we screened the area we had overrun, reorganized, and made all in readiness for the drive straight into the heart of the Ruhr pocket to force the surrender of the encircled enemy. The 99th had been selected to deliver the *coup de grace*.

We started our attack on the 5th April; it was all over on the 16th April—twelve days of day and night fighting. For the Nazi hordes, this was a desperate fight of desperate men. They had no hope of escape; they had but one choice—either be killed or taken prisoner. Some of their regiments were hacked down to twenty men. German gunners fired all their ammunition, then surrendered. For us, it was the "Battle of Flak Hills."

The country over which this drive took place stands on end. It is a scenic land, beautiful but rugged. For more than fifty miles in the direction of our drive cross-country were hills and more hills, ridges and valleys, one piled on another like the pleats of an accordion which had been opened and stepped on, so that the ridge lines ran in all different directions. In these green-covered, heavily wooded hills were the headwaters of the Lahn River, Eder River, the Ruhr River and the Lenne River. The Rothaar Gebirge (mountains) separated the headwaters of the Eder and Lahn Rivers from the headwaters of the Lenne and Ruhr Rivers. The Lenne Gebirge, which ran lengthwise down the area over which we were to fight, separated the Ruhr from the Lenne River, which is one of the tributaries of the Ruhr River and joins it near the town of Hagen.

Across the Eder River and the Rothaar Mountains, across the headwaters of the Lenne River and down the full length of the Lenne

¹ This occurred when the First and Ninth Armies made their junction near Lippstadt.

Mountains, with the Lenne River generally as our left flank, was the zone of advance of the "Battle Babies" in their drive into the heart of the Ruhr pocket.

This is ideal country in which to spend a vacation, fishing and hunting. I am sure that every man who fought over that area, at some time or other, longed for an opportunity to try his skill with a "Royal Coachman" in the crystal clear babbling brooks. That longing, however, was but a passing fancy, for the business in hand was hunting—hunting down the German army!

Up hill and down hill. Up every hill and down again—for on each knoll, surrounding a group of anti-aircraft guns, now used in ground defense, was a detachment of the enemy. They had to be hunted down and driven out. It was slow, fatiguing and dangerous work.

I believe that the "Battle Babies" were deliberately selected by higher headquarters for this arduous task primarily because they had become experienced mountain fighters. They had cut their eye teeth in the fighting they first encountered in the hills of the Ardennes, they perfected their mountain tactics and leg power in the steep hills on the east bank of the Rhine around Linz when they established the Remagen bridgehead, and later proved their ability in this type of fighting when they broke out of the bridgehead area across the Wied River and fought over the hills to the open plains in the break-out drive. Now they were engaged in rolling over bigger and better hills to puncture the Ruhr pocket. Our men had truly become mountain goats, sure-footed, tireless, determined and fearless.

Mountains and wooded hillsides were not the only deterrents to a rapid advance in this rugged country. Small towns and villages sprinkled over the area were all used as centers of resistance by the German soldiers. These towns had to be softened up and then taken one by one. To top it all, our route was practically all cross-country, for there was no road net which ran in the general direction of our advance. The small, tortuous roads which did exist ran for the most part across our route of advance.

The infantry had a bad enough time crawling up hills and sliding down again, but the artillery, tanks and tank destroyers frequently encountered terrain over which they had to winch their vehicles, one by one. The entire front was the same. The right flank, along which the 394th Infantry Combat Team fought, was no different from the rugged terrain encountered by the 393rd Infantry Team along the

east bank of the Lenne River, or the 395th Team in the center. It was all rough, tough going.

On the 4th April the 99th Division² moved into its assigned zone near the town of Schwarzenau, and took over its front from the 9th Division, which in turn slipped over farther to the east in its defense of the perimeter of the pocket. The 393rd Infantry took over an eight-kilometer front, the 394th Infantry took over a nine-kilometer front, and the 395th Infantry was held in reserve after sending its 3rd Battalion to assist the 7th Armored Division. The front extended from Berghausen on the south to Girkhausen on the north, with the 395th Infantry, around the town of Arfelt, covering the south flank.³

At 8:00 A.M. on the 5th April the "Battle Babies" started attacking. The 393rd Infantry, operating on the south flank, advanced 4000 yards to capture the town of Aue after a bitter house to house fight. It then pushed on to capture the town of Wingshausen and then drove on another 1500 yards deeper into the pocket. The 394th Infantry advanced about 7000 yards over rugged and difficult country to capture the town of Latrop after a short, stiff fight, and then pushed on to seize a high hill beyond this town, where it held up for the remainder of the night and organized for its next attack early the following morning. During that first day we captured seven towns and took 234 prisoners.

The 6th April saw a gain of about 5000 yards against spotty resistance. That day also brought about the first offensive action by the enemy. He launched a counterattack at us in the zone of the 393rd Infantry. Two hundred or so of his infantry, supported by a few tanks, hurled themselves at our men at 6:00 P.M. At 7:00 P.M. the attack was wiped out—short and sweet!

The extremely difficult terrain was the primary factor which held up the speed of our advance. In spite of this, however, the 394th Infantry was able to advance deep enough to seize the town of Nieder Fleckenburg at about 7:00 P.M. that evening.

The 7th April was practically a repetition of the experiences of

² At this time the 99th Div. had attached to it the following units. The period of time during the month of April these units served with the 99th is shown:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 535th A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn. 1-30 Apr. | 90th Chem. Bn. 21-30 Apr. (Bn.-Co. C |
| 786th Tk. Bn. 1-30 Apr. | 4-7 Apr.) (Co. A 7-16 Apr.) |
| 26th Ord. Co. 1-19 Apr. | 873rd Q.M. F. and B. Co. 20-30 Apr. |
| 629th T.D. Bn. 1-30 Apr. | 598th Q.M. Laundry Co. 20-30 Apr. |
| 170th F.A. Bn. 1-16 Apr. | 3463rd Ord. Co. (M.M.) 27-30 Apr. |
| 667th F.A. Bn. 1-16 and 21-30 Apr. | |

³ See illustration.



Machine gunners support
the attack.



393rd Infantry
men advance on
the town of
Aue after our
artillery softens

Aue in ruins but
snipers still cause
many casualties

*(Photos
393rd History.)*





THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE E.T.O. PAYS US A VISIT
AT WINGESHAUSEN—HE VISITED US AT LINZ, TOO

Left to right: Generals Lauer, Lear and Black

Few people knew that General Ben Lear had a great sense of humor. On his way to our headquarters he passed one of our battalions which had just had a hard, short fight in a small town in the course of which it had to attack and clean out a cigar factory. They were plodding along now, a thin column on each side of the road—each man with a cigar in his mouth. General Lear called to a sergeant he saw. The sergeant promptly came over, saluted, and addressed the general by name. When questioned, he explained that they had just had a fight, sent about one hundred prisoners to the rear, and were on their way to the next hot spot. When asked about the cigars he frankly admitted that they had just liberated them. The general thanked the sergeant for the information and later at division headquarters admitted that it was one of the funniest sights he had ever seen and that it had given him a great boost. He thought highly of the 99th Infantry Division.

(Photo by Sgt. Innis Bromfield, 99th Division.)

the preceding two days. A gain of about 5000 yards was made over rugged terrain. Resistance was light, except in the town of Oberhunden, where the enemy put up a stubborn fight with flak guns, artillery, mortar, automatic weapons and small arms fire, plus the direct fire from several dug-in tanks. All day long the fight for Ober-

hunden raged. Our air and our artillery pounded the town. Finally, at about 11:00 P.M., the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry charged in and succeeded in capturing the town.

During the morning of the 8th April, enemy resistance was negligible as our men pressed forward through a stretch of rugged but unpopulated terrain. Enemy opposition increased markedly, however, that afternoon as our troops reached a zone of strongly held towns including Wormbach, Felbecke, Worpe, Werntrop and Saalhausen, which were on or near one of the important highways which ran across our front. The towns were stubbornly defended, but by the end of the day all these towns had been cleared of the enemy, and half of the large town of Saalhausen was in the hands of the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry. Here a bitter house to house fight continued throughout the night.⁴

The town of Lenne had been overrun. Promptly the 395th Infantry, our reserve, was jumped forward to that place. Its 2nd Battalion, which had been attached to the 394th Infantry during the fighting of the 7th April, had moved to the town of Wormbach after that town was captured by the 3rd Battalion 394th Infantry. In turn it was relieved by elements from the 7th Armored Division. The 395th Infantry, minus its 3rd Battalion, which was still operating with the 7th Armored Division, having been held in reserve, was now given a zone of its own. The possibility of a strong counter-offensive by the enemy, against which we had held out the 395th Infantry as a reserve, was daily becoming less of a hazard. The pattern of a purely passive defense by the enemy could be sensed, and so I decided that the time had arrived to strike out in a three-punch drive instead of the double punch being used up to this time.

Before sunrise on the 9th April, at 5:30 A.M., the whole front of the 99th Division burst forth in a new blast. In spite of a more stubborn defense encountered, the Division nevertheless advanced another 4000 yards that day. The 393rd Infantry drove straight ahead to reduce all resistance up to the Lenne River where it flowed across the route of advance. It then jumped northwest of the zone assigned the

⁴ It has been stated at times that the fighting was stiff and resistance spotty. The blind fanaticism which our soldiers faced at times is indicated from the words of a captured company commander of the notorious Pz. Lehr Div., who calmly related to our interrogator, "No good Nazi retreats. At Wormbach I shot several officers and men who attempted to pull back. Court martials are too slow. We are proud of our outfit [Pz. Lehr Div.]. Its presence on line boosts the morale of the men near it!"



Men of the 395th Infantry, on alert for snipers, move cautiously through the recently captured town of Saalhausen.

(U.S. Army photo.)

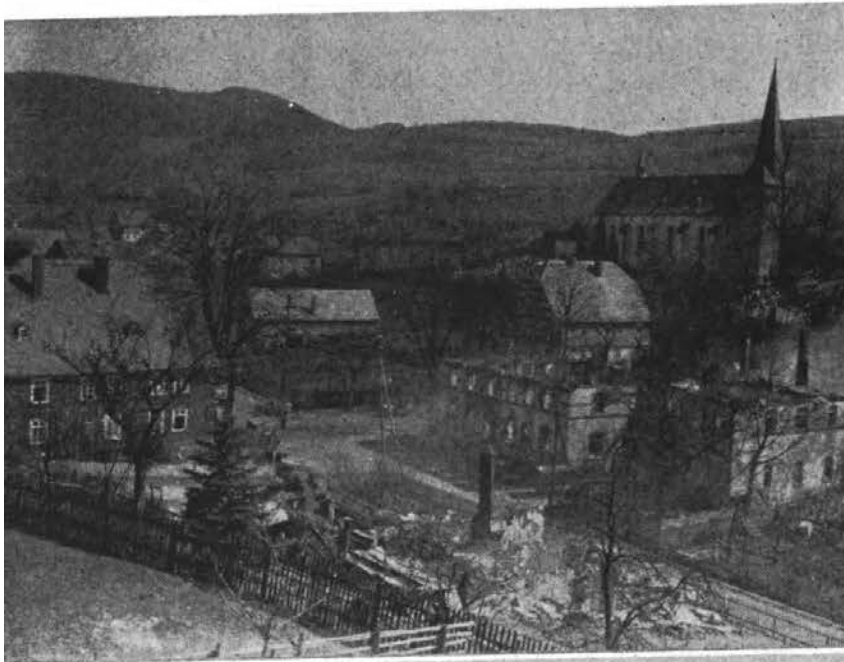
395th Infantry and seized the town of Stoppel. The 395th Infantry drove west along the north bank of the Lenne River, in its new zone of attack, toward the town of Meggen. It initially passed through elements of the 394th Infantry and then advanced southwest over 3000 yards on its mission of clearing out the pocket formed by the bend in the Lenne River. The 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry cleared the town of Saalhausen of all resistance by 10:30 A.M., while the other battalions of the regiment, hopping off at 5:30 A.M., drove ahead another 4000 yards and captured the town of Bracht. Our artillery and air support helped considerably to discourage enemy resistance in this town, which initially indicated that it would be a stubborn nut to crack. The town fell without much of a fight—another stepping stone on the road to the heart of the Ruhr.⁵

⁵ Bracht is a town (see map, p. 248) which was on the right flank boundary of the division. It was well situated on an important mountain road to offer a strong defense, particularly against the 7th Armd. operating on that flank. It was also a thorn in the side of the 394th Inf. On the 8th Apr. our air O.P.s spotted the enemy reinforcing the town with thirty troop-laden trucks and half a dozen artillery pieces. Our air O.P.s called for artillery fire. All through the night our front line soldiers could hear the screams of wounded Boche and smell the pungent odor of burning gas, wood and flesh as our artillery pounded away. Early on the morning of the 9th April, two flights of our air support swooped down on the town and bombed and strafed it, laying every egg on the target area. Our artillery and mortars continued to pound away. The second our barrage lifted the 1st Bn. 39th



Road blocks such as this were frequently encountered. A platoon of Company A 324th Engineers goes to work on it.

(Photo by Col. J. Neale, Amarillo, Tex.)



The town of Oberhuden was strongly defended. We hit it with air and artillery.

(393rd History.)

(Below)

The town of Bracht caught it too.

(Photo by Chaplain Neighbour, Santa Monica, Calif.)





395th Infantry
doughs mount up
and roll.

(Photo
Russell Van Noy,
Troy, N.Y.)

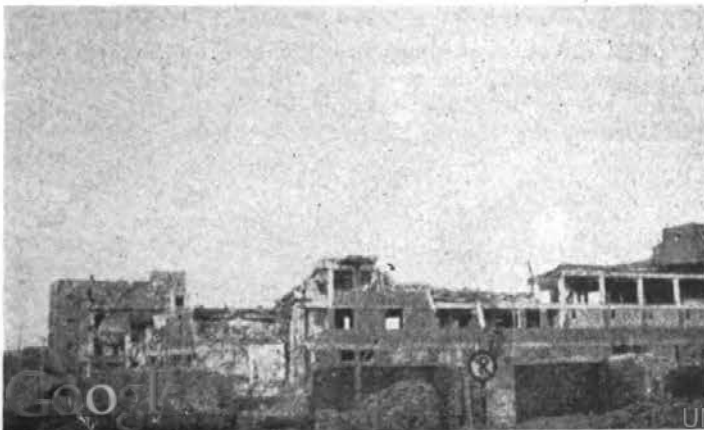
WORMBACH

(Photo by Chaplain James Neighbours,
Santa Monica, Calif.)



FELBECKE OR WORPE
(Photo by Chaplain Neighbours)

A Monument Was Left in Every Town



SAALHAUSEN

(Photo by
Sgt. R. H. Brown,
Graham, Ala.)

So the drive continued, yard by yard, hill by hill, town by town, day and night. We never let up in our driving, hammering pressure. Our men were tired, dead tired, hungry and weary, but this was the time to hit, hit hard, continuously and relentlessly. The time to rest would come later, after the German collapse. We had the Jerries off balance and we intended to keep them that way. Under this never ceasing pressure the pocket was being gradually compressed. The thousands of troops estimated to be in the pocket were being driven in on themselves—ever in and in—into a tighter, more compact mass.

Each day we were gathering in what we thought was a reasonable number of prisoners. How many were in the pocket was a question which, when it was finally solved, surprised everyone. From the 6th April through the 9th April, by relentless pressure, we had hammered out an advance of ten miles over the rugged Rothaar Mountains and cleared the upper reaches of the Lenne River. During those four days we had taken eighteen towns and 2046 prisoners of war. Identification of enemy units showed that we were facing two strong organizations, the 130th Panzer Lehr Division, old enemies we had met before, and the 338th Infantry Division. These two units, plus a miscellany of other units, chief among which were the 79th, 84th, 382nd and 445th Anti-Aircraft Battalions operating as ground defense units, offered us resistance in every town and on every hilltop. In spite of the excellent defensive strength of the terrain and the fact that as the pocket was being compressed more and more enemy forces were encountered, the enemy only once assumed the offensive. This was a weak counterattack which lasted about one hour and was demolished. If this counterattack was the best the enemy could do offensively to break out of the pocket, we felt there was little we had to worry about. We concluded he was licked, demoralized and confused. Future events proved the correctness of this inference.

On the 10th April we continued our attack with three regiments abreast. Holding out a strong reserve to meet possible hostile action was still sacrificed to give us a strong front line punch. We were convinced the enemy would not counterattack in strength, and we were right. That day the 395th Infantry cleared out the pocket formed by the bend in the Lenne River and captured the town of Meggen. The remainder of the Division bit off another 5300 yards in its forward

Inf. doughboys (Co. C) swarmed down from the hills and entered the town. In a half hour they were through the town and sitting on the high ground on the other side. This was an excellent example of the superb air-artillery-infantry teamwork developed by the "Battle Babies."



The 99th Reconnaissance Troop, screening the rear areas and beating through woods, gathers in a bunch of hidden *Wehrmacht*.

(Courtesy 1st Sgt. W. H. Bryant, 99th Reconnaissance Troop, Pacific Grove, Calif.)

plunge—this time into the Lenne mountain range. Our attached 786th Tank Battalion pushed forward to the town of Lenne and provided security for the bridges at Hatzfeld and Arfeld and the railroad terminal near there, while its Company D, with part of our 99th Reconnaissance Troop, moved to the town of Altenhuden to protect the Division's left flank. The remainder of the reconnaissance troop continued to screen all the towns and the entire area overrun by the 393rd, 394th and 395th Infantry Regiments. This in itself was a tremendous task for that small unit. It did it, and did it well, by day and night operation. Our 324th Engineers were fully engaged on real engineer work, maintaining the divisional main supply route, its water supply, building bridges, and at the same time destroying the many mines and Panzer Fausts uncovered. Our infantry kept driving ahead, and our heavier units kept close up to the front, ready to add their heavy blows to the fight whenever needed.

On the 11th April we advanced about 7000 yards over the mountains. The 393rd Infantry captured the towns of Nieder Melbecke and Deulmerke and then pushed beyond these towns to seize and hold the next tactically important high ground. The 394th Infantry seized all its assigned objectives, and the 395th Infantry continued driving ahead in its zone to clear out all resistance along the north bank of the Lenne River.

The backbone of the enemy resistance was centered around a miscellaneous collection of anti-aircraft and engineer battalions fighting on hilltops. Their effective fighting strength was daily being reduced by the large prisoner of war toll exacted by our advance.

On the 12th April stiffer opposition was encountered as the



HELLO!

At Fretter, which we captured on April 12, Generals "Ike," Bradley, Hodges and Van Fleet descended on us to say, "The 99th has consistently done a fine job!"

Hostile artillery was still occasionally coming in, and we had just removed some dead bodies from the entrance to our C.P. . . . We served tea!

GOODBYE!

"IKE" AND LAUER



enemy showed a slightly better defensive organization, and a greater determination to resist. In addition to the hostile units previously encountered, we started taking prisoners from the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, three more anti-aircraft battalions, the 64th, 93rd and 22nd, and from a force of six replacement battalions numbered 59, 62, 78, 211, 306 and 536. We were still looking for a real defensive position manned by large units of the flower of the German army. We had encountered elements from a few of them, but they were scattered over a wide front and interspersed with these miscellaneous small units. Nowhere had they organized the ground for a real defense.

During the 10th, 11th and 12th April the "Battle Babies" had advanced over thirteen miles, taken twenty-five towns, and captured more than 2100 prisoners of war plus large amounts of enemy equipment and several important supply installations. We had encountered no real opposition, nor had we found it necessary to beat off any hostile offensive action. Among the many troubles the enemy was encountering at our hands, the following two sidelights which we discovered may give an idea of his confused state.

Our troops captured a copy of an order which had been issued by the 338th German Infantry Division. It read in part as follows:

"To take effect immediately: Troops will buy up all cattle (except 1 cow and 1 pig per farmhouse) as well as all provisions and warehoused supplies . . . because of the limited ration situation, a decrease of one-half in the size of portion of each element of the ration is unavoidable . . ."

The enemy was having his troubles indeed, as a result of being hemmed in and cut off from his supply bases. But supply problems were not his only worry. The "decline and fall" of German Army Engineer Combat School West summarizes the apparent tactical confusion that existed at higher headquarters.

The purpose of this school was to train competent army engineer personnel. The school was discontinued by order of the German Army Group Headquarters on the 29th March, and its personnel left their school stamping grounds near Nehheim to become close acquaintances of our divisional prisoner of war cage. Originally planned to be used only in engineer delaying actions, the school began its commitment as genuine infantry on its arrival at Berleburg (see map p. 248) on the 1st April.

From that time on, the sector in which Combat School West was committed was roughly in the triangle Berleburg-Raumland-Saal-

hausen, all within the Division zone of attack. From this broad-based sector it was gradually whittled down so much that finally the unit was used solely in the defense of Saalhausen. The companies were always committed separately and seldom had contact with each other. In the words of the P.O.W.s, the school left Nehheim as a proud force of about 1000 men, combat strength, and after the loss of Saalhausen to the "Battle Babies" there were less than 150 men still at large. During the period we drove from Berleburg to Saalhausen, the school unit was organized as a regiment of a *Sperrverband*, which is just another name for a *Kampfgruppe*, of about division size. There were two other similar regiments in this *Sperrverband*, all under the command of General von Alfen. P.O.W.s stated that the general had assured them that the other regiments were flanking the school regiment, but in the same breath admitted that their position could not be held since they were in a bulge created by the rapid and powerful 99th Division advance. All P.O.W.s confirmed the fact that during the period 1-9 April the school unit had absolutely no contact with any adjacent or rear units, and from their point of view they were fighting all by themselves. None of the P.O.W.s had any idea as to how or where their unit fitted into the bigger picture. Since the commanding officer of Combat School West, his two battalion commanders, four of his six company commanders and ninety per cent of the men were either killed or taken prisoner, Army Engineer School West and that part of the *Sperrverband* could be stricken off the books as far as opposition was concerned. The fact that every-

A NAZI HOSPITAL UNIT SURRENDERS AT ALLENDORF

Patients and attendants sit on the roof, content to "watch the war go by."

(U.S. Army photo.)





ALTENA

This town on the Lenne River in the "Sauerland" was captured by the 393rd. This view gives one an idea of the type of country over which the Ruhr pocket drive took place.

(Courtesy H. H. Richter, Jr., 99th Signal Company, Houston, Tex.)

one in command of this group was ignorant of the general plan of defense or action in the pocket was strongly indicative of the confused tactical situation which existed at higher headquarters.

The 395th Infantry having eliminated all resistance in its zone of action on the south flank of the Division, was assigned a new zone in the center of the Division route of attack. With all three regiments again abreast, our relentless pressure and drive continued unabated.

During the 13th and 14th April our unrelenting drive up hill and down hill over the Lenne Mountains, through towns and dorfs, villages and hamlets and hillside farms, pushed the enemy ever back and compressed the pocket more and more. In those two days we collected another bag of 3526 prisoners of war, captured sixteen fair sized towns, and advanced our front lines a total of more than twelve miles.

The state of disorganization of the enemy's forces was further illustrated by the large bag of P.O.W.s and the endless variety of unit identifications they brought with them. One hundred thirty-eight different units were represented, and they included every conceivable type of unit. There were combat units such as the 130th Panzer Lehr.



PLATTENBERG

Another town in the "Sauerland," showing the type of countryside over which the 99th fought.

(Courtesy H. H. Richter, 99th Signal Company, Houston, Tex.)

338th Infantry Division, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 176th Infantry Division, innumerable flak battalions, engineer battalions, many labor units, signal, replacement, veterinarian units, transport battalions, fortress troops, observation units, quartermaster companies, construction companies, and on and on, even to personnel of a straggler collecting point.

The evidence was piling up fast that our hammering and driving-in of the pocket was compressing the front lines of the enemy tightly against his rear area installations. Something had to give way soon!

We were convinced that the German horde facing us was no longer being guided, even in the most basic tactics, and was incapable of any large scale co-ordinated action. The most potent units we had encountered, like the Panzer Lehr Division, the 338th Infantry Division and the 3rd Panzer Grenadiers, were rapidly building up to full strength in our divisional P.O.W. cage.

The enemy even employed that last ditch scheme which failed when first tried in the African campaign. He sent units against us made up entirely of politically unreliable men—men who would, in any situation short of desperate, have been confined or at best been used as labor troops under penal conditions. They were given this opportunity, under pressure, of course, to fight, as a chance to atone for their unorthodox political beliefs. To stiffen their resolution to

do so, they were informed that any negligence or unsoldierly conduct on their part would lead to their execution. As could be expected, these men deserted in wholesale numbers. There was no doubt about it, confusion reigned supreme in the enemy camp.

The prisoners we captured displayed a general feeling of letting down, of being able to relax now, because "It's all over." Prisoners brought out their harmonicas, and in some cases even an accordion, to play and sing German songs to while away the time. Most of them no longer regarded themselves as soldiers, except for the uniform they wore. All indications pointed to the fact that the end of the trail was close at hand.

The 15th April was a day of abnormal activity. Our attack, as usual, started at 6:00 A.M., with the first light of day. We were able to advance only about five miles. Prisoners pouring in, and town after town falling to our men, delayed our progress. Enemy resistance was erratic, varying from strong, determined resistance to light, token small arms fire followed by surrender.

On the Division's south flank, the 393rd Infantry overran the towns of Utterlingsen, Dahle, Vettenscheid, Altena, Evingsen and Nette. Several thousand prisoners and large amounts of enemy supplies and materiel fell into our hands. Here too, as Altena fell, the 130th Panzer Lehr Division, including its commander, Colonel von Hauser, his staff and more than 2000 of its men surrendered.⁶

In the center of the Division's zone of advance, the 395th Infantry drove ahead to reduce all resistance encountered, stormed and captured the town of Kesbern (the 1st and 2nd Battalions stormed the town abreast), and tied in our line tightly across the entire front, hooking up with the 394th Infantry on its right flank and the 393rd Infantry on its left flank.

The 394th Infantry, in its zone of action, stormed the city of Iserlohn, using all three of its battalions. The enemy resisted stoutly,

⁶ The surrender was made to the 3rd Bn. 393rd Inf. How the tables had turned! The 3rd Bn. 393rd, hit by a division in December during the Bulge, received the surrender of a division.

A further sidelight on the confusion existing in the enemy camp is illustrated by the following event: In a little village near Altena a box the size of a small trunk, filled with jewels, was discovered. A mess sergeant of the 3rd Bn. 393rd Inf. had set up his part of the kitchen train in a house and was using the box to sit on when he was annoyed by a German woman who insisted he get out, etc., etc. She aroused his curiosity and so he investigated the contents of the box. We decided it was probably loot collected by one of the German combat units which was forgotten when the units surrendered. The contents were guarded, inventoried and turned over to our finance officer and to higher headquarters.

HEMER

They were starving!
Interpreters were told,
"Food is on the
way."

Left to right:
Russian colonel, French
interpreter, C.G.
III Corps, C.G. 99th
Division.

*(U.S. Army Signal Corps
photo.)*



and the fight continued throughout the day. This was the largest city in the zone of advance of the 99th Division, and it was defended by various elements of the "die-hard" units who were taking literally the Nazi order to "Defend to the last man."

While the fight for Iserlohn continued, the 7th Armored Division and our 3rd Battalion 395th Infantry, coming in from the north and east, overran a German P.O.W. camp in the town of Hemer. Here, compressed into a small enclosure, were over 23,000 allied prisoners of war, consisting of some Poles and Americans but mostly Russians. They were a starving mass of humanity, cruelly herded into an area fit for not over 1000 men.

It was a horrible sight to see these human beings squeezed into the limited area of their open air stockade, digging in the ground



They broke out to ransack
the countryside looking
for food. We had to
bring them back.
We did.

(Photo by 99th Division.)

with their bare hands, searching, groveling, fighting for grubs and worms to eat. They had gone without food for over a week and were dying like D.D.T.'d flies. As our leading troops arrived at Hemer, the German guards fled, and thousands of these poor, starved wretches broke out of their prison stockade and flooded the countryside in search of food. They ransacked every place they came across, hunting solely for something to eat.

Through interpreters we were fortunately able to stop the exodus of the entire camp by assuring groups of them that food was on the way. It did arrive in a matter of an hour. Many who had broken out came back quickly when they heard food was available. This incident, however, required the detachment of an entire infantry battalion to be stationed there, purely to maintain order and to round up prisoners who had broken out. In the building sheltering the sickest of these prisoners, they were found three to a bed. Their German guards lived in luxury—two soldiers to a room. How so-called human beings could treat other humans in such outrageous fashion surpassed all understanding. As we took over and brought them food and medical attention, the Nazi guards who remained were dismayed that we hurled them out of their rooms and placed fatally sick soldiers in them.

During that day eleven towns were taken, 9043 prisoners of war collected, and in addition to the commanding officer and staff of the 130th Panzer Lehr Division, three major generals were taken prisoner.

The fighting depended upon the character of the local commander. In some places a token resistance of light small arms fire was received, followed by a prompt surrender; in other places a determined, stubborn resistance was met. In the latter cases, our men ripped into the enemy remorselessly. We destroyed in combat that day five tanks, including a Tiger tank and a Jagpanther, plus three halftracks, and in addition, many Germans who had needlessly sacrificed their lives. We captured nine 88mm guns, seven flak guns, a 16-inch R.R. rifle and 125 miscellaneous vehicles. It was evident that the German army was falling apart at its seams. The next day it collapsed.

On the 16th April, the bubble which was the eastern half of the Ruhr pocket burst suddenly and completely, yielding an astounding number of prisoners of war and tremendous quantities of materiel. After days of steadily falling back and of unorganized, blind attempts to hold out against our merciless pressure, the long expected mass surrenders became a reality. The 99th Division alone took 23,884



THE ROAD BACK

Surrendered German prisoners, too numerous to be guarded, walk back to 99th P.O.W. cages near Altena.

(U.S. Army photo.)

prisoners during the day, including eight general officers and one admiral.⁷

⁷ The eight general officers were:

- Gen. der Artillerie Loch, chief of rear area fortifications
- Gen. der Panzertruppen von Luttwitz, C.G. XLVII Pz. Corps
- Gen. Maj. Denkert, C.G. 3rd Pz. Gr. Div.
- Gen. Maj. Ewart, C.G. 338th V.G. Div.
- Gen. Maj. Roemer, C.G. 22nd A.A. Div. (G.A.F.)
- Gen. Maj. Hoppenrath, C.G. sector "Westphalen Sued"
- Gen. Maj. Eimler, assistant to Gen. Loch
- Gen. Maj. Jaist, assistant to Gen. Loch

The admiral was Scheer, former submarine corps, caught on recruiting duty.

It was humorous to us but not so to the officer concerned, for among these high ranking German prisoners brought in was one of our fellow officers—Brig. Gen. Gjelsteen, the artillery commander of the 86th Inf. Div., which was operating with us and on our left flank. He had been taken prisoner by the enemy several days before and was recaptured along with a group of Germans by our 99th men. No persuasion on his part could convince our doughs or M.P.s that he was truly

Continuing our attack at 6:00 A.M., as usual, on the morning of the 16th April, our "Battle Babies" drove on to the northeast until 8:30 A.M., when orders were received to halt in place pending the surrender of all German troops in our zone. Emissaries of the 7th Armored Division of our III Corps were negotiating details of surrender, and a truce had meanwhile been called, which was to end at noon.

Enemy commanders on our immediate front, including the commanding general of the XLVII Panzer Corps and the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, took this opportunity, before noon, to surrender their commands. Great numbers of enemy soldiers, too impatient to reach our P.O.W. cage to wait for negotiations, poured into our lines in ever increasing numbers, much to the chagrin of the Nazi "die-hards" who wished to continue the hopeless fight. The city of Iserlohn, however, one quarter of which had been captured by our 394th Infantry the day before, remained a center of resistance during the early hours of the day.

It was at about this time that a frantic call was received at Division headquarters in the town of Sundwig from Lieutenant Colonel Thomas N. Griffin, the commanding officer of the 395th Infantry.⁸ His two battalions (the 3rd was at Hemer) were stretched out in a thin line along high ground overlooking a wide valley to the immediate west of Iserlohn. His plea was, "What's up? I need help! The whole d--- German army is flowing down the valley right at my position!" I told him that it was probably a mass surrender, to wait there, and that I would join him at once.

I stepped into my Jeep, and with siren wide open, rolled out in a cloud of dust. One of my aides, Captain Frank X. Gallagher (Wilmington, Del.) and my driver, Sergeant Wade (Roanoke, Va.), accompanied me. I covered ground like I never want to cover it again. I found the colonel at an observation post on his front lines. Sure

an American officer; they did not know him, therefore he was just another Jerry in American uniform. He was brought to division headquarters under escort of a Tommy gun. When he saw Brig. Gen. Frederick H. Black, the 99th Div. artillery commander, the relief and satisfaction of recognition on the face of the "prisoner" was thanks enough. His cry when he saw Gen. Black of "Hey, Freddie, for Crissake tell 'em who I am" brought a laugh. He was wined, dined and hurried off to rejoin his outfit. Thereafter the 86th Div. I am sure cleaned up its flanks and rear areas as it advanced and no longer stormed headlong down main roads disregarding everything else, a procedure which in the past had caused the 99th considerable trouble along that flank.

⁸Lieut. Col. Thomas N. Griffin succeeded Lieut. Col. James S. Gallagher as C.O. 395th Inf. during the Ruhr pocket drive.

enough, the entire countryside was alive in gray-blue uniforms. Marching troops, motor vehicles loaded with troops, S.P. guns in columns, and still more columns of troops moving down every road and trail across the valley as far as the eye could see, coming toward us at the slow, regular, plodding rate of foot troops. No bands playing, no fanfare, just subdued ranks of troops marching as though they were coming from a big review. On they came, slowly, ceaselessly, doggedly.

There was no fight in them. All they wanted to know is, "Where is the P.O.W. cage?" The drag in their feet, the slump of their shoulders, the vanquished look in their eyes, their attitude of finality and resignation, cried aloud. These men were conquered. They knew it—we did too!

On they plodded, fully armed, with full field equipment, on to the P.O.W. cage, where they were glad to settle down on the ground to rest and breathe a big sigh of relief, for they had made it—alive! For them the war was over. "*Heil, Hitler?*" No, no! "*Gott sie dank!*"

As a sidelight, it was a funny feeling I had, the sudden feeling of uncertainty, when I left the observation post and turned onto the road back to headquarters. We in the Jeep found ourselves in the middle of a long column of German soldiers—German soldiers all around us, in front of us, behind us, along side of us. Minutes ago we were fighting them—as a matter of fact, we still were—but here, suddenly, they surrendered, and we found ourselves in a column of Jerries. What would happen if some fool Nazi suddenly got it into his head to take one more American before quitting? I stopped my Jeep and directed two big, strapping "Lansers" who were walking along the side of the road to hop on the hood of the car. If anything happened, at least two Jerries would bite the dust! Nothing happened. We rode them down the road to the P.O.W. cage, where they got off and walked into confinement. They did not know that they had been driven to the cage in style by the Division commander. We breathed a sigh of relief and dusted back to Division headquarters.

At 11:05 A.M. all German garrisons were surrendered, but not the one in Iserlohn. The 394th Infantry promptly resumed its attack on that city. At 12:30 P.M. the garrison in the city surrendered. Due to the ever increasing number of German soldiers deserting their ranks to give themselves up, plus the persuasive power of our fighting men and that of a tank-mounted public address system we used, the resistance collapsed. "Soldiers in Iserlohn," boomed out the voice of Lieutenant Walter Wellford (New York City), of the 394th Infantry,



The advance is faster riding on tanks than walking.

The "I. and R." platoon, 393rd Infantry, recaptured these four medics of the 86th Division who were taken prisoner by the Germans the night before. We thought it a joke—they were glad to be back, but a bit peeved. Note the expressions on the men—it tells who was who.

(Photos 393rd History.)



The "Krauts" began surrendering in groups. This company, led by its commander bearing a white flag, gave up to men of the 393rd Infantry.

It has always remained a mystery as to what became of the steel helmets the Jerries wore.



Generalmajor Romer leaves his headquarters with men of the 99th after surrendering to the 394th Infantry at Iserlohn.

(U.S. Army photo.)



Most officers and N.C.O.s were happy to be prisoners.

(393rd History.)



Some of the 130th Panzer Lehr Division's ex-soldiers. Our P.O.W. cages were jam-packed. Over 23,000 were collected.

(393rd History.)

over the loudspeakers as he began his speech in German, "your situation is hopeless. You are completely encircled. Your commanders have surrendered. Lay down your arms and surrender at once or we will annihilate you with artillery fire! Come out!"

They came out—more than 400 of them. Then, continuing to broadcast instructions to the civilians in the town, more soldiers surrendered, and the "smaller pocket" collapsed.

It was here that a proud little unit of the once-crack 130th Panzer Lehr Division gave up to Lieutenant Colonel Robert Kriz (Grand Isle, Neb.), commander of the 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry. Aligning his depleted company beneath the long-barreled 128mm guns of his three anti-tank Tigers, in the town square, its commanding officer, Lieutenant Ernst, shook hands with each of his men, called them to attention, had them count off, delivered a short speech to them, executed an about face, saluted Colonel Kriz, and formally surrendered.⁹

The Ruhr pocket was history.

Elements of the 394th Infantry pushed on through the city of Iserlohn, and along with our other regiments and forces, took up a position facing to the northeast along the Lenne River and the railroad line west of Iserlohn. We thought we would have a period now of collecting prisoners of war and screening the area over which we had fought. We were wrong. No such tranquil duty was in the books for the hard hitting 99th Infantry Division.

The Division was going strong. It had become one of the top-notch fighting outfits in the E.T.O. The Nazis down in Bavaria were still full of fight, and so down to Bavaria rolled the "Battle Babies" to join General Patton's Third Army.

Before leaving the history of the Ruhr pocket, a word must be said about the magnificent job done by the 99th Infantry Division's artillery and the attached 786th Tank Battalion and 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion. These units were faced with more than just fighting the enemy. They had to fight the terrain too. The heavy armament with which they were equipped had to be brought forward.

⁹ I personally watched this surrender as it took place in the town square. I was in my Jeep parked at a curb. Thousands of Germans watched. A group of spectators close to me suddenly realized that my Jeep was parked there. I noticed some of these spectators point at my Jeep and withdraw in fright and then I heard them remark, "Russian." They had apparently taken the distinguishing plate of a major general, which the Jeep displayed (a red plate with two white stars on it) as a Russian emblem.



At Iserlohn they line up their Jagd Tiger tanks as for inspection—still fully loaded—and turned them over. Enemy troops all came in with full combat equipment.

(99th Division photo.)

"OUR SPIRITS WERE HIGH"

The C.G. (pointing) and the chief of staff (Bob Warren) inspect these prizes, one of six 128mm 'Tigers.

(Note effect of our shell fire—a small dent in the 14-inch-thick armor.)

(99th Division photo.)

The terrain over which they had to bring this equipment was primarily heavily wooded, steep hills. Few roads led in the direction of our attacks. Many, many times guns and tanks, vehicles and trailers, had to be winched foot by foot up the sides of these hills to get them into positions from which they could support the infantry. There was hardly a time when the infantry needed artillery fire or tank and tank destroyer support that it was not forthcoming, where they wanted it and when they wanted it. Our forward observers were always up with the front lines. They lived there. While our advance at no time was like a streak of lightning, it was a steady, relentless one.

The following extracts from the journals of two of our battalions of artillery show this steady, powerful advance. The schedules of the 370th F.A. (105) Battalion, which supported the 393rd Infantry, and that of the 372nd F.A. (155) Battalion, which supported the Division as a whole, bears out this fact. The other battalions, the 371st and 924th, both 105 howitzer battalions, and our attached 170th F.A. (105) and 667th F.A. (155) Battalions had similar schedules. Because of the difficulty of the terrain, these units were usually attached directly to the infantry regiments, so as to give them quicker and closer support. For example, at one time the distribution was as follows: To the 393rd Infantry were attached the 370th F.A. and the 667th F.A. Battalions; to the 394th Infantry were attached the 371st and 372nd F.A. Battalions, and to the 395th Infantry were attached the 924th and 170th F.A. Battalions. This gave each regiment of infantry operating on these wide fronts and difficult terrain powerful artillery support. Here is a sample schedule of their daily advances (see map, p. 248):

| <i>372nd F.A. (M.) Battalion</i> | | <i>370th F.A. (L.) Battalion</i> |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Wunderhausen | 4 April | Dotzlar |
| Schullar | 5 April | Berghausen (first firing) |
| | 6 April | Wingeshausen |
| Latrop | 7 April | Wingeshausen plus 3 miles |
| | 8 April | Oberhunden |
| Harbecke | 9 April | |
| | 10 April | Kickenbach |
| Brenscheid | 11 April | Elspe |
| Ramscheid and Kuckuk | 12 April | Ostentrop |
| Endorf and Mellen | 13 April | Frankhausen |
| Brockhausen | 14 April | Kuntrop |
| | 15 April | Lauferschlade |
| Westiger-Kreuz (Iserlohn) | 16 April | |

As to the number of prisoners captured, the following list illus-

They rode
comfortably—
sixty-three to a truck!

(Courtesy 1st Sgt.
Bryant, 99th
Reconnaissance
Troop.)



trates the increasing number of prisoners we gathered in day by day as we pushed deeper and deeper into the pocket. These were all evacuated by our own service elements—primarily the 99th Quartermaster Company:

| | |
|---------|--------|
| 5 April | 243 |
| 6 | 509 |
| 7 | 430 |
| 8 | 546 |
| 9 | 561 |
| 10 | 594 |
| 11 | 695 |
| 12 | 799 |
| 13 | 987 |
| 14 | 2,154 |
| 15 | 9,043 |
| 16 | 23,884 |
| 17 | 3,795* |

Total 44,240

* Only a few of those we had collected. That day we departed for the Third Army and turned our catch over to the troops relieving us.

These prisoners were all evacuated from our Division prisoner of

war cages to the Army cages in two and one-half ton trucks. They rode comfortably (?) —63 to a truck.

The attitude and deportment of the German generals captured and surrendered presented interesting studies. We knew the ruthless manner in which they had acted in combat when they had everything their own way—surprise, superiority of numbers, etc., etc. We now discovered how they reacted in adversity—exactly as could be expected. Pictures of a few of them, taken at the time, speak for themselves.

General der Panzertruppen (Lieutenant General) Heinrich Freiherr von Luttwitz commanded the XLVII (47th) Panzer Corps. His corps hit into our line toward Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. He arrived at our P.O.W. cage with his entire entourage of several staff officers, his political adviser, a *Kreisleiter*, and an interpreter. Pompously he informed the lieutenant in charge of the Division cage that he was "Lieutenant General Freiherr von Luttwitz," etc., who had very important information to transmit at once to the high command of the American army and desired to talk to a general officer of the American army.

I happened to be near the cage at the time. Informed of the situation, I walked over to the shack where the group was being held to find out what this was all about. As I entered, "Attention!" was called. No interpreter was needed to translate that command. The German officers all responded by rising and standing at attention. The "politico" insolently remained seated, with his hands in his pockets and his legs stretched out in front of him. Without ceremony, he was yanked to his feet by one of our military policemen.

General von Luttwitz, a typical *Junker*, squat, heavily built, self-important, but cowed by the "politico," began hesitatingly to stutter out who he was. His *Dulmetcher* (interpreter) began translating. It was evident that he wanted to say something but was afraid to talk as long as the other people were around, particularly the *Kreisleiter*. I listened for a moment and then directed that the room be cleared of all prisoners except von Luttwitz. When the *Kreisleiter* made some sort of objection, I turned on him and in forceful German dressed him down and told him to get out along with the others. Turning to von Luttwitz, I asked him what was on his mind. After that demonstration, the consternation of General von Luttwitz was pitiful.

With tears in his eyes and a sob in his voice, his important message was to the effect that he was just a regular German soldier, a



GENERALMAJOR MAX JAIST
Former commander of a
Nazi Panzer division.



GENERAL DER ARTILLERIE LOCH

They Were NOT Happy

A Study in Facial Expression

(All U.S. Army photos.)

CONTRE-ADMIRAL SCHEER



GENERALMAJOR ROBERT EIMLER
C.G. 4th Pioneer Division.



career officer, that he never had anything to do with any atrocities. He wanted to say that he was not a Nazi at heart. How pitiful a picture—and yet how typical! All he could think about was himself—not a thought about his men or the tactical situation. I never answered him. Disgustedly I turned to the lieutenant in charge of the cage, directed that the group be sent to higher headquarters for questioning, and departed.

The 99th Division Prisoner of War Interrogation Teams reported as follows on the other general officers questioned. There was Generalmajor Arbeitsfuehrer (works director) Paul Hoppenrath, who was in charge of all labor in the South Westfalen area. He was an actor, not a *Wehrmacht* officer. He found pleasure and importance in his very limited knowledge of school English. He was a glorified housekeeper under Model, looking after the living conditions of the anti-aircraft units. He was perfectly willing to spill his knowledge of everything—but he knew about as much as any captive private about the tactical situation—nothing.

Then there was Generalmajor Maximilian Jaist, z.b.v. Tough. Bavarian stubborn. Like a robot. The dials and switches of this robot were set by tradition and his superiors. It was hard to see how so inflexible a man had ever become a general. He was a first lieutenant in World War I, and as far as tactical knowledge was concerned was still a lieutenant.

Generalmajor Ewart, commanding the 338th Volksgrenadier Division, was a typical Prussian officer, extremely correct in his behavior, and bowed stiffly from the hips. He had an "I know" attitude concerning any situation, and was as security minded as a new officer candidate school graduate. He brought his wife to the cage with him and expected he would be assigned quarters and that she would accompany him to the States. (She was rather young and pretty, too). He was confused and completely chagrined when his dear wife was shooed out and told to go home—and he found his quarters waiting for him in the northwest corner of the open field cage, where he found a number of officers senior to himself standing around waiting!

Then there was Generalmajor Roemer, commander of the 22nd Anti-Aircraft Division. Not as correct as Ewart and not as polite as Hoppenrath. After the closing of the pocket, he became the C.G. of all anti-aircraft artillery units in the pocket. He was the only air force general in the sector. He knew little about the strength of his units. He admitted that over seventy-five per cent of the guns in the sector were out of commission, and he thought that the rest would be out



THREE OF THE CAPTURED GENERALS

Lieutenant David J. Schmechel (Milwaukee, Wis.), P.O.W. Team No. 1, 99th Division, talks to them. Left to right: Lieutenant Schmechel, Generalmajors Jaist, Hoppenrath, Eimler. (See text.)

(U.S. Army photo.)

of ammunition soon. He stated that a railroad A.A. unit which he was able to squeeze into the pocket at the last moment was already scattered and lost. He expected us to ship his personal belongings, contained in a cabin trunk, to his wife, 100 kilometers away. He expected.

Generalmajor Denkert, commanding general of the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, was a soldier. He admitted without fear that "The war is lost!" He gazed upon our P.O.W. cage with difficulty. He realized that his career as a professional soldier was over. Asked about the situation in the pocket, he replied, "Take a look at your P.O.W. cage." He complimented American P.O.W.s on their security mindedness, and was sincere in his remark, "The 99th Division is a very good Division." He was the most refreshing experience in the line of generals interviewed.

Then there was General der Artillerie (Lieutenant General) Herbert Loch. Forty years a *Wehrmacht* officer. At various times C.G. of the 17th Infantry Division, 28th Corps, 18th Army. Retired and called back again to operate rear area installations. There was something wrong with either his ability as a commander or his political connections. Under him were both Generalmajors Jaist and Eimler, on jobs considered, for their rank, menial labor. They all complained bitterly of the difficulties they encountered in their assigned tasks. Eimler explained that in the first place he had to make a personal reconnaissance of the towns which had been chosen to serve as strong points and decide, together with the actual troop commander, how the place should be defended, where trenches should be dug, the tanks dug in, the road blocks placed, the anti-tank guns put into position, the bridges blown. That finished, his task was to round up the labor and tools for the job. He then visited the mayor of the town, and, based on the strength of the male population, ordered so many men to appear at a selected place at a specified time. The mayor would point out that this was easier said than done, as the people were bitterly opposed to having their town turned into a fortress and therefore doomed to become rubble. The male population would sooner go into hiding than chop down trees and excavate holes for the *Wehrmacht*, and, admitted the general, the mayor was always right. Only a fraction of the labor force he demanded would turn up. Other sources of manpower, foreign workers and the *Reichs Arbeits Dienst* (National Labor Service) detachments were either unwilling and had to be driven, or were scarce. Then the task of collecting tools at a half-dozen different depots and bringing tools and material and workers together at the proper place meant more delay. By that time it was usually too late—the Americans had arrived there first. Such were their jobs—labor foremen.

There was Contre-Admiral Werner Scheer, a tall, slender naval officer for thirty years, relegated to shore duty—recruiting duty. Reluctant to talk, embarrassed more because of his type of duty than anything else. Pleasant, but of no military value to us. Shipped on to higher headquarters. A Nazi, although he professed great admiration for everything American—he had visited the U.S.A. before the war.

On the morning of the 17th April, while the Division was pulling out of the Ruhr to join the Third Army, our men picked up General der Infanterie Gustav von Zangen, commanding general of the 15th German Army, which army had assaulted our 99th Infantry Division positions around Hofen and Elsenborn during the Battle of the Bulge.

He was attempting to slip through our lines disguised in a private's uniform which he had slipped over his own uniform of a German general officer. He and two other generals were gathered in at that time. They were turned over for disposition to the 5th Infantry Division, which unit was relieving the 99th.

As every combat soldier knows, the front line fighting man sees only that part of the battle where he himself is engaged, and that small part is often further limited to a worm's-eye view. In the same way, a great battle is nothing but a composite picture of a number of engagements by small groups, and a campaign is but a series of connected battles. This was particularly true of the Ruhr pocket drive, in which squads, platoons and companies were primarily used to drive the enemy off hilltops, away from roadblocks, and out of small towns and villages. The concerted effort of even an entire battalion was seldom employed against any specific target. The entire drive, campaign, was a never ending succession of small fights for critical terrain features from which the enemy had to be driven.

The hundreds of actions which took place during this operation defy detailed accounting. Each soldier, each squad, platoon, company and battalion fought on and on in a continuous battle to seize and hold a never ending series of objectives set them by Division headquarters. One fact, however, stands out even now, paramount to all others.

In fighting of this sort, our American soldier undoubtedly is the world's superior fighting man. His intelligence, initiative and leadership ability, his willingness to assume responsibility, and the confidence he has in his ability to accomplish a task once attempted are the qualities which make him so outstanding. He has no fear of superiors, for he is a free man from a land where all men are created equal. He has initiative and drive, for he is the product of a land where free enterprise is encouraged and has brought about our high standard of living. He is willing to take calculated risks and to fight twice as hard to make his decisions come out right. These are the characteristics which make him the most feared man on the battlefield.

My officers and men have frequently asked me, "How come, with all the prisoners we gathered in during the Ruhr pocket drive, that the Germans did not put up more of a fight? They certainly had the ground to do it on!"

I agree. At first we thought there were only about 75,000 Germans

in the pocket. It turned out we had corralled about 350,000.¹⁰ Their tactics never were properly co-ordinated. Their operations degenerated into isolated rear guard and delaying actions at road junctions, towns and critical terrain features. Defense in depth, along cohesive linear positions, did not exist. They used what might be called "hedgehog defense of staggered points"—anti-aircraft guns on ground defense roles, defended road blocks, and the defense of hastily organized strong points. The more expendable troops, the "makeshift infantry," were ordered to hold to the last man, while the elite troops, the once highly mobile Panzer and S.S. troops, appeared but infrequently, to hit and run. Consider for a moment the operational problems of which captured General Eimler complained—selection of defensive areas, objection by the people of the towns, labor and tool troubles, etc., etc., and one must wonder where the highly vaunted German precision and exact co-ordination had gone.

There was no love between the military and political leaders, as was proven in the P.O.W. cages where the German officers frequently disclosed to our authorities Nazi political leaders in disguise.¹¹ I believe that the politicians, the *Kreisleiders* and *Gauleiters*, now that the fight was on *Festung Germania*, were taking over the tactical and strategic handling of the troops, and that the trained military leaders had nothing to say about it. These "politicos" in their egotism, I believe, thought themselves better generals on their home grounds

¹⁰ During the first sixteen days of April, 12th Army Grp. troops alone took over 750,000 prisoners and in a single day (16th Apr.) took an estimated 180,000 of which about 50,000 were outside of the Ruhr pocket. Roughly 1,200,000 P.O.W.s were captured on the Western Front in six weeks.

¹¹ Extract report 5 Apr.: "The Nazi *Kreisleider* of Marburg was reported by two officer P.O.W.s to the first sergeant of the cage as hiding in officer's uniform among the officer P.O.W.s—but without shoulder straps and with brown shoes. Col. Count Strachwitz, a typical arrogant Silesian *Junker* and the C.O. of a school which had been captured, tried to hide him. When Strachwitz denied this, the *Kreisleider* was screened out before his eyes. His arrest was watched by the other officer P.O.W.s with satisfaction. As one P.O.W. captain put it, 'The *Kreisleider* of Marburg was arrested by these Americans who seem to know everything. How the *Kreisleider* trembled! And only two days ago the entire army in Marburg trembled when the *Kreisleiter* hit the table and cried, 'Who conducts the war? The army or the party!'"

"Another '*Goldfasan*' was unearthed when a German lieutenant colonel denounced him. He was standing in the division cage apart from the other officers who avoided him as if he were a leper. Under his uniform he wore the brown shirt of the party, dress slippers, no cap and a narrow leather belt tied around his waist. He had no '*Soldbuch*' or 'dog tags.' When unearthed, he ran the entire gamut of arrogance, through self pity to downright pleading for mercy." (Source: 99th G-2 Report.)

than their professional soldiers. Maybe they hoped to spirit their elite troops out of the pocket to the German "redoubt" near Berchtesgaden, where they might find refuge. This fighting, remember, was taking place in Germany proper, and the Nazi party leaders were therefore apparently a superior authority to the supreme military commanders.

CHAPTER XIII

The Final Drive — Through Bavaria

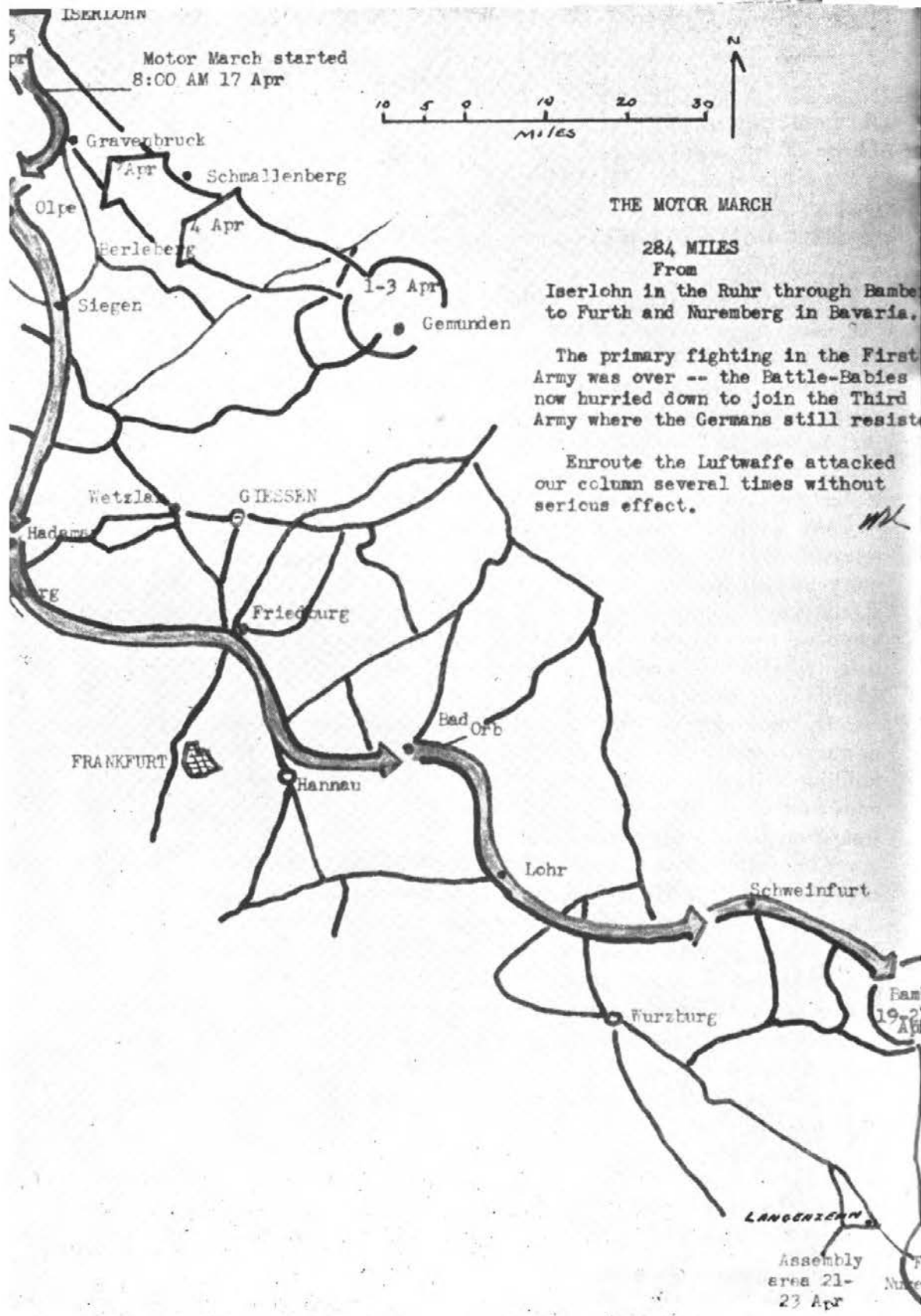
THE EASTERN HALF of the Ruhr pocket collapsed. Day and night our two and one-half ton trucks kept running back and forth between our P.O.W. cages and the Army cages, hauling prisoners. Each truck bulged with them. The numbers of P.O.W.s we had gathered in surpassed the greatest stretch of our imagination during the days of the "Bulge." Now and then one of the Army P.O.W. trucks would haul off in one load 150-200 of them. Our trucks looked tiny along side these long-bodied giants.

We were screening our area, taking care of the thousands of released allied prisoners, like those at Hemer, regulating the many more thousands of displaced persons who were under our feet, and at the same time holding a front line north and west of Iserlohn, when we received orders to close out, turn our sector over to the 5th Infantry Division, and hurry down south to join General Patton's Third Army in Bavaria.¹

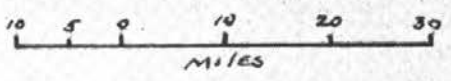
In mid-stride, so to speak, the Division changed its pace. One minute it was fighting, the next it was gathering up prisoners and holding a front line, and the very next it gathered up all its loose ends and went rolling out of the Ruhr on a 285 mile cross-country trek from Iserlohn to Bamberg.

Long drawn out field orders and detailed instructions were not needed. Our units had learned to function as smooth operating teams. They were able to meet any type of situation immediately and effectively. As the units withdrew from the front, details of men were already speeding on their way, marking routes, selecting halting points, gas refilling stations, and making arrangements for the innumerable other essentials incident to a march of this nature. The white printed card with the checkerboard shield and a big black arrow became a familiar emblem on the roads of Europe. These advance detachments of military police and billeting details posted them to help guide the columns to their destinations.

¹ I like to believe that the intelligence report from Headquarters Third Army dated 13 Mar. '44, given on p. 199, had much to do with the selection of the 99th Div. for this essential task, in addition to the fact that the "Battle Babies" had reached the pinnacle of efficiency as a fighting division.



Motor March started
8:00 AM 17 Apr



THE MOTOR MARCH

284 MILES

From
Iserlohn in the Ruhr through Bamberg
to Furth and Nuremberg in Bavaria.

The primary fighting in the First
Army was over -- the Battle-Babies
now hurried down to join the Third
Army where the Germans still resist.

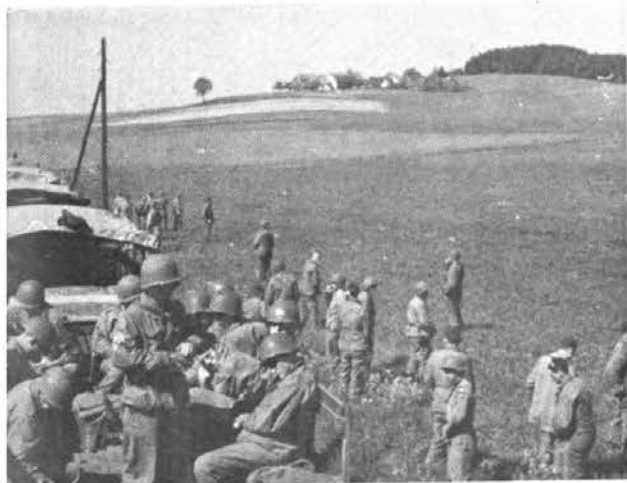
Enroute the Luftwaffe attacked
our column several times without
serious effect.

WJL

Bam
19-21
Apr

LANGENSCHEN
Assembly
area 21- Nure
23 Apr

SENWABARD

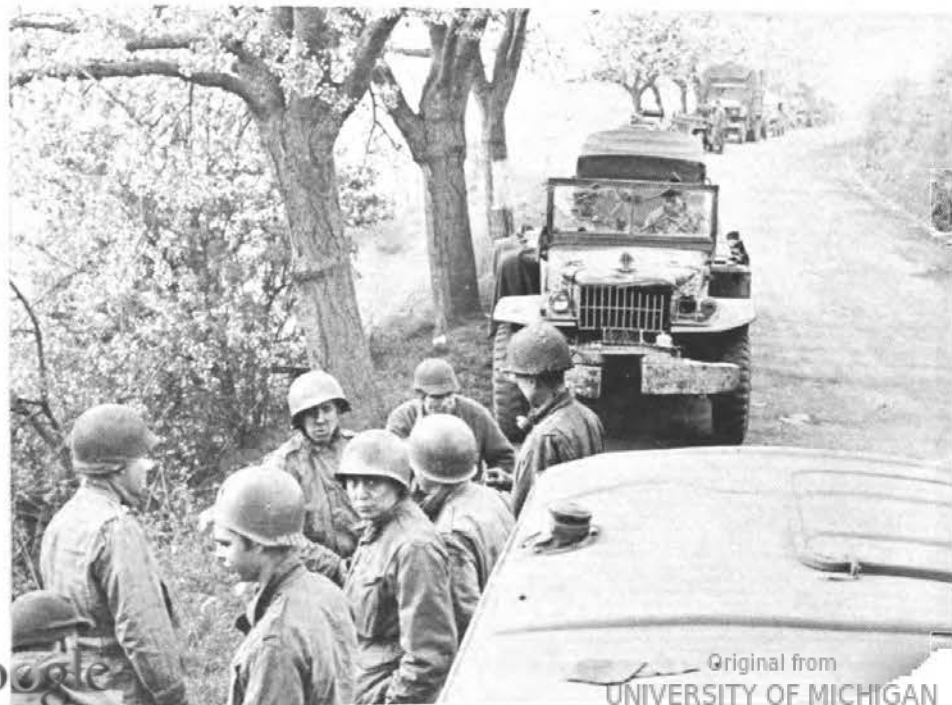


EN ROUTE

The move was secret—note covered shoulder patches or none.

Halts were few and food was "K" ration or a hot "C."

(393rd History.)





Practicing assault boat tactics, a refresher course while waiting for the drive to start.

General Patton drove over 200 kilometers to visit 99th Division headquarters and welcome the Division to his Army as we arrived at Langenzenn.

(Courtesy 1st Sgt. Bryant, 99th Reconnaissance Troop)

A new kind of country—fields covered with flowers. Our men load up on trucks ready to roll.

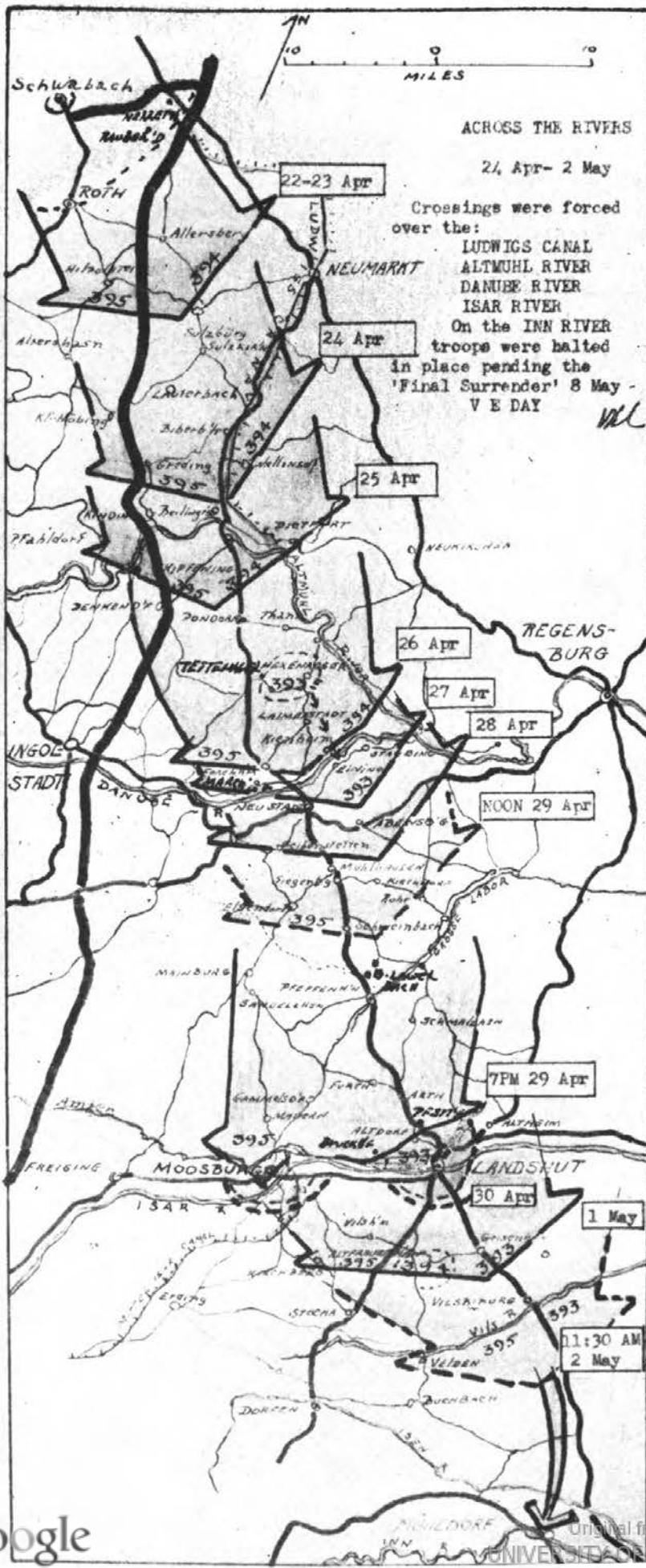


The long motor trek started from the unit assembly areas near Iserlohn and Neuenrade, in the Ruhr, and proceeded down the winding banks of the Lenne River (up which we had just fought) to the town of Gravenbruck. From there it proceeded along a good highway to the town of Ople, where it turned south to roll through Siegen and Limburg and through the Wester Wald part of Germany over which we had fought when we broke out of the Remagen bridgehead and drove to Giessen. The route then continued down toward Frankfurt am Main, which it bypassed at Hanau, east of Frankfurt, on to Bad Ord, through Lohr and Schweinfurt to Bamberg. It went right through the area we later took over in occupation.

It was a beautiful scenic trip, much more enjoyable this time than when we saw it the first time while double-timing after our armor as we cleaned out that area originally. We streamed down south on our own power. Every truck had a trailer loaded down with troops. Many new vehicles, which but days before were Jerry's, had changed their coloring and markings and now were hauling 99th "doughs" down to Bavaria. Six men in a Jeep, six more in its trailer, and down the road they rolled. I remember particularly the big trailer the artillery had captured and fixed up as a mobile fire control center. It was a fine piece of equipment, heavy to drag over the steep hills on our route, but the artillery brought it along, nevertheless, and later it served its purpose well.

The tanks and tank destroyers had the hardest time of it. They came down that route on their own power. How they made it remains a glowing tribute to the drivers and repair crews of those two battalions, the 786th Tank and 629th T.D. Battalions. Our 799th Ordnance Company comes in for the highest praise, too. They kept all the transportation rolling. Their crews and wreckers followed each column, worked day and night, and accomplished the work of a dozen ordnance companies.

Within two hours after being relieved by elements of the 5th Infantry Division, our combat teams started rolling. The 394th Infantry Team led out. Relieved at 8:00 A.M. on the 17th April, it started its march at 10:00 A.M. Next came the 395th Team; relieved about noon, it rolled south at 2:30 P.M., to be followed by the 393rd Infantry Combat Team. Sandwiched into the column were the other elements of the Division, such as the Reconnaissance Troop and Division Headquarters Company. Closing the column were the Tank and T.D. Battalions, the Quartermaster Company, the Ordnance Company, and a detachment of the 324th Medical Battalion.



ACROSS THE RIVERS

24 Apr - 2 May

Crossings were forced over the:

- LUDWIGS CANAL
- ALTMUHL RIVER
- DANUBE RIVER
- ISAR RIVER

On the INN RIVER

troops were halted in place pending the 'Final Surrender' 8 May - V E DAY

WLL

The column began arriving in its assembly area near Bamberg during the night of the 18th April, and closed during the early morning hours of the 19th April. The march was not without incident of enemy action. Several times, individual planes of the German Luftwaffe descended on the column to strafe and harass it. No damage was done, and our men rather enjoyed the incidents as a break in the monotony of the march.

To expect our medium tanks and tank destroyers to make the complete march without a breakdown was expecting too much. These heavy, full-track vehicles accomplished the impossible and began arriving, on their own power, a few days later.

Here, in and around the small towns of Prossendorf, Vierath, Lisberg Ober Schliebach, Limbach and Preissendorf, our troops spent two days on maintenance of vehicles and equipment and getting ready for the next combat.

Early on the morning of the 21st April the Division pushed south another fifty miles to the vicinity of Nuremberg. Combat Team 394 pulled out of its temporary assembly area near Vierath at 6:30 A.M., and by 4:00 o'clock that afternoon its 1st Battalion had relieved elements of the 42nd Infantry Division in the town of Furth, while the remainder of the regiment bivouacked at and near the town of Vietsbronn. Division headquarters moved down at the same time from Prossendorf to Langenzenn, just west of the city of Nuremberg, and the next day the other elements of the Division came rolling down to assemble near the town of Schwabach, about ten miles south of Nuremberg, into which town Division headquarters also moved.

Quickly the stage was set for the "Battle Babies" to take over a ten to fifteen mile wide zone to drive southeast out of Schwabach with its destination Salsburg, Austria.

The 394th Infantry Team, with the 99th Reconnaissance Troop attached, rolled out of its area near Vietsbronn and screened through the area of the Division zone of attack up to the line Nerreth-Roth. Its 1st Battalion was relieved in Furth by the 8th Tank Destroyer group and rejoined its regiment at the town of Raubersried that evening at 8:30 o'clock.

The 395th Infantry Team moved south from Lisberg, where it had held up for two days after the long motor trek, and assembled at the town of Roth. The 393rd Infantry remained in its old assembly area near Preissendorf as a reserve, but its 3rd Battalion came south that day to the little village of Buchenbach, about eight kilometers southeast of Schwabach. Here it was joined the next day by all the

other elements of the regiment. Combat teams were formed and the Division was readied to hop off in its next drive, scheduled to start the morning of the 23rd April.

It was not until 4:00 o'clock the afternoon of the 23rd April, however, that the "Go" signal was given to the 394th and 395th Teams. Even then they were limited in their advance to the line Allersburg-Hilpolstein, beyond which they were not permitted to reconnoiter because of the movement of elements of the 14th Armored Division, which were being switched from the XV Corps to the III Corps that day and were moving across our front. Our teams jumped off at 4:00 P.M. and arrived at their destination, the line Allersburg-Hilpolstein, at 9:00 o'clock that night, where they again held up.

It is interesting to note that the 99th Infantry Division was originally withdrawn from the First Army and that later the III Corps was also withdrawn. At the time this drive through Bavaria started, the 99th Division found itself again operating under the III Corps, this time teamed with the 86th Division and the 14th Armored Division.

Inasmuch as the 14th Armored Division would be spearheading our advance, both the 99th Reconnaissance Troop and the Reconnaissance Company of the 629th T.D. Battalion were withdrawn from attachment to the 394th and 395th Infantry Teams and assigned the mission of screening the area behind these two teams instead of spearheading them as at first planned. The 99th Reconnaissance Troop was assigned the mission of screening the area behind the 394th Infantry and to maintain contact with the 14th Cavalry Group on the left (northeast) flank, while the 629th T.D. Reconnaissance Company was assigned to screen the area behind the 395th Infantry and keep in contact with the 86th Division on the right (southwest) flank. This was a job in which both these units had had experience. They had done it with excellent results during the entire period of the Ruhr pocket drive.

The "Battle Babies" finally resumed the advance to the southeast at 8:00 A.M. on the morning of the 24th April. They moved rapidly about eighteen miles, following the advance of the 14th Armored Division. The advance was without incident. The most serious delaying factor encountered was the condition of the roads. The enemy had blown practically every bridge on the few good highways in the Division zone, and the other roads were all narrow, one-way trails in poor repair—and even on these, foot bridges and culverts had been destroyed.

In the north portion of the Division zone of advance, the 394th Infantry Team advanced its 2nd and 3rd Battalions abreast, crossed the Sulz River, then the Ludwigs Canal, and continued on to Oberndorf, a small town about five kilometers southeast of Wallendorf (see map). In the south portion of our zone, the 395th Team advanced to within one kilometer of the Altmuhl River that evening and sent strong patrols down to the river bank, looking for crossing sites.

The 393rd Combat Team followed in great leaps as a reserve. Our artillery was not called upon once during the day for its fire power. As a result of screening operations, as our troops passed through the area, 214 prisoners of war were collected, mostly deserters and stragglers.

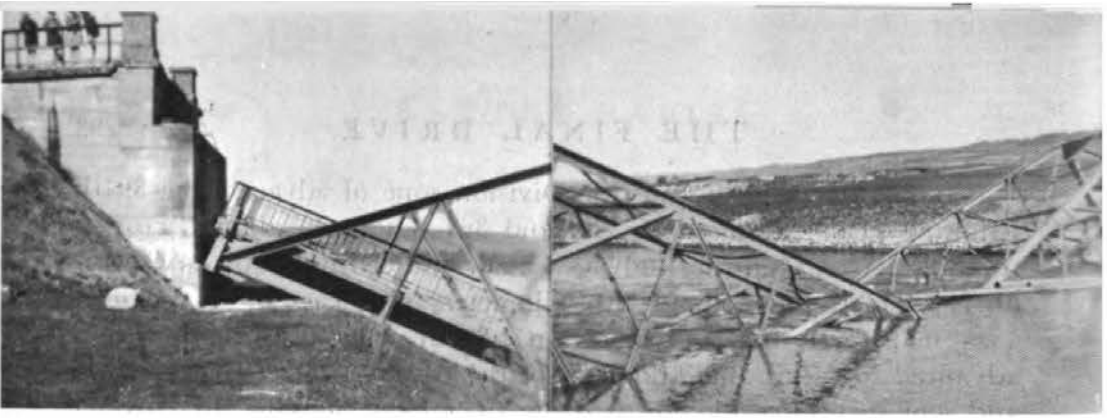
Again, this was a different kind of war. Even the terrain was different. No more mountain fighting, no more heavy woods to penetrate, for here we sat on the high ground which we had taken without a fight and could look down into the valley of the Altmuhl River and see in the far distance the flat valley of the Danube. There were patches of woods on the hill slopes and deep gorges to the southeast, and along the Altmuhl River banks, but they held no threat to our men. The open fields of the area were pasture lands, vineyards and hop fields, and those not cultivated were blooming in wild flowers.

From a study of aerial maps of the area ahead of us we could foresee that we were in for a series of the most treacherous kind of tactical operation—the forcing of river crossings; for a succession of rivers were the only natural obstacles in our path.

The enemy had apparently given up the high ground and hilly area to offer his resistance from behind the river lines, which were all formidable obstacles. The Altmuhl and Danube Rivers promised to be hard nuts to crack, should the enemy offer real co-ordinated resistance along their lines. Farther on were the Isar and the Inn Rivers, and in between were the Sulz River, the Ludwigs Canal, and the many smaller tributaries, all possible serious hurdles.

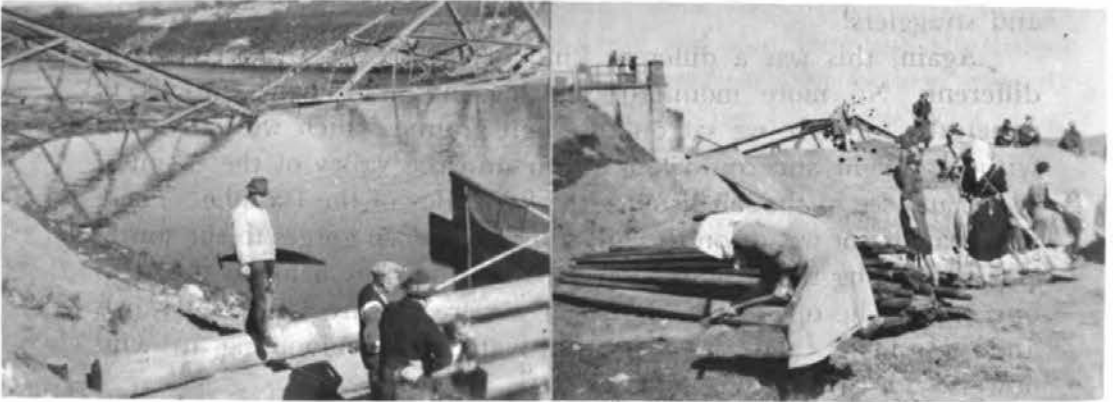
We knew we would have a series of rivers to cross before we started, and so, during the period back at Schwabach, while we were waiting for the "Go" signal, all our units were put through a refresher course in assault boat tactics. Our teams were experienced fighters, and our men were ready and anxious to try their hand at this type of operation.

It could not be expected that any bridges over these important



All the Bridges Were Down

(Pictures courtesy R. R. Wago, Company B 324th Engineers, Pittsburgh, Pa.)



Near Hallstadt the Germans began constructing a timber and barge bridge. Their women had to work too!



Company A 324th Engineers threw a floating Treadway bridge over the river. (Note town burning—result of W.P. shells.)

rivers would be captured intact, as happened on the Rhine. We hoped for the best—but expected the worst. The enemy had so far destroyed everything which held any semblance to a bridge, and our air observers reported several of the important bridges over the big rivers already destroyed. We expected we would be in for several real fights, and we were not disappointed.

Early on the morning of the 25th April we started out in our stern drive through *Mittle Franken*. In the north portion of our zone, the 394th Infantry moved rapidly cross-country toward the town of Dietfurt and the Ludwigs Canal. They had to cross this canal twice while advancing through their zone. The 2nd Battalion 394th Infantry, after a sharp skirmish, cleaned out the town of Dietfurt at 4:00 o'clock that afternoon. Joining with the 3rd Battalion, the two units, abreast, pushed across the canal against light opposition and advanced another two miles to the Altmuhl River.² Here they were met with heavy small arms and artillery fire coming from the high ground on the south bank of the river. Under cover of the woods along the bank of the river and in the twilight they reconnoitered for suitable crossing sites. They found them! They decided then and there to continue the attack under cover of darkness that very night.

At 11:00 P.M. the 3rd Battalion started across. It succeeded in establishing itself on the south bank by 1:30 A.M. Quickly the 2nd Battalion followed, and then the remainder of that glorious fighting team. Without a moment's hesitation, the regiment pushed on over the countryside toward the Danube River, 26 kilometers away. When it arrived within 1000 yards of that river it began receiving hostile mortar and artillery fire. In spite of the fact that the regiment had been instructed to halt so that the 393rd Infantry Team, which was being brought up from reserve, could pass through it and continue the attack, the 394th men reconnoitered the banks of the Danube for crossing sites and turned that information over to their teammates. This was the type of team work for which the "Battle Babies" were famous.

In the southern part of the Division zone, elements of the 395th

² The 3rd Bn. 394th had suffered eleven casualties on the far side of the canal as irregulars and elements of the 17th S.S. Pz. Gr. Div. resisted its advance. Four medics of the 3rd Bn. Med. Detach., in order to speed up the evacuation of these casualties, not waiting for the engineers, constructed their own bridge. Resting two flat-bottom boats upside down on the banks of the waterway, they spanned the water between with planks from a nearby barn. All night they raced their Jeep back and forth over this bridge, evacuating the casualties. Theirs was the first bridge over the canal and it did real service for them and others too.

Infantry Team had reached the Altmuhl River, in the left part of its regimental zone, late in the evening of the 24th April. The regiment resumed its advance early (7:00 A.M.) on the morning of the 25th and was able to advance all along its front without opposition right up to the banks of the Altmuhl River. Here it encountered exceptionally heavy small arms and artillery fire from organized positions along the near bank of the river and from positions on commanding ground across the river. In the right half of its zone, the town of Kinding, on the near bank, was occupied by several hundred S.S. troops and had been organized into a strong point. The town had to be cleaned out. Slowly but relentlessly the 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry closed in on the town. After two hours of stiff fighting the enemy suddenly quit and withdrew across the river. The town then became a favorite target for the enemy. Few of our men went into the town proper—a few squads to screen and check security were the only ones. Individual Jeeps drew artillery fire every time they showed themselves in the town that morning. That afternoon the enemy poured artillery into the town at the rate of about one shell every twelve seconds. In addition, four dug-in tanks across the river engaged our screening details in Kinding, and our other troops nearby, with direct fire. Such tactics were senseless. It was indicative of guerilla warfare, and not of high level organized resistance. They did us little harm, but they did severely punish the inhabitants of Kinding. Meanwhile, our men succeeded in reconnoitering along the river bank and found a protected crossing site. Late that afternoon they launched a co-ordinated attack following an artillery preparation and established a toehold on the southern bank of the river. Under cover of twilight that night (9:40 P.M.), Company F of the 2nd Battalion 395th Infantry crossed and seized the high ground near the village of Iraahull. The remainder of the battalion promptly followed, and driving south along the bank of the river, attacked and captured the town of Kipfenberg, upon which all resistance in that area collapsed.³

³ Paul E. Wessner, Co. E 395th (Tampa, Fla.) tells this story of the attack on the town of Kipfenberg: "It was almost dark (sunset was at 8:15 P.M.) as we approached Kipfenberg from the rear. As we slipped down a small hill and out of the woods, the first buildings we saw were those of what turned out to be a Russian labor camp. My platoon was in the lead. Two heavy machine guns were set up by our men supporting us and before we had time to slip down into the camp, they began firing. That gave away our position and eliminated the element of surprise. We took shelter behind the thin-walled cabins as the enemy opened on us from all sides. They began dropping mortar shells on us. The first was twenty-five yards short, the next twenty-five yards over but all the rest were direc'

In the left half of the 395th zone, the 3rd Battalion 395th had pushed down to the river bank during the day and selected its crossing sites. At 8:00 P.M. it crossed the river just south of the town of Belingries. Once across, it moved rapidly in the twilight, through woods and open fields, to seize the town of Kirchbach. No enemy resistance was met. The 1st Battalion followed, and early the next morning the entire combat team poured over the countryside toward the Danube River, twenty-six kilometers away.

The first hurdle had been overcome!

As had been suspected, the enemy had disappeared, vanished into thin air, after the crossing had been forced. No further opposition was offered our troops until they arrived at the banks of the Danube at 6:00 o'clock that evening.⁴ Quickly they occupied the north bank of the river, and hurriedly reconnaissance details scoured the bank for suitable crossing sites. As the reports came in that night, detailed plans were speedily formulated, and it was decided to force the crossing of the formidable Danube the next morning.

That historic stream, which we had read about in our school books and heard extolled as the "Beautiful Blue Danube" was in reality a muddy, dirty, yellow colored, fast flowing, smelly river. Its banks were marshy, its valley flat and unattractive, and its towns ratty appearing. As one looked more closely, a slight touch of the Orient could be observed. The river for centuries had been the main highway of commerce from the East to the West, and along its course the finger of Eastern influence, of the ancient Byzantine Empire, was faintly discernable. The spires of some of the churches, instead of being steeples, were small domes, shaped like upended dried onions. The furnishings of many of the homes, in the towns overrun, were abundant in Oriental fixtures. Little time, however, could be spent in philosophical conjecture as to what happened in this country

hits on our men huddled around the cabins. Six of the ten machine gunners were hit, five out of our squad of twelve and three others. Since the medics were plenty busy and I was one of the few not hit, I took care of two members of my squad. One was hit in the leg, the other in the foot. We found a cellar into which we moved all the wounded. It was impossible to move them back up the hill under the fire the Germans were laying down. We waited until 2:00 A.M. and then infiltrated across a dynamited bridge into the town. All the Heinies had gone; they had moved out only a short time before. We stayed there until 8:00 A.M. and got a few hours' rest. We had been averaging four or five hours' sleep each night. We left Kipfenberg by tanks and T.D.s for the Danube."

⁴ Undefended road blocks and blown bridges were encountered throughout the day and a short fire fight at 4:30 that afternoon, just south of the town of Tettenger resulted in three enemy killed and forty taken prisoner.

centuries ago, or of the influence of the East on the architecture of the buildings, and no time was available for sightseeing other than the type we were engaged in, of storming over the countryside. The country was different, it was slightly strange—but the enemy facing us were the same type we had been fighting. They were not strange!

On the 25th April we gathered in 136 prisoners, and on the 26th 345 more. They were a miscellaneous group these prisoners—some *Volksturm* (old men) and some 17th S.S. Panzer Grenadiers, with a smattering of the 99th Mountain Replacement Battalion, the 38th S.S., the von Hobe and the 352nd Infantry Divisions. There appeared to be no tactical unity among the troops opposing our advance. In general they were offering a form of rear guard delaying tactics, utilizing road blocks, demolitions and poorly organized fire power at critical points on natural terrain features. The enemy was offering us a poor duplication of the type of resistance we had encountered during the Ruhr pocket drive, except that he had the advantage of the natural barriers of the rivers. The stubbornness of his defense depended in great part on the character of the local leader. Some were the "last ditch," "defend to the last man" type, and others were the "shoot and run" type. None, however, really resisted to the last man, and all ran as soon as our men got close. The mystery to us for a time was, "What happened to these troops?" They would resist, then withdraw. With us close behind them and right on their heels, they would disappear. What happened to them? We knew they could not get away from us, yet they did. We could not catch up with them, nor could we find them. Eventually it became evident that as soon as they pulled back they would disappear into a woods to emerge on the other side, not as soldiers, but as civilians, to scatter and hide themselves among the townsfolk and the thousands of displaced persons streaming toward our rear areas. We eventually corralled them in our dragnet of rear area screening, and they ended up in our P.O.W. cages just the same.

At about this time we were alerted to the possibility of the Germans employing final desperate "cornered rat" tactics. Specially trained enemy personnel, operating behind our lines, would have the mission of attacking personages in important command posts and other military installations. With the enemy being steadily compressed into a smaller and smaller area and our discovery of so many disguised soldiers in our rear areas, the possibility of his employing this type of action in his final throes of last stand warfare had to be kept in mind.

These would be desperate, extremist acts which would have no affect on major tactical operations but could be costly to us as acts of sabotage and demoralizing as spite murders. The acting *Bürgermeisters* of several towns had met their death under mysterious circumstances, and this gave credence to the report. All command posts were alerted to this possibility, and as a result, as a command post was established, all inhabitants in the immediate area were moved out and an unceasingly watchful guard maintained.

We realized that as an organized military force the enemy was shattered and incapable of large scale warfare, but we also realized he was still capable of killing and destroying as a ravenous beast at bay and wounded to the death. The enemy included the innocent (?) civilians in the rear and overrun areas. We were in hostile territory, with the enemy all around us, a matter which was frequently forgotten by our troops, who were so often greeted with smiles of welcome by men, and women particularly—smiles which actually hid inner hatred.

The bitter humor of the surrendered and captured *Wehrmacht*, the only kind of humor which was left them, was well illustrated by a theme song, sung in our cages by prisoners of war from the 17th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division. It went like this:

“Kennt Ihr den Avanti-Schritt, Einen vor und drei zurück?

Ja, ja, ja—den kenen wir, schon seit beginn der Invasion!”

This was sung to the tune of an old German folk song, a free translation of which is:

“Do you fellows know the Avanti step, forward one and back three?
Yes, yes, yes, we do, ever since the Invasion!”

Prisoners freely admitted that they did not want to fight any longer. They did not know for what, and worse, did not know with what, to continue the fight. They complained that rifle companies were but squads and had no rifles, that the artillery had no ammunition, the vehicles no gas, and the *Landser* (private) had nothing to eat, and to top it all, that Hitler's Germany had no future. This war was over for them, and all they wanted was to go home, even via captivity. But threat was very much alive in them yet, for if they quit, the Nazi machine would take their mother, their father, their wife, and so—the *Landser* kept walking, walking, walking. “Did you know the Avanti step?”

Such was the morale of the troops we faced. They fought, and

fought hard, until the opportunity presented itself for them to sneak away under conditions which would not harm their loved ones. Screening the rear areas to shake out soldiers in civilian clothes hidden among the town folk, policing the routes used to keep the thousands of displaced persons streaming toward our rear areas off these roads so as not to interfere with the movement forward of our troops and supplies, were two of the herculean tasks performed by our two small units, the 99th Reconnaissance Troop and the Reconnaissance Company of the 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Day and night these two companies sped up and down roads, keeping them open and preventing the roads from being mined by saboteurs.

Under these strange conditions of warfare, our columns made the jump from the Altmuhl River to the Danube during the 26th April. Our 324th Combat Engineer Battalion, which had been broken up and attached to the two combat teams to assist them in handling the assault boats used for the Altmuhl River crossing, also constructed a Treadway bridge over the river. The bridge was completed at 3:00 o'clock that morning, and our heavy equipment and supplies started rolling forward without a moment's delay.⁵

The 394th Infantry, upon its arrival at the Danube, immediately began searching for crossing sites. The heaviest hostile fire came from the right flank part of its front, but in spite of this fire, three sites were found and selected as suitable for launching assault boats. This information was turned over to the 393rd Infantry as they arrived.

The 393rd Infantry moved forward during the night to the town of Hexenagger, while advance command groups arranged with the 394th Infantry to pass through their positions and formulated the details of the assault crossing. It was decided that the 394th Infantry would, from its positions on the north bank of the river, support the crossing by fire, while the 393rd men actually crossed in the assault boats.

The 395th Team arrived at the Danube in the early evening on the 26th April, made its reconnaissance, and completed its attack plans. During the night of the 26th-27th April, final co-ordinated plans to force the crossing were completed, and the attack for the entire Division was set for 11:00 A.M. on the morning of the 27th.

Both regiments hopped off as planned. On the front of the 395th Infantry, a crossing was forced by 12:45 P.M., but then things went

⁵ One and one-half companies of engineers were attached to each of the two combat teams to handle the 136 assault boats used by the infantry to cross the stream. Rafts, ferries, etc., were also operated by the engineers.



South of the town of Marching on the Danube was the site of the 395th Infantry crossing. A dike paralleled the river. Over this dike the 2nd Battalion 395th launched its boats. Company F got over, but well directed hostile fires pinned the others down.

Some of Company E 395th men digging in at the dike. Assault boat in distance.

*(Photo Russell Van Noy,
Troy, N.Y.)*



Taken at about 12:15 P.M. Hostile fires made the men hug the ground. Some of these men were wounded later. Our aid men were always right up front.

*(Photo William Chandler,
Onancock, Va.)*



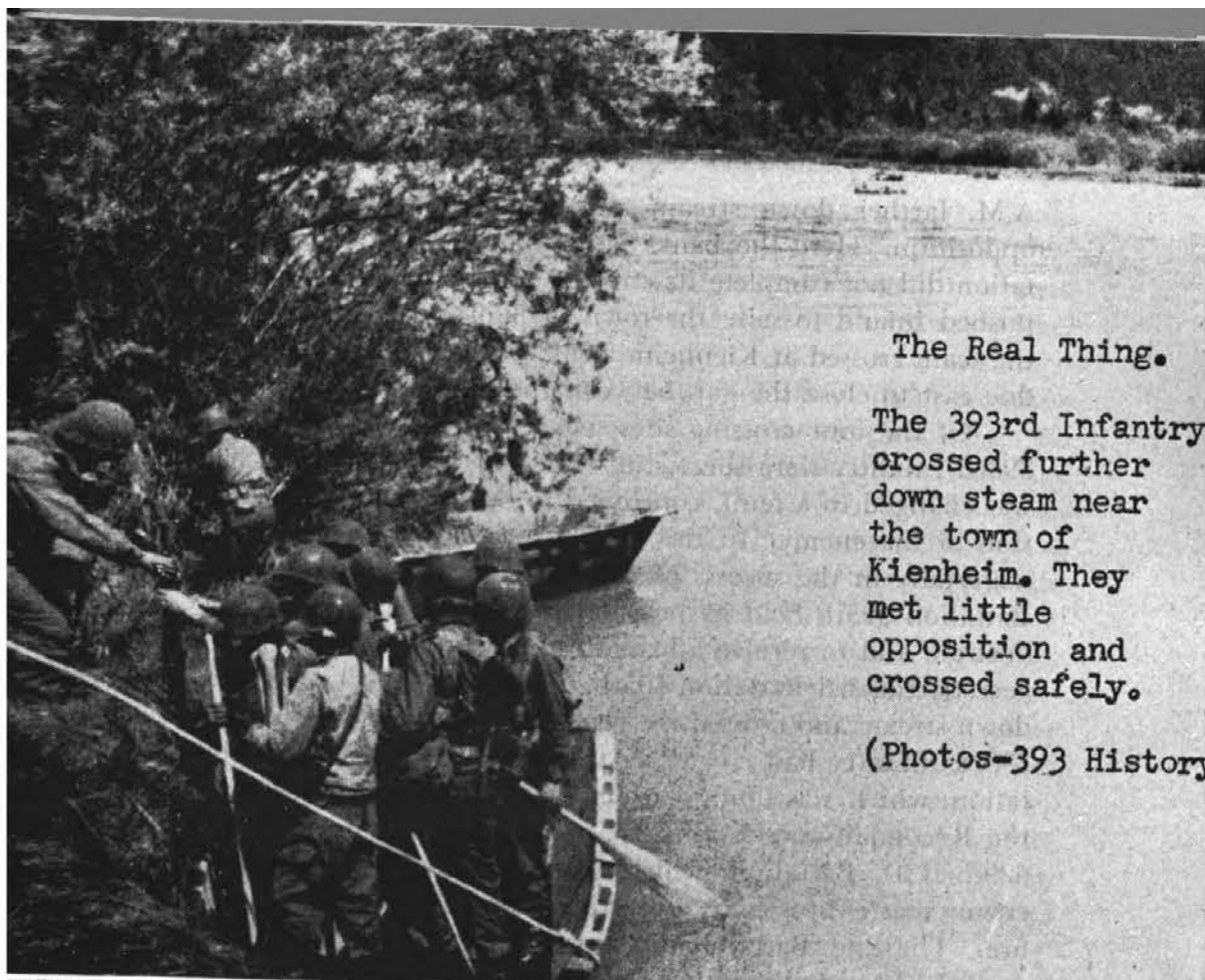
Company A men and an A.T. bazooka team push up to the river with an assault boat.

(Photo A. M. Leban, Baltimore, Md.)

wrong. Company F of the 2nd Battalion 395th succeeded in getting across, but then met extremely heavy small arms and artillery fire on the south bank of the river, was pinned down, and was unable to advance. Well directed fire of hostile mortars, artillery, anti-aircraft guns on ground defense, and small arms fire directed at the north bank prevented the remainder of the battalion's assault waves from launching their boats, which had to be hauled over a dyke paralleling the river at that place. Our concentrated retaliatory fire hurled at the enemy by the entire team had no effect on the well concealed and dug in enemy positions. Several costly attempts to push more troops across the river at this point met with failure! The plan was changed. This assault was changing to a feint. Holding its position on the north bank of the river, the 2nd Battalion continued only to demonstrate, so as to focus the hostile attention on that spot, while the remainder of the combat team secretly moved farther down stream to cross the river.⁶ The handful of troops on the south bank of the river heroically held their position and were supported by the protective fires of their battalion and its supporting artillery from across the river.

On the front of the 393rd Infantry, the 1st and 2nd Battalions led the assault, supported by the fires of the 394th Infantry. Here complete success met our efforts. The 2nd Battalion crossed just south of the town of Kienheim after a fifteen minute artillery preparation. No opposition was met during the assault boat operation. As the troops arrived on the south bank, however, they received considerable fire from the river town of Eining. The battalion completed its crossing at 1:30 P.M. and then turned on the town of Eining, which it completely cleared of all enemy resistance by 4:30 P.M. The 1st Battalion of the 393rd Team had launched its crossing at 11:00

⁶ "We were told we would make an initial crossing," writes P. E. Wessner, Co. E 395th Inf., of Tampa, Fla. "We marched for several hours and the shelling was getting closer. Every so often we would pass a pool of blood with a cartridge belt or rain coat near by. We knew then and only then that we were in for a rough time. We walked along parallel with a high dike that ran along the bank of the river. The enemy was constantly shelling this area as we had some 81mm mortars set up here. When we arrived at the assault boats we learned that Cos. F and G, which formed the first waves, were suffering heavy casualties from artillery and direct M.G. fire. . . . We learned that 393 had crossed farther down the river without casualties. We were to wait until dark, withdraw F and G Cos. on the north bank of the river, evacuate the wounded and then move down the river to a new point. . . . At dawn we arrived at the river and waited around in the deep mud for a D.U.K.W. to take us across. The weather was misty and the current fast. . . . It was a very uncelebrated crossing for us of a very famous river."



The Real Thing.

The 393rd Infantry
crossed further
down stream near
the town of
Kienheim. They
met little
opposition and
crossed safely.

(Photos-393 History)



A.M. farther down stream and was able to cross without hostile opposition. Here the banks were difficult to negotiate, and the battalion did not complete its crossing until 5:00 P.M. It then promptly pushed inland to seize the town of Staubling. The 3rd Battalion of the team crossed at Kienheim at 6:30 o'clock that evening and moved due east to close the gap between the other two battalions.

Of the four crossing sites selected, the three on the front of the 393rd Infantry were successful. The one in front of the 395th, which was changed to a feint, continued to demonstrate and hold the attention of the enemy. In this it was successful, and undoubtedly aided materially in the success of the other crossings. Impatiently the 2nd Battalion 395th held its position during the day, continuing to demonstrate and to receive all the hostile fire the enemy could hurl at it. Secretly the 3rd Battalion 395th, followed by the 1st Battalion, moved down stream and crossed the river near the town of Eining, where the 393rd Infantry had crossed. At 11:00 o'clock that night the 2nd Battalion, which was doing the demonstrating, was relieved in place by the Reconnaissance Company (light tanks and armored cars) of the 629th T.D. Battalion, which took over the mission of holding the enemy's attention and protecting Company F, across the river, by fire. The 2nd Battalion, in turn, moved down stream and crossed over the river without further trouble.

The story is told of the Negro platoon, attached to the battalion, which that night cleared out the enemy along the river bank facing the 395th crossing sites. They routed out the well concealed enemy in cold fury and drove them away screaming for mercy. Heavy sniper fire and determined resistance by small groups of S.S. troops concealed in buildings forced house to house fighting in a few places, during which time few prisoners were taken. Company F, which had held its toehold on the hostile bank of the river during the day, not much the worse for wear, rejoined its battalion that night to continue the drive to the south and east.

Our 324th Engineer Battalion had been reinforced by the 291st Engineer Battalion. They operated the 136 assault boats used by our troops in the crossing, plus a number of ferries. While the troops were establishing themselves on the far bank of the Danube, Treadway bridge equipment was brought up to the bridge site near Kienheim, and construction of a pontoon bridge was initiated. The site selected was that of an old boat landing which had a road leading down to it. It seemed ideal for our purpose, but during the day it rained, and the bed of the old road began to give way as the heavy

engineer trucks hauled their bridging equipment down to the banks of the river.

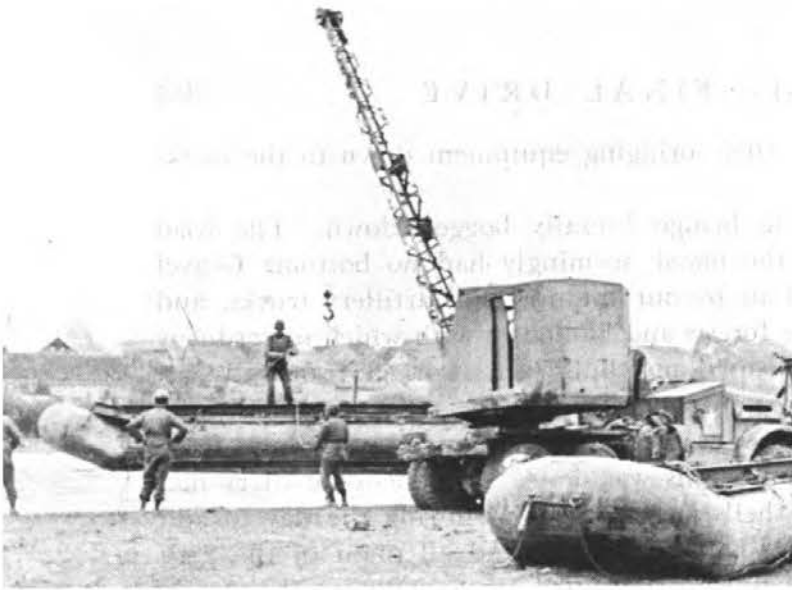
Construction of the bridge literally bogged down. The road became a marsh, and the marsh seemingly had no bottom. Gravel and stone were hauled in by our infantry and artillery trucks, and logs were cut out of the forests and hauled in with which to corduroy the road. Engineer tractors and bulldozers worked frantically all during the day hauling pontoons down to the river. Gradually the bridge began to stretch across the stream. The strong current of the river had to be overcome. This was done. The enemy artillery had the range, and hostile shells kept coming in during the day to add their hazard to the job. During the day and all night of the 27th April these doughty engineers continued unceasingly at their task. All during the 28th, in spite of rain, marshy road, and hostile fire, they continued forcing their bridge over the historic Danube. Toward dark that night the last unit of the bridge was placed in position so that vehicular traffic could use the bridge. Foot elements had been able to cross for some time, and during the construction operations the 394th Infantry (now the Division reserve), less its vehicular elements, had crossed and assembled in an area near the town of Neustadt.

Our vehicular elements were lined up ready to roll as the last bridge unit was locked into place. They rolled! Soon the roadbed again gave way, and engineer tractors had to yank vehicle after vehicle across the sinkholes onto the bridge apron. As darkness descended, this operation became impossible, and for the first time during our fighting in the E.T.O., lights were used at night.

I had been down at the site during the day, urging on the endeavors of the men and speeding the bridging operation. Again that night, as the movement of traffic bogged down, I was there and directed a number of vehicles to be so placed that when they turned on their headlights, the roadway would be illuminated. I stayed there until the operation was again moving smoothly, and then set off across the bridge in my Jeep to join my advance command post.

All during the night our vehicles kept pouring over the bridge. Artillery fire had now ceased on the bridge site for our foot troops, continuing their advance during the night, had driven the enemy farther and farther away from the river and out of artillery range. No hostile air attacks occurred. I feared this would happen when I ordered the vehicles to turn on their headlights. We were lucky.

During the 28th April our troops advanced about 7000 yards



The engineers start their bridging operation. One-two-three, and sections were assembled and ready.

(Photos from 393rd History.)





The bridge grows.
Another section is
hooked on.

(Below)

The roadway had to
be corduroyed.



to secure the line Abensberg-Juhlhausen-Geibenstettin.⁷ We again encountered the "hedgehog" tactics of small groups defending selected tactical locations. The will to resist of these enemy groups varied materially. A number of groups fought stubbornly until overrun, while others were captured or dispersed after the exchange of a few rounds of small arms fire. We gathered in 1054 P.O.W.s that day. They were from the same units we had encountered before, and on the whole were happy, because for them the war was over.

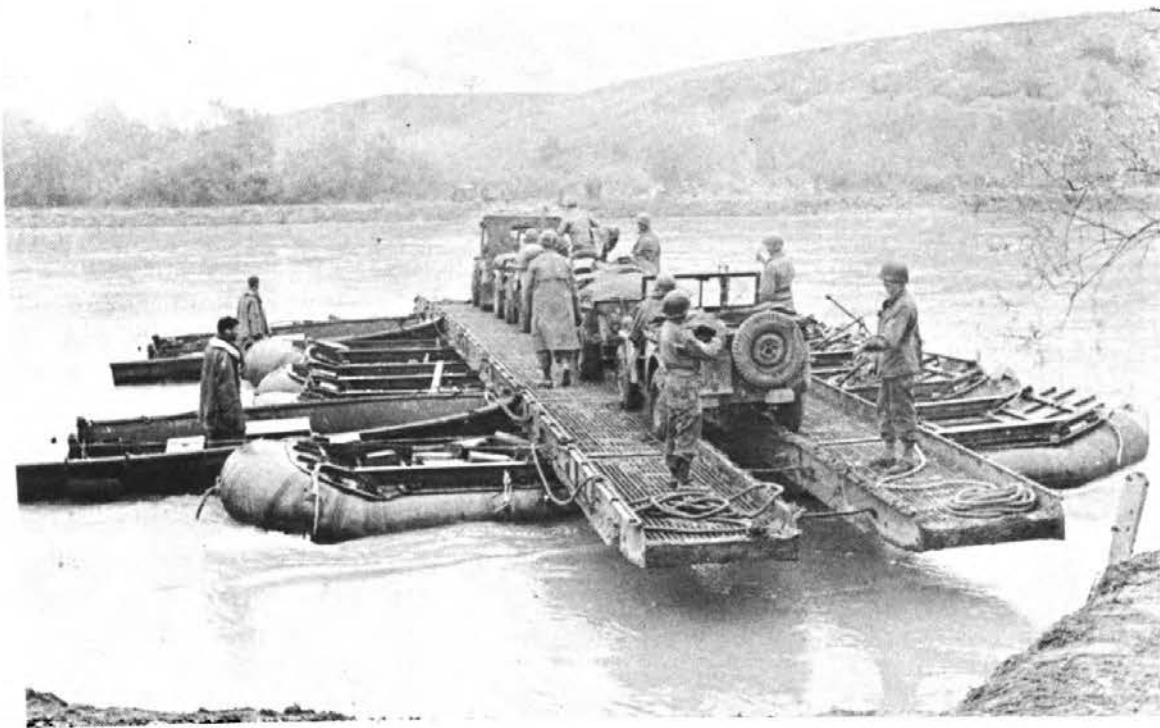
On the 29th April, the Division started out at 6:30 A.M. and by noon had advanced 14,000 yards to seize and hold a line which ran generally through the towns of Elsendorf-Schweinbach-Rohr. At Schweinbach a short, stiff, small arms fight took place. Some of the "die hards" had to be convinced the hard way. Sniper fire continued for a little time after the town was overrun, but that, too, died out. The movement of the Division's combat vehicles across the Treadway bridge was initially rapid, but as our track vehicles started over, the flow was again slowed. Reinforced now with many of its combat vehicles, our fighting infantry battalions swooped along. By 7:00 o'clock that evening our men had advanced another 19,000 yards. The 395th Infantry in its forward dash arrived at the Isar River and secured the town of Moosburg on its north bank, while the 393rd Infantry rushed ahead to the line Bruckberg-Pfetrach, close to the Isar. It had advance detachments also down at the river reconnoitering.

That night all the Division's transportation crossed the Danube and closed in to join its teams in their forward positions. Our units advanced over eighteen miles that day and captured 3128 prisoners.⁸ Preparations were made at once to cross the Isar.

At Moosburg a great German prisoner of war camp was overrun and thousands of our allied prisoners were released. Among them were a number of our own 99th Infantry Division men and officers who had been captured during the Battle of the Bulge. The tales these freed men told were not pleasant ones. There were stories of eighty men, clad only in wool undershirts and winter drawers, crammed into a boxcar where they were held shivering for two weeks without food or water and using the car for a latrine as well as sleep-

⁷ At Abensberg, fourteen hospitals containing over 800 patients were taken plus an ordnance warehouse and several ammunition dumps.

⁸ During this advance the town of Ober Lauterbach was overrun and the entire German propaganda ministry's radio monitory installation on foreign broadcasts was captured intact. Initially, 1000 men while operating in Berlin, this installation was now only 100 men.



Ferries (sections of the Treadway bridge propelled by outboard motors) were used while the bridge was being constructed.

(393rd History.)



Once the bridge was completed, traffic began to roll.

*(Photos by
Ralph H. Brooks,
Graham, Ala.)*



A general view of our bridge over the Danube.



While the bridge was under construction, casualties were brought back by ferry and Dukws and evacuated.

(393rd History.)



ing quarters. Stories of one bowl of watery potato soup per day and vile black bread were told—of Red Cross packages (less cigarettes) that saved their lives.

The never-die spirit and desire to take part again in the campaign against the Nazi was exhibited by our former members who begged to be allowed to rejoin their old outfits. It was difficult to refuse them this concession, but regulations forbid, and with sincere regrets they were sent back to rear areas for rehabilitation.

The two cities of Landshut and Moosburg were on the opposite flanks of the Division's zone of advance. Moosburg, on the north bank of the Isar, had been overrun by the 395th Infantry and the 14th Armored Division. Landshut, in front of the 393rd Infantry, extended from the north bank of the river, across an island in the river, to the south bank, with most of the city on the south bank of the river. It was strongly defended. Armored forces leading the advance had partially cleared the enemy from the north bank but were unable to push their advance any farther. The 393rd Infantry closed up to the river, and by 11:00 A.M. on the 30th April had secured all the high ground along the north bank in spite of heavy concentrations of artillery fire they received intermittently from the time they entered the town of Altdorf, a short distance from the Isar. Preparations to force the crossing proceeded rapidly. Two attacks were planned—one straight across, via the island, to focus attention, while the main attack crossed the river farther to the west.

That evening the regiment launched its assaults. Companies I and L of the 3rd Battalion 393rd Infantry, under cover of supporting fires of our artillery and tank destroyers, succeeded in infiltrating troops to the island and clearing out that place. A high, narrow catwalk which was part of a building at the water's edge stretched across to the island. A few of our men valiantly braved the hostile rifle and sniper fire and reached the island by this route. After the enemy trained machine gun fire on the catwalk it became too dangerous to use, and other means to cross were employed.

Under cover of darkness that night, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the regiment, using assault boats, forced a crossing of the Isar southwest of the town of Landshut. While paddling over, they were under intermittent concentrated artillery and mortar fire. They were fortunate. Hostile observation was limited, and casualties were few. Once across, they promptly reassembled and attacked the main part of the city. All night the fight continued.

On the front of the 395th Infantry, early morning of the 30th

Approach to the bridge where the road gave way.
(Note the curve which had to be negotiated by all vehicles.)



How the bridge
looked to
those who rolled
over it.

At Moosburg
assault boats were
used too. Note
their location on
side of road.
It snowed too.



*(Photos courtesy R. R. Wago, Company B 324th
Engineers, Pittsburgh, Pa.)*

April found the regiment pushing across the river at that point. They lost no time. By 1:30 P.M. all foot elements had crossed. Several thousand yards inland they had secured the line Langenpreising-Kochbauer to cover the bridging operations of the 14th Armored Division. The main bridge over the Isar at Moosburg had been destroyed by the enemy, but while the destruction was sufficient to stop every type of vehicular traffic, foot elements were able to scamper over the debris. Down stream a short distance an undestroyed dam permitted some of our foot soldiers to cross over, and hasty crossings were erected at other places. Our men flowed across. A short distance inland they encountered a determined stand by a battalion of enemy "school troops." After a sharp skirmish, this enemy force was dispersed and never seen again. The 395th established its bridgehead!

While fighting for the city of Landshut progressed, a short Treadway bridge was thrown over from the north bank to the island. Valiantly our men constructed the approaches. On the far side, a steep bank had to be cut away, and many willing hands, displaced persons and even Germans, helped to cart and pile rubble from nearby demolished buildings onto the bridge approaches to make them usable.⁹

On the near side, our engineers placed pontoon and Treadway bridge sections together and spanned the waterway. As the bridge was completed, our tanks rolled over to add their fire to that of the two battalions attacking the city from the far bank and the one battalion fighting from the island.

The city of Landshut fell early on the 1st May, and our men collected 600 prisoners of war from that place. Another barrier in our drive through the south of Germany and the questionable redoubt area near Berchtesgaden had been hurtled!

By dark the night of the 1st May, all elements of the 99th Infantry Division had crossed the Isar, and our forward elements had advanced twelve miles farther southeast.¹⁰

⁹ Here again were the two types of Germans—those who wanted to fight to the end and those who realized the hopelessness of it all and wished the fighting to end quickly so that their homes and lives could be spared. Some of the latter type helped haul rubble to construct the approaches for the bridge.

I crossed to the island on this bridge and here just a few yards behind our firing line D.P.s and *Germans* were going around with screening details pointing out members of the Wehrmacht in civilian clothes. It was a common sight to see D.P.s just released slapping their former masters and shouting their hatred, before calling to the screening details to arrest them.

¹⁰ The fighting in this drive had been done primarily by combat team—each infantry regiment directly supported by a battalion or more of artillery, a company



MOOSBURG

The 395th overran a large P.O.W. camp here. It brought about one of the happy moments of war when we liberated our own troops here, most of whom were captured by the Germans in the "Bulge." Man in "tam" was a 99er, Staff Sergeant Frank Gregorczyk, 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry. (See story on 17th December '44.

(Photo by 1st Sgt. Nawrocki, South Bend, Ind.)



A power dam near Moosburg left standing permitted foot troops to cross the Isar River.

(Photo by R. H. Brooks, Graham, Ala.)



At Landshut all the bridges were pletely demolished.

(Photo 1st Sgt. Nawrocki, South Bend,

General Patton
came down to see
our attack on
Landshut.

Left to right:
Lauer, Patton,
Van Fleet.





A short Treadway bridge went in between mainland and island.

General Patton looks it over critically and is satisfied.

Tanks start over. On the far side—not visible—the approach was built by many willing hands other than soldiers.



Our troops roll through Landshut.

(Photo by Ed Ward, 324th Medical Battalion, Pine Bluffs, Wyo.)



Landshut, in distance, fell to our troops after a night assault—boat crossing--the current was very swift.





It snowed the 1st May. Note snow on ground and on rooftops.
Taken near the Isar River.

(Photo by R. H. Brooks, Company E 395th Infantry, Graham, Ala.)

No resistance of importance was encountered. Blown bridges, muddy, slippery roads (for that day we had had a light snowfall) made the advance of vehicular traffic slow and difficult. Armored spearheads were limited to operation on the roads. They could not move cross-country because of the boggy ground in which they would mire when this was attempted. They could not cross blown bridges, of which there were many. They jammed the roads for miles, unable to advance and unable to get out of the way. Our foot elements bypassed them, and leaving their own combat vehicles behind, marched on toward the Inn River.

We organized at that time a special spearhead of our own, consisting of light tanks and Jeeps, which we called Task Force C. The "C" was for Cummings, a lieutenant colonel, former member of the

of engineers, tanks, tank destroyers, chemical, medical collecting company, etc. The speed of this drive is illustrated by the itinerary of two of the F.A. battalions. The 372nd (155s) generally supported the division as a whole and the 370th (105s) supported the 393rd Inf. The other battalions of artillery, the 371st and the 924th, and the attached 667th operating with the 394th and 395th Inf. Regts., had similar schedules.

| <i>372nd F.A. Bn.</i> | <i>370th F.A. Bn.</i> |
|--|--|
| Lay | 24 Apr. Weidinwrag |
| Kaising | 25 Apr. Mallerstetten |
| Schwabstetten | 26 Apr. Schwaben (first firing) |
| Forchheim | 28 Apr. |
| | 29 Apr. Pfeffernhausen (crossed Danube 11:30 A.M.) |
| Gelbersdorf (crossed Danube) | 30 Apr. Eugenbach |
| Niederndorf (Moosburg) (Released 924 F.A. men captured near Krinkelt.) | 30 Apr. Eugenbach (beyond Altdorf) Delivered harassing and preparatory fires for infantry to cross Isar. Last fires of war. |
| Hachelstuhl (over Isar) | 1 May Kachgrub (over Isar at Landshut) |
| Haarbach | 2-5 May Treaterfing |

9th Armored Division, reputedly the first man over the Rhine when they captured the Remagen Bridge intact. He had joined the 99th Division and was given command of this task force consisting of the 99th Reconnaissance Troop, Company L 393rd Infantry, Company D (Light Tanks) 786th Tank Battalion, Company A 90th Chemical Battalion, a platoon of Company A 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company A 324th Engineers, and Company A 786th Tank Battalion. It was a fast moving, hard hitting little force. The spearhead pushed ahead rapidly, cross-country, by using circuitous routes over relatively high ground. It succeeded in arriving at the Inn River and reported the main bridge near Muhldorf destroyed, but that it had seized another smaller bridge intact, which it was holding.

We had succeeded in penetrating as far east as any allied unit at that time. We truly spearheaded the III Corps and the Third Army. Near the Inn a short, brief encounter took place. A few shots were fired. Two generals, two colonels and about forty men of the Hungarian army surrendered. The enemy had suffered one casualty. One of the Hungarian generals insisted, when he was captured, that a pretty pearl handled pistol which he carried would be turned over only to the American general to whom he would formally surrender. Private First Class Ralph Kaiser, a messenger for Company L 393rd

Six men to a Jeep—six more in the trailer—and we rolled. This picture was taken during the occupation period—better times, yet serious work. The big difference: men and transportation are clean.

(393rd History.)



Infantry, was the American general, its recipient. This was perhaps the last real "war" souvenir.¹¹

At 11:30 A.M. on the 2nd May the Division was ordered to "halt in place," assemble and await orders. Our reconnaissance patrols were permitted, however, to operate to the Inn River. We realized that the halt order meant something great was impending. Was the war over? Were we to change our front again? The armor was jammed on the roads and could not advance, but our infantry was still capable of moving ahead, nothing could stop them! What was to happen next?

Patiently we waited. Each of our splendid combat teams halted, assembled, and waited poised in their forward assembly areas, ready to swoop on. We were within sight of the Bavarian Alps, but waiting and sweating out the final word.

Then it came. UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER! Our order went out:

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| England | France | Belgium | Germany |
| | 99th | (Shield) | |
| | | Infantry | (in a Scroll) |
| | C*O*N*F*I*D*E*N*T*I*A*L | | |
| | | Hq 99th Inf Div | |
| OPERATIONAL |) | Vic: GEISENHAUSEN | (Z-3395) |
| INSTRUCTIONS #13) | | 071220B | May 45 |

1. A representative of the German High Command signed the unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command at 0141 hours, Central European Time, 7 May under which all forces will cease active operations at 090001B May 45.

2. Effective immediately all offensive operations by Allied Expeditionary Forces will cease and troops will remain in present positions. Moves involved in occupational duties will continue. Due to difficulties of communication, there may be some delay in similar orders reaching enemy troops, so full defensive precautions will be taken.

3. No release will be made to the press pending an announcement by the heads of the three Governments.

LAUER
Maj Gen
Commanding

I added the following remark to the order:

Monday, 7 May 1945, D-335; 298th Week of War; 177th Week US Participation

My sincerest congratulations to each and everyone of you on this

¹¹ Reported by 1st Sgt. Selders, Co. I, 393rd Inf.

historic occasion. Every member of the 99th Infantry Division can be proud of his combat record, in having aided materially in defeating the Nazi beast and gaining this VICTORY!

The tremendous task of forcing the "Will of the Allies" upon the German Nation has not been completed. Occupational duties will be required from all of us. These duties are just as important as the duties in combat. The job which remains is one more mission for the SOLDIERS OF THE 99th DIVISION to begin to do NOW, to do RIGHT and to do with that DETERMINATION which typifies all our efforts.

Shortly thereafter the "Battle Babies" turned about and moved back over the areas they had just fought through. The Division was on its way to take over the Main-Franken area of Bavaria as the occupational force.

The following letter which was received from the commanding general of the III Corps is indicative of the high opinion in which the 99th Infantry Division was held, and of the splendid reputation it had won for itself:

HEADQUARTERS III CORPS
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
APO 303, U. S. Army

11 May 1945

Major General Walter E. Lauer,
Commanding General, 99th Infantry Division,
APO 99, U. S. Army

My dear General Lauer:

Victory in Europe day is here and the military operations of the fighting 99th Division against the German Army are at an end. It is fitting at this time that I express my feelings of admiration and gratitude to you and your splendid Division for the magnificent work you have done. Your operations will stand out as a brilliant page in the history of the Western Front.

On 9 March 1945, two days after the seizure of the Remagen bridgehead, and at a time when the enemy had strongly reacted to the Rhine crossing, the 99th Division was attached to the III Corps. On 10 March it entered the bridgehead and assumed command of a zone four miles in width. Despite extremely rugged terrain, a wide zone of advance and a strong enemy resistance, the Division attacked relentlessly and gained all objectives, thus contributing materially to the rapid expansion of the bridgehead.

Between 23-25 March the Division attacked and advanced more than four miles through difficult terrain and strong enemy resistance, catching the enemy by surprise. This advance made it possible for the 7th Armored Division to break through and make its sensational 130 mile drive to WETZLAR, GIESSEN and the EDERSTAU-SEE.

Following the breakthrough, the division by skillful use of motors, advanced rapidly behind the 7th Armored Division, moving approximately 110 air miles and capturing 3,859 prisoners of war during the period 25-30 March.

Between 5-17 April the division attacked the Ruhr pocket in a zone four and one-half miles wide and through almost impassable terrain. Despite precipitous mountains and strong enemy resistance, through the indomitable spirit of the 99th Division, it covered approximately 40 air line miles and captured 37,968 prisoners of war.

After the liquidation of the Ruhr pocket, the division proceeded to the Third Army zone, where it attacked southeast, and between 24 April and 2 May drove 75 air line miles to the southeast. During this time the division crossed the ALTMUHL, DONAU and ISAR rivers and took 15,455 prisoners of war.

From 11 March until 2 May the 99th Division was attacking almost continuously. Its brilliant successes were in a large measure a result of the determined, aggressive spirit of the troops and of your sound leadership.

I look forward with great pleasure to further associations with your grand division. All are proud of you.

Sincerely,

J. A. VAN FLEET,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

The Division during its battle history had successfully performed every type of tactical operation, with the exception of a "landing on a hostile shore," in which type of operation it did not have an opportunity to participate. It attacked and defended over hills, mountains, woods and plains. It conducted active defense, and, for a period, a stabilized defense. It successfully assaulted fortified areas, including probably the most strongly fortified area in the world, the Siegfried Line defenses; it fought in cities and in towns and villages. It fought delaying actions and executed withdrawals under pressure during daylight and at night. It conducted many night operations, forced river crossings and established bridgeheads. It spearheaded attacks and cracked open the enemy lines to permit our armor to flow through. It fought with and without the support of artillery, tanks, tank destroyers and air. It experienced hand to hand combat, and delivered a bayonet charge—perhaps the only one on record in the E.T.O. It advanced unbelievably great distances on its own power through enemy territory, fighting all the way. It played a leading role in the Battle of the Bulge, the drive to the Rhine, the establishment of the Remagen bridgehead, the initial drive into *Festung Germania*, the reduction of the Ruhr pocket, and the final drive across

the rivers, through southern Germany to Austria, forcing the final surrender of the Nazi. It made one of the longest combat motor marches on record, 285 miles, when it switched from the First Army (sixty miles from the border of Holland) to the Third Army (about seventy miles from the border of Austria). It released over 243,000 allied prisoners of war, and during one drive alone, captured over 42,000 Germans. It established an enviable record. It always fought clean and hard.

Its exploits, its successes, its sorrows and its joys will live forever in the hearts and minds of its members.

The glorious accomplishments of the "Battle Babies" were for a time forgotten in the hustle and bustle of "unconditional surrender," "occupational duties," and the "reorganization of the army" which resulted in the return to the United States and the "inactivation" of the Division.

A grateful government did not permit that occasion to pass unnoticed. The following letter was received by the Division from the commanding general of the army ground forces, Washington, D.C. It expresses the official attitude of our country to the members of the 99th Infantry Division for a job well done. It verified that the Division had fulfilled the promise of its slogan to "Do It—Do It Now—Do It Right and Do It with Determination!"

HEADQUARTERS
ARMY GROUND FORCES
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
ARMY WAR COLLEGE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

17 September 1945

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation.

TO: Commanding General, 99th Infantry Division.

Colorful and courageous in action, the officers and men of the 99th Infantry Division made a magnificent contribution to the glorious victory over a swaggering Nazi enemy sworn to destroy our cherished American way of life. A grateful Nation will always remember the heroism and self-sacrifice of these men of the 99th Division, and acknowledge the hardship and suffering they endured to accomplish their important military missions.

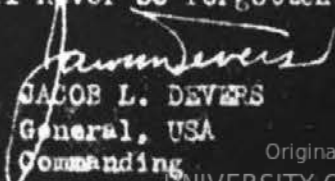
From the time the untried troops of the Checkerboard Division moved out in a driving snowstorm on 15 December 1944 to seize their first objectives on the outer fringes of the Siegfried Line until the collapse of Nazidom nearly five months later, they fought with tenacity and skill.

These remarkable fighting men of the 99th, in combat only four days and outnumbered five to one when von Rundstedt's fanatical forces struck the Division's 20-mile front, inflicted casualties in the ratio of eighteen to one to win high acclaim for gallantry in the Battle of the Ardennes. This same zeal and ability to fight against great odds carried the 99th through the Rhine River Campaign, the fighting for the Remagen Bridgehead, into the Ruhr Pocket and finally into the Danube River Drive.

It is noteworthy that the Checkerboard Division captured 42,283 prisoners in the Ruhr Pocket alone, that it became the first Infantry division of the First Army to reach the Rhine, and that it was the first complete Infantry division to cross the historic river.

The pattern for the 99th Division's fame and fighting ability was set soon after its activation, 15 November 1942, at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi. Initial training was followed by maneuvers in Louisiana and further training at Camp Maxey, Texas, before the Division sailed for England, 29 September 1944. First division to land at LeHavre, France, during World War II, the 99th was committed to the lines on 9 November 1944.

Now, upon the occasion of the inactivation of the 99th Infantry Division, it is my deep privilege to join all America in commending you, your officers and men for their gallant accomplishments on the field of the battle. Such devotion to duty will never be forgotten.


JACOB L. DEVERS
General, USA
Commanding

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER XIV

Occupation

COMBAT WAS OVER, and now occupational duties confronted the Division. Forty-eight hours after the "Unconditional Surrender," the "Battle Babies" rolled into the Main-Franken area to which they were assigned for occupational duties. Their first task was to find shelter for the men in the war torn, bombed and demolished farm towns of the area.

The *Regierungsbezirk Mainfranken*, a district which lies in the northwest corner of Bavaria, is in the hilly country of the Main scarp-lands. The Main River flows across it from east to west. The district is mostly agricultural. The main industrial towns are Wurzburg, the capital, and Schweinfurt, the center of the roller-bearing works. It is divided into three *Stadtkreises* (city districts) and twenty-one *Landkreises* (county districts). Its population was 822,453 (Protestant 150,593; Catholic 622,197), and its area is 8,432 square kilometers, with 1,235 towns.

The cities of Wurzburg, Schweinfurt and Aschaffenburg had been heavily blasted by our air forces, and stood there as masses of rubble from which exuded the occasionally encountered heavy, dank odor of sweetness given off by dead still unburied. The smaller towns, such as Ochsenfurt, Lohr, Kitzingen, Karlstadt, etc., had all been similarly blasted by our air forces and invading armies. The urban population had long since fled to the country towns and farms for shelter, and were superimposed on the limited housing still available there.

The cities were dull brown, dirty, dismal, wretched places of ruin and destruction, and the smaller towns were no better. Hardly a building remained standing in the entire area which had not sustained some damage.

Our battalions were parcelled out to the various *Kreises*, and the entire area was divided into three regimental zones and one artillery zone for occupational administration under the general control of Division headquarters, which was established in the small town of Kitzingen.¹

¹ To appreciate the extent of the destruction of the area the following example is given: Two days were used in searching the area for suitable housing for the division headquarters, a relatively small installation. Six planes and a dozen groups

Then began the task of establishing law and order and civil government—the tasks of removing mined areas; opening roads; repairing bridges; screening the area for wanted war criminals; housing, feeding and discharging the thousands upon thousands of German prisoners of war collected in our prisoner of war camps; establishing and maintaining displaced persons camps, where we gathered about 40,000 of these lost souls, men, women and children, and administered to their needs of shelter, food, clothing and medical attention until they could be shipped to their homelands; and the myriad other occupational tasks and duties never even thought of or anticipated.

Thousands upon thousands of German soldiers were processed through the great discharge center we established at Ochsenfurt. As quickly as their identity was established by our prisoner of war interrogation teams and it was determined that they were not among those wanted for war crimes, they were given a discharge and identification paper and returned by our motor transportation to their home towns or close enough thereto so that they could walk home. Their manpower was needed by the local Burgermeisters, and we did all we could to release this great horde of men to make their manpower available to the local authorities. These ex-soldiers, almost without exception, wanted only to get home, find their families, shed their uniforms, and go to work.

A regiment of German signal corps troops, prisoners of war in our area, were impressed for the task of re-establishing the telephone system throughout the Main-Franken area. They did the job quickly and efficiently. Upon completion of the job the entire regiment was discharged. Hundreds of events of this nature transpired under our initial supervision.

There remained some die-hards who had to be hunted down and controlled. Acts of sabotage continued for a while, but as time went on, order was established and occupational duties became more normal.

The apathy of the German population to their surroundings, their sullen and stunned attitude, was one out of which they had to be shaken. They had no desire to work, to open roads and bridges connecting their towns, so that surplus food in one area could be shipped to places where it was needed by their own people. They

of officers in cars scoured the area to find one undemolished building suitable for this purpose—all to no avail. Finally a partially destroyed German anti-aircraft regimental barracks (*Casern*) was found in the town of Kitzingen—one building of which, though partially destroyed, was made to serve our purpose.

TYPICAL STREET SCENE

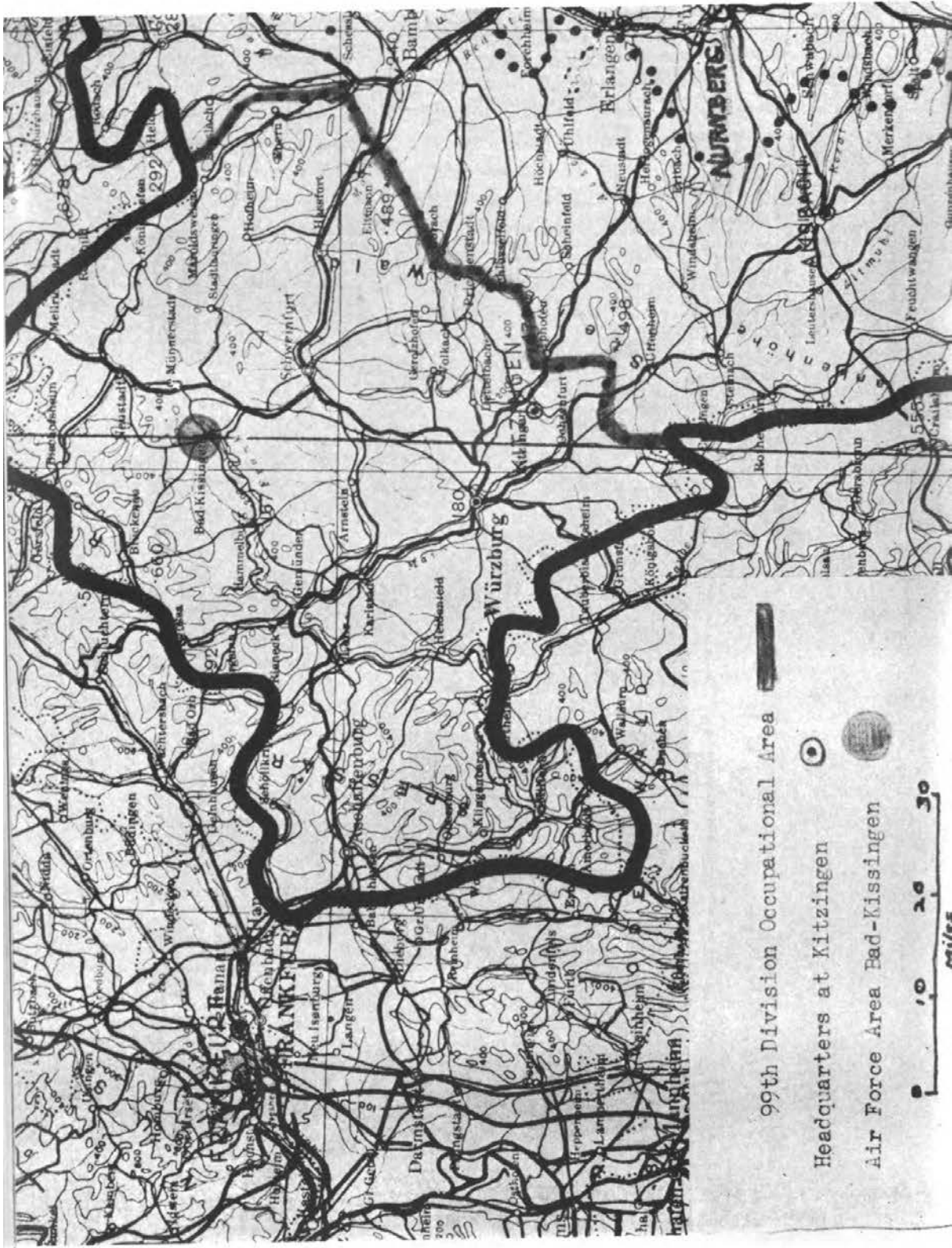
Rubble filled the streets, buildings were gutted. Here in Aschaffenburg the streets were opened for traffic.

(393rd History.)



Our soldiers supervised German prisoners in cleaning up the debris of war.

(Photo by member of Cannon Company, 393rd Infantry.)



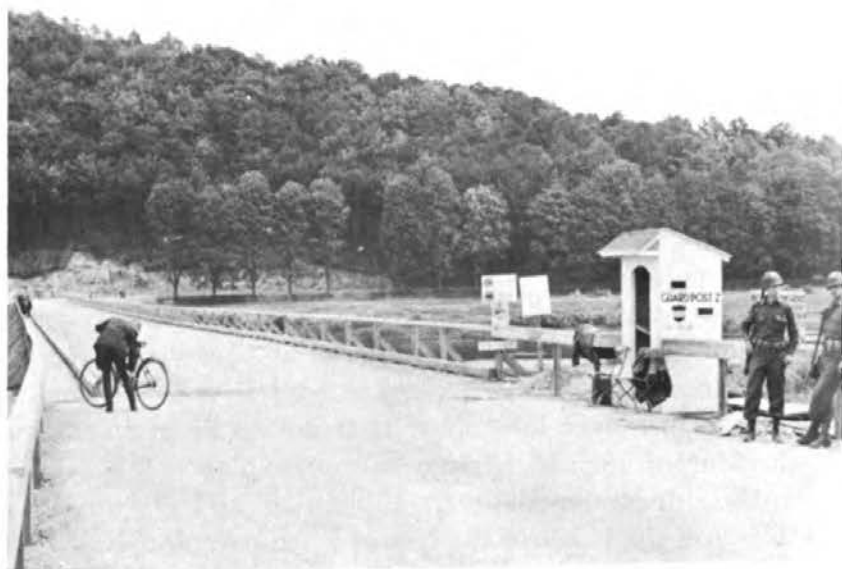
had no desire to bring in crops from the fields which were about to rot. They had no desire to help themselves. They sat around with their arms folded or basked in the occasional sunshine on the banks of the Main River, where they went bathing. Drastic measures were taken. Burgermeisters were required under severe penalties to put their people to work—both men and women. Gradually the main highways were opened as obstructing rubble was removed and bridges were repaired (incidentally, these bridges no longer required guards to protect them against acts of sabotage), crops were brought in from the fields, and order was brought out of chaos.

The masses of wandering Germans, discharged soldiers, men, women and children in search of their families scattered as a result of the frequent "blitzes" to which their towns had been subjected, became a problem. Sought-for war criminals hid themselves among these wanderers. Saboteurs, thieves and criminals of every nature took this same opportunity to hide themselves and carry on their nefarious acts. Again stringent measures were taken. Every person within the area was checked for proper identification. Every house, barn and shed was searched, and every woods and cave thoroughly examined. Every means was taken to rout out these undesirables, and it was effective. Gradually law and order was re-established, and the Germans themselves, in turn, were given more and more responsibility in the administration of their own local affairs, even to the extent of appointing police to operate under our occupational forces.

The displaced person centers which we established in the towns of Schweinfurt, Wurzburg, Aschaffenburg, Lohr, Karlstadt, etc., were real problems. Facilities were limited. Bombed-out buildings were the only shelters available, and they were made as habitable as limited means permitted. Former German army barracks in the area were primarily used, for they were the most suitable for this purpose. Displaced persons were assembled in these centers according to nationality and even district. They were housed, fed, given clothing and medical attention, and administered as best we could under the circumstances. They were treated as well as our own troops. Many of these former slave laborers were happy to be free and were sincerely thankful of their deliverance from bondage. Others were trouble-makers, discontented and complaining and wishing to vent their spleen on the heads of the German populace and even on their deliverers. They had to be guarded and controlled. As soon as rail facilities were available, trains were made up, stocked with food and medical supplies, and these displaced persons were transported to their former



Every person within the area was checked for identification.
Bicycles were the favorite form of transportation.



Bridges had to be guarded against acts of sabotage.
(Photos from 393rd History.)



Our 99th Signal Company men supervised Germans in repairing the communication lines destroyed. They got a great kick out of this kind of work!

(U.S. Army photo, 17 May '45.)

homes. In many cases, these men, women and children had to be housed and fed for long periods, while the final decision as to their disposition was being debated on an international basis. Trouble even with the more amenable began when some of them, having previously been transported to their homelands, drifted back to tell various tales of mistreatment and of harsh sentences meted out to them by their own home town people's courts. The result was that many of them, still in our centers, no longer wished to be returned to their homelands. In some cases they even objected physically to being sent home. That was the beginning of the real displaced persons problem which is continuing even to this late date.

At Lager Hammelburg, in a former German prisoner of war camp, thousands of Yugoslav officers and men were found. When they were ordered to be returned to their former country, it appeared for a time that we would have a large-sized riot on our hands. The prisoners objected, for they claimed that since their capture their government had been overthrown, and upon return to their homeland they would be liquidated. They were finally moved to a camp in Austria where all Yugoslav prisoners were assembled pending international adjudication of their case, and Lager Hammelburg was converted

into another displaced persons camp. At Wildflecken, another German army casern, thousands of Russian prisoners of war were discovered. For a while these men gave us trouble, for they would break out of their camp and storm over the countryside, stealing and committing acts of violence. A battalion of our troops and a number of tanks were dispatched to the scene and established order. The surrounding woods and forests were screened, and several bands of these prisoners were routed out of their lairs and brought back under control. Finally, this camp was also cleared and converted into a displaced persons center.

Occupational duties were anything but pleasant, but were taken in stride. For our fighting men, relief that the war was over was mingled with the uncertainty of the future. What was to happen next? How long were they to stay in occupation? Would they be re-deployed to the Pacific Theater of Operations? Would they go home? The war in the Pacific had not stopped. At first a faint hope existed that our splendid fighting machine would be sent to that theater of operations, but the information finally trickled down that no units of divisional size would be sent there, and that hope died.

The shooting war in the E.T.O. was over, but gradually, as the weeks rolled around and month followed month, it became more and more evident that the war to win the peace was just beginning. V.J. Day came and went as casually and uncelebrated by these fighting men of the 99th as V.E. Day. Then began the insistent clamor of the folks at home to bring the soldiers back and disband the army.

Men began to think of themselves as individuals, and the problems they would have to face individually in the workaday world back home. To be separated from their unit and their buddies, to face life anew, were distasteful problems pushed into the background to be solved at a later date. Finally it was announced that certain units had been selected to be returned to the United States for demobilization, among which was the 99th Infantry Division. At the same time an "adjusted service rating" (A.S.R.), a "point system," was published for the selection of men as individuals, to be returned to the United States with these selected units for discharge. Each soldier, man and officer, was at first required to have a minimum of eighty-five of these credit points to entitle him to be returned to the United States. Each received five points for each major campaign, wife, wound, child, decoration, for age, etc., etc.

Points!—*Points!*—POINTS!—the bane of a soldier's existence from then on. The low point personnel in the 99th Division were

parcelled out to units remaining in Europe, and the Division received the high point men from these organizations. Soon the 99th Division contained men from almost every organization in the European Theater of Operations, and it received its embarkation orders.²

It was the end of the "Battle Babies," the end of many deep friendships—comradeships. It brought with it the sadness and sorrow of saying goodbye to comrades, and the uncertainties of the future—the future whether in other units or in civilian life, where old tried and true buddies would not be alongside to joke, to tease, to help when the going got tough. It is not in a soldier's makeup to be expressive, and so a "So long, Jim," a slap on the back, and an "I'll be seeing you," while the extent of his farewell, was sincerely meant and was carried away for life.

Daily these departures took place. The great fighting team, the 99th Infantry Division, the "Checkerboarders," the "Battle Babies," were no more!

² V.J. Day was officially announced on 15 Aug. 1945. About the 23rd Aug. the 99th Div. units moved into the field and the 79th Div. took over the occupational duties of the Main-Franken area. On the 1st Sept. the division under Brig. Gen. Frederick H. Black started moving by motor and rail to the Calais staging area at Marseille, France, for return to the United States. Three weeks later, 24 Sept. '45, it arrived in the United States and at Norfolk, Va., and at Camp Miles Standish, Mass. (from which point it had set sail for Europe), was inactivated 27 Sept. '45.

Random Moments, Faces and Places Never To Be Forgotten



FOR HEROISM—THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

One of a Number Won by Members of the 99th

Two thousand, two hundred eighty members of the Division were awarded personal decorations, including the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star Medal and the Air Medal. In addition, over 5328 were awarded the Purple Heart and several thousand more the Certificate of Merit.

The Division won the Belgian Fourragere and earned three Battle Stars, one each for the Ardennes campaign, the Rhineland campaign and the campaign of Central Europe.



The Bottle of Rhine Water

The 99th Division was the first infantry to reach the Rhine in the First Army. The honors went to Captain Felix Salamaggi's (Brooklyn, N.Y.) company of the 393rd Infantry Regiment. The senior aide, Captain Frank X. Gallagher (Wilmington, Del.) delivered the bottle of water as proof, and Captain Salamaggi received six bottles of Scotch as a reward. Men of the general's armored car of the 99th Reconnaissance Troop watch the proceedings.

The Effects of Combat



The same man during and after. Submitted by Sgt. Nawrocki, he writes: "Here are two snaps of a great company commander, H. B. Jones of Tyler, Tex. He captured the devotion of everyone in the 1st Battalion 393rd Infantry. His company, cut to pieces in the Bulge, had been reduced to twenty-nine men and one officer. The first picture was taken the 7th April 1945 and the second was taken six weeks later, when the war was over. We all went through the same thing—War to Peace."



The 99th Division artillery liaison pilots all get the Distinguished Flying Cross at a ceremony 2 June '45 at Kitzingen, Germany. All received the award for extraordinary action against the enemy when they evacuated their Jeep planes from the Division air strip while under heavy machine gun and tank fire when the Germans broke through our lines in December '44. The 99th is the only division to have all pilots awarded the D.F.C. Major Cunningham, the C.O., received the Silver Star. The pilots so honored were First Lieutenants Sears, Hilson, Proctor, Tadlock, Gaston and Kean.

"Toward our comrades who have been left on the fields of battle, we feel most gratefully humble. Their sacrifice shall be our ever-constant inspiration to do our job—now, right, and with steadfast determination!"

SERVICES IN THE FIELD

This was a common sight. Here Chaplain J. L. Neighbours, 395th Infantry, and his assistant, T/5 MacDonald, conduct services at Konigshofen, Germany.



HENRI-CHAPELLE

Here in the great cemetery lie many of our buddies—heroes; 1148 men were killed in action, 4080 wounded and 251 missing in action; total, 5482.





THE DIVISION "BIG BRASS" AT THE CEREMONY AT KITZINGEN

Left to right: Brigadier General F. H. Black, division artillery commander; Brigadier General H. T. Mayberry, assistant division commander, and Major General W. E. Lauer, C.G.

At the time of the final review in Kitzingen, the commanders and staffs were as follows:

DIVISION HEADQUARTERS

C.G.: Gen. Lauer
 A.C.G.: Gen. Mayberry
 G-1: Lt. Col. Duncan, Maj. Mayer
 G-2: Lt. Col. St. Clair
 G-3: Lt. Col. Herbst, Maj. Bishop
 G-4: Lt. Col. Ross, Maj. Farrar
 Surg.: Lt. Col. Miller
 I.G.: Lt. Col. Charbonneau
 A.G.: Lt. Col. Achor
 Sig. O.: Lt. Col. Shudder
 Q.M.: Lt. Col. Galloway
 Fin. O.: Lt. Col. Plympton
 O.O.: Lt. Col. McKinney
 Chap.: Lt. Col. Koons
 J.A.: Lt. Col. Logan (also Asst. G-2)

393rd INFANTRY

C.O.: Lt. Col. Logan Clarke
 Ex. O.: Lt. Col. Hartwell

1st Battalion

C.O.: Lt. Col. Leidenheimer
 Ex. O.: Capt. Fabianich

2nd Battalion

C.O.: Lt. Col. Peters
 Ex. O.: Maj. Jacobs

3rd Battalion

C.O.: Lt. Col. Schmierer
 Ex. O.: Maj. Stevens

Regimental Staff

S-1: Lieut. Thompson
 S-2: Maj. Davis
 S-3: Maj. Belt
 S-4: Maj. Beacham

394th INFANTRY

C.O.: Col. Jeter
Ex. O.: Lt. Col. Maxwell
1st Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Douglas
Ex. O.: Maj. Sandiland
2nd Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Kriz
Ex. O.: Maj. McCune
3rd Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Moore
Ex. O.: Maj. Clayton
Regimental Staff
S-1: Capt. Smart
S-2: Maj. Legare
S-3: Maj. Kempton
S-4: Maj. Manus

395th INFANTRY

C.O.: Lt. Col. Griffin
Ex. O.: Lt. Col. Hendricks
1st Battalion
C.O.: Maj. Davis
Ex. O.: Capt. Allen
2nd Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Boyden
Ex. O.: Capt. Beyers
3rd Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Butler
Ex. O.: Capt. Golden
Regimental Staff
S-1: Capt. Awsumb
S-2: Maj. Baldwin
S-3: Capt. Collier
S-4: Maj. Gregory

ARTILLERY UNITS

C.G.: Brig. Gen. Black
Ex. O.: Col. Hopkins
370th Field Artillery
C.O.: Lt. Col. Barker
Ex. O.: Capt. Bell
371st Field Artillery
C.O.: Lt. Col. Jones
Ex. O.: Maj. Paulson
372nd Field Artillery
C.O.: Lt. Col. Mostek
Ex. O.: Maj. Beem
924th Field Artillery
C.O.: Maj. Schwoerke
Ex. O.: Maj. Nash

AUXILIARY UNITS

324th Engineers
C.O.: Lt. Col. Neale
Ex. O.: Maj. Loftfield
324th Medical Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Beckford
Ex. O.: Maj. Weeks
799th Ordnance Company
C.O.: Capt. Wickesser
Ex. O.: 1st Lieut. Emigh
99th Quartermaster Company
C.O.: Capt. Lee
Ex. O.: 1st Lieut. Strangeland
99th Signal Company
C.O.: Capt. M. J. Klevan
Ex. O.: 1st Lieut. Patrick
99th Reconnaissance Troop
C.O.: Capt. Lueders
Ex. O.: 1st Lieut. Worley

ATTACHED UNITS

629th Tank Destroyer Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Cole
Ex. O.: Maj. Kite
786th Tank Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Skinner
535th Anti-Aircraft Battalion
C.O.: Lt. Col. Francis

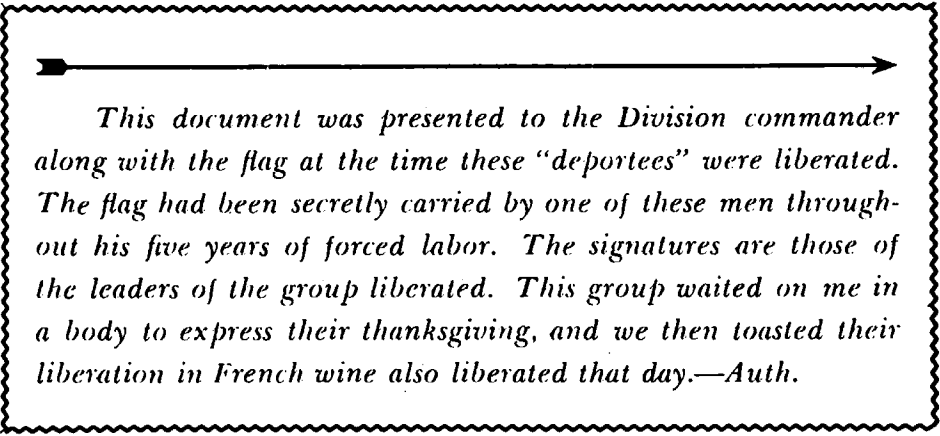


FINAL REVIEW

The "Old" 99ers pass in final review at Wurzburg, 30th June 1945.

Shortly thereafter our officers and men were transferred to other units in the E.T.O. and the Division was filled with "high pointers" and sent back to the U.S.A. for inactivation.





This document was presented to the Division commander along with the flag at the time these "deportees" were liberated. The flag had been secretly carried by one of these men throughout his five years of forced labor. The signatures are those of the leaders of the group liberated. This group waited on me in a body to express their thanksgiving, and we then toasted their liberation in French wine also liberated that day.—Auth.

HEADQUARTERS 99th INFANTRY DIVISION
FRENCH LIAISON SECTION
APO 449

SUBJECT: Letter of commendation, 99th Inf Division.

It is my privilege and honor to be serving the US 99th Inf Division in the capacity of Chief of the French Mission. In serving this unit, I am serving a unit that covered itself with glory at an hour where the situation was judged as "tragic" from a military standpoint.

The Division with the "Checkerboard" insignia has written for Belgium a magnificent page in Belgium history, a story that will stand out in Belgium History.

Conscious of their sublime mission, and the seriousness of the situation, when the enemy launched his fatal and final blow in Dec 1944, these proud and stalwart American sons were thrown into battle against the bitter foe.

"Hold at any price"—was the 'order of the day'—it was carried out to the letter.

Let us honor the soldier heroes who repulsed the invasion of the Liege Province on the 16th, 17th and 18th of December 1944.

The population did not cherish the thought of having the BOCHE return. Panic had already gripped some elements. It was the 99th Infantry Division which rallied the citizens of VERVIERS, who in return gave them confidence and friendship which will remain forever with these soldiers. They completed their task under the foresight and competence of their leader, Major General WALTER E. LAUER, who fought, thinking not of the danger to himself, only of the welfare of his men.

For a long time the operations and whereabouts of the Division were kept secret.

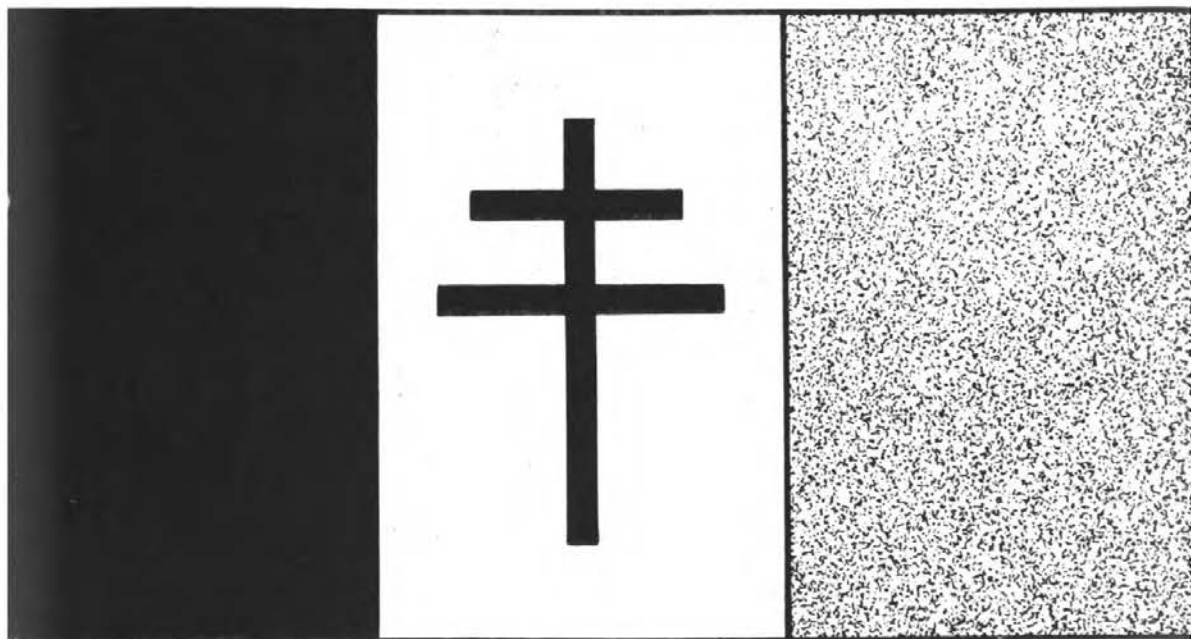
During the hard months of winter 44-45, our troops held a difficult sector, always probing and patrolling deep into enemy lines.

Arfeld la 5-4-45

Mon Général,

Après cinq années consécutives de captivité passées dans les camps de prisonniers et Rommandos, privés de tout, à l'acception des souffrances et des calomnies infligées par les boches, obligés de travailler les journées entières avec presque rien à manger traités à un raug inférieur à celui des animaux, nous avons maintenant retrouvé, grâce à la vaillante Armée des U-S-A notre liberté, par la libération que vous nous avez apporté. Tous mes camarades moi-même nous vous en rendous hommage à Vous mon Général ainsi qu'à tous vos vaillants soldats et en remerciement de ces beaux jours, veuillez bien accepter ce fanion Français ainsi que tous nos meilleurs remerciements.

[Signatures of released prisoners appended.]



TRANSLATION

General: After five consecutive years of captivity, passed in prison camps, deprived of everything, except the sufferings and calamities imposed upon us by the "Boche," obliged to work all day with almost nothing to eat, treated worse than animals, we have now found, thanks to the valiant U.S. Armies, our liberty, by the liberation which you have brought us. All my comrades, myself, we thank you, General, as we thank all your valiant soldiers—and in thanks for this beautiful day, kindly accept this French flag, and our deepest-felt appreciation.

The heroism displayed during the battle of the Ardennes was acknowledged by the President of the United States of America, when he presented the 1st Battalion, 394 Inf Regt, and the 3d Battalion, 395 Infantry Regt, with the Presidential Citation

When the General Order to attack the Siegfried Line was given, the 99th Infantry Division lanced forward. Hindered by the extreme atmospheric conditions they carried on and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

After these successful operations, and a few days of rest and re-grouping in the vicinity of Aubel, they found themselves engaged in the battle of the ROER—bringing out new feats in Allied military tactics. In its drive the 99th Infantry Division liberated hundreds of Belgian Prisoners of War and Political prisoners, treating them with solicitude. To the gates of DUSSELDORF they pushed, reaching the left bank of the RHINE.

Always forward, no rest, the Division moved on, and after one stop at STADT MECKENHEIM, it performed one of the most audacious operations in the history of the war. Within 24 hours it had crossed the RHINE to fight the last battle, a feat comparable to the landings in NORMANDY.

The battle was on—the fight was bloody. The bridgehead was relatively small, however, with its past experiences in the ROER Campaign, it gained superiority—victory was theirs, earning for themselves the name “DEVIL WITH THE BLUE CHECKERBOARD.”

The role played by the Division in liberating and handling the liberated Belgians was magnificent and complete. I enclose a letter written to me by a liberated Belgian citizen, a Political deportee.

Now that the war is over, let us not forget these acts of heroism. let us commemorate them!

Germany, 25 June 1945

RENE CHARLES SAUTER

Chief of the French Mission

1st Lt, 1211

*Translation of a letter written in French to Lieutenant Sauter
by Josse Gits:*

TO: Lieutenant SAUTER, Franco-American Soldier, fighting for liberty.

FROM: The Franco-Belgian Repatriots of Camp ANKAM, GEISENHAUSEN, BAVARIA.

Sunday
6 May 1945

Lieutenant SAUTER—

It was on the third day of the month of May 1945, very far, very deep in the heart of BAVARIA in a very small village, OBERHEL-



CAPTAIN (Then Lieutenant)
RENE CH. SAUTER

French Liaison Officer With the
99th Infantry Division

He went out on patrols with our men in November 1944 and later took charge of all liberated Allied prisoners and displaced persons. A fine soldier and real diplomat, he could make German P.O.W.s talk.

His opinion of the 99th Infantry Division and the opinion of Mr. Josse Gits, high Belgian government official whom we liberated from the Germans as a political prisoner is expressed in the two attached documents.

DENBERG, a "last square" of French and Belgian political prisoners. "*libres extremis*" the first day of May 1945 by the troops of the US 99th Infantry Division.

At that time, they were undergoing a "March of Death," executed by their savage, teuton guardians, always watchful, always totally persistent. At dawn, 25 April 1945, the column left their prison at STRAUBING, 4300 strong, comrades in chains, coming from the four corners of Europe. The toll of death was high after six days and six nights—960 remained.

Assassinated by the SS, beaten by the "*Wachtmeisters*," killed by their physical effort, or through starvation—others sacrificing themselves as martyrs in this drunken, endless march, this "March of Death." At the gates of MUNICH stood the victorious Allied troops, the German Commander changed his course and forced the remainder of this chain of human cattle in direct line of fire of the Allied Artillery.

Faced with complete destruction, afraid, yet brave in this hour of onslaught, Frenchmen and Belgians remained undaunted and awaited the end—then . . .

There he stood, this man, proudly wearing his national Khaki battle-dress uniform—his clear eyes gazing on a terrible sight, cool

and calm was he! Yes, the men who had marched in this "March of Death" had reached Heaven at last—The doors of Heaven were open.

Fifteen minutes later, writing material was distributed for the purpose of writing home to the families of these unfortunate men. A rendezvous was made for erection of a camp—a camp to save lives.

The father of our new family had already been selected—it was I, I, who was on my back, suffering from weakness of heart. It was I who was rallied to the cause by this efficient and forceful officer of the 6th Alpine Chasseurs,—wearing the Fourragere de la Legion d'Honneur.*

Amidst this new grasp for life, he brought us food, precious food to feed our ravaged bodies, clothes to cover our naked bodies—he brought us new assurance of life—Everyone lived—everyone spoke—He was our champion.

In tribute to you, my champion, on behalf of the men under my jurisdiction I salute you, for within 24 hours you brought life, freedom, happiness to 960 men, men who had once more found their souls—May God bless you and keep you strong.

On behalf of myself and the men under me I ask you to carry forward the news of the heroic deeds of the 99th Infantry Division, under the command of General Walter E. Lauer, for their glorious deeds in fighting for freedom and liberty, and bringing back to life the ghosts of 960 men.

JOSSE GITS
29 Blvd General WAHIO
BRUXELLES

Camp Commander

Mr. Josse Gits was at the time a high Belgian government official who had been seized by the Germans and held as a political prisoner. He and his group on the "March of Death" were liberated by the 99th. * Lieut Sauter was the 99th liaison officer who contacted them.—Auth.

CHAPTER XV

What and Why

THE BOOK IS CLOSED. A new book is opened, the pages of which we fear to turn.

For our fighting men, onerous occupational duties hardly filled the gap between split-second living and return to the expected humdrum of life as civilians in our homeland, untouched by the ravages of war.

The unbounded and intense joy of being alive, to be able to drive once more at night WITH LIGHTS soon wore off, to be supplanted by just as intense a desire to have light cast on questions and problems which had been set aside during the fighting period.

Men had time to think, to wonder why, to ask questions about many of the events which had taken place and those happening. Soldiers whose very lives had depended upon clear thinking and direct action sought clear answers to their questions and looked for straightforward action by their leaders to solve the perplexing international problems which developed.

That the war had been necessary was unquestioned. That the Nazi doctrine and dictatorship with all its incidental sadism and ruthlessness had to be wiped out for the good of civilization and mankind was unqualifiedly conceded. Our men needed no explanation on that score.

What they wanted to know was: What is the next step, and about how long will it take?

There was no simple, brief answer to these pertinent questions. The people back home were clamoring for the return of our soldiers *at once!* The war was over—bring our soldiers home! Our fighting men knew of this demand, but few agreed with it. They realized that all their fighting would have been in vain if our government conceded fully to this untimely demand.

The question, however, remained: What next and how long? They were willing and anxious to do their share in whatever plan our government had. All they wanted to know was: What, and approximately how long will it take?

These two basic questions have not been answered even at this late date—1949. It is a sad commentary on the foresight and efficiency of modern government.

Our soldiers wanted the answers to these questions right after V.E. Day. They were entitled to know, but the answers could not be furnished. No one knew, no one could even guess. The stock reply: "Occupy Germany and maintain law and order until a new government is established acceptable to our country," was a stop-gap answer begging the issue.

The fact remains that throughout the long years of fighting, our statesmen, or rather that executive branch of government, both our own and our allies, charged with foreign affairs, had sat idly by and apparently neglected to look forward to the day of final victory and have their definite co-ordinated plans ready to put into execution.

Is that expecting too much? All knew that as soon as the fighting war was over they would have to step into the picture again and conduct the foreign affairs of the nation they represented. When V.E. Day came, they appeared to be unprepared—they floundered around—they started the "war to win the peace."

To the student of history and of war, this situation did not make sense. Basically, war is a political act, called forth by political motive. It is a political instrument used when peaceful and diplomatic methods fail. It is the use of force or the threat of force as another means of obtaining the political (national) objective. One must bear in mind that the guiding factor of war is the NATIONAL OBJECTIVE of the war and NOT, as is commonly believed, the objective set the armed forces.

The objective for the armed forces is set by the executive branch of the government which called the war into use, to gain that which it failed to gain through peaceful and diplomatic means. The armed forces overcome the hostile "will to resist," and that is all. Fighting power, operations of war and battle are only a part of the means available to obtain the national objective, for wars today are not fought on the battlefield alone. Financial, moral, diplomatic, commercial and ethical pressure is also used, even propaganda.

Granted that our government employed all these means, the fact remains that when V.E. Day came, it was unprepared to gather in the "fruits of victory," or even chart a definite course for the future to gather these fruits.

It was after the armed conflict was over that diplomats got together to bargain and adjust and thrash out their differences in "national objectives." They should have gotten together while the fighting war was going on, and had their agreements and plans ready to put into effect immediately after V.E. Day. They had put the cart

before the horse, and naturally, progress could be expected to be slow. The great aid our nation had rendered our allies not only on the battlefield but by lend-lease, by financial aid, by actual supplies and ships and shipping, and by myriad other means, had lost their value as bargaining factors. Defeat of the enemy was no longer a common denominator. Mutual give-and-take was no longer a life-or-death, success-or-failure factor. The shooting war was over, and each nation felt that it and it alone was the winner and entitled to the lion's share of the take.

Conflicting ideologies, like that of our nation, to establish world peace and let by-gones be by-gones, clashed head-on with, for example, the Russian one of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Thus started, the war to win the peace, which has degenerated into the "cold war," and it goes on and on, with the questions asked in 1945 still unanswered.

The answer to that simple, direct question of the soldier, "What next?" is still suspended in mid-air. To answer the other simple question, "How long will it take?" involves the consideration of completely different factors.

Of all the harm brought the German people by the fallacious Nazi doctrine of government, the greatest and most lasting crime committed was that done the youth of that nation. During its long period of power, its false doctrines of right and wrong, of ethics, of religious teachings and of human rights were firmly implanted in their youthful minds. They knew nothing else. To establish a new government, a democratic form, such as advocated by our nation, with our concept of right and wrong and our philosophy of deportment and conduct, meant that all that had been taught by the Nazi regime must first be eradicated from the minds of this youth and replaced with the proper concept. This takes time, more than merely teaching the correct doctrine initially. How long would that take? How long would it take to re-educate an entire nation? Old men, young men, women and children. How long would it take to put the nation on an even keel to deal again with the other civilized nations of the world? Six months? Ridiculous! Six years? Hardly enough. One generation? Yes! But probably even two!

Let us not fool ourselves and determine the answer through wishful thinking. The Nazi doctrine found a very fertile bed in German *Kultur*. The right of might, of power, has always been a dominant factor in German life. The glory of the robber baron of old and the *Junker* of yesterday flows strongly in the blood of every

German. He expects and looks to his leader to tell him what to do. He does not question his leader's order, right or wrong—if it is so ordered, he does it—for that is the order, that is the law. Through generations he has actually shirked his citizenship responsibilities, although he will deny this. Perhaps he was not permitted to exercise them for any long period of time. The fact remains that he is happier under such conditions of leadership and willingly follows a strong leader, doing so gladly and even blindly.

His love of the uniform, of parades, of army life and war, are purely the result of his love of power. In a military organization, various grades exist, each marked and distinctly recognized, and each carrying with it various degrees of authority—authority over others. This he cherishes, for in the hierarchy of the army, he, the individual, can gain authority over others. Authority—power—is the element he worships. With an iron fist he orders his subordinates around; with a cringing attitude he complies with the dictates of his superior.

This, too, is part of the re-education of the nation which must be considered in arriving at the answer to the question of “how long?” Surely it is evident that unless a completely new mental attitude is inculcated in the German people, it will be only a matter of “how long” before another war will be started by them, of which we already have had two in less than one generation.

Consider the expressed opinions of many high ranking German leaders made prisoners of war during the early part of 1945. They all agreed that “There will be another war and Germany will be in it”; furthermore, they believed that “sooner or later”—they did not speculate how long—there would be a war between the allies and Russia, with Germany playing the buffer role. As events have shaped themselves since the end of hostilities, one wonders at times whether or not these forecasts by our former enemy leaders may not have a modicum of truth in them.

The German is intelligent, industrious, and willing to work hard. With proper leadership and government he will be able to take his place again among the respected nations of the world. He will be able to do this in a relatively short time. It is hoped that this time our allied governments will see to it that the German people will have been properly re-educated and brought to realize the full meaning and responsibilities incident to their being re-accepted among the civilized nations of the earth.

As to the Russian menace to world peace and the communistic doctrine of overthrowing all capitalistic forms of government by force,

etc., we should first consider a few basic factors about Russia. We will not consider the vast expanse of its country nor the great number of tribes which constitute the present-day U.S.S.R. We will consider purely its policies as they affect the rest of the world. The Russian policy of many centuries has been that of growing bigger by expansion of its borders, by absorption of its neighbors, and not by colonial expansion as practiced by other European nations. It is doing that same thing today. Its present-day leadership is a dictatorship supplemented by a small, virulent oligarchy, and is very similar to that of its old absolute monarchy.

By its very nature it may provide the German people with that type of leadership it so craves. Even though the German has been taught under its old monarchy, later under the republic, and still later under Nazism, to distrust and detest the Russian, the fact of the danger of absorption of Germany by Russia remains. Should this come about, Russia, which in great part lives in the early Eighteenth Century, would receive a tremendous impetus industrially, economically and commercially, and overnight may become an active threat to the peace of the world. This must be avoided, or Europe as a whole will experience a reversal to a period approximating the Dark Ages.

Russia by itself is not a power to be feared. It can, of course, start a war, but it cannot win it. Its leaders today are smart enough to realize this, and so talk big but do little. Like a big bully, it has gobbled up the small fry on its borders by infiltration and the threat of force, and because the more enlightened nations of the world wish to avoid war and all its resulting costs and horrors, it has gotten away with this procedure. It therefore thinks itself strong. It is not—it is weak.

It has the manpower, it may even have the desire to start a war, but one need look only as far back as the history of World War II to discover the answer as to its ability to fight a war to a successful conclusion. It staged a poor show against little Finland—it was defeated and overrun by Germany until the United States came to its aid with the sinews of war, war equipment and know-how.

We need consider only a few factors to make this situation clear. A war today is waged by all the people of a nation, civilian and soldier. So-called heavy industry is essential—but more, the maintenance of the equipment needed and the operation of the mechanical equipment used is just as essential.

A fighting division, such as the 99th Infantry Division, about which this history has been written, is a complex, complicated and

intricate piece of machinery. The present-day division is still more mechanical and complex. Weapons have become more and more automatic, mechanical and complex. Vehicles of all types are employed from bicycles to tanks, communications equipment runs the entire circuit from foot messengers to radio and airplanes, engineering equipment extends from picks and shovels to dredges and bridging equipment of the heaviest conceivable type, and so we can go through all the modern equipment of the modern fighting division. To operate this modern equipment, large numbers of intelligent, highly trained technicians and specialists are required.

In the United States our people are familiar with machinery. Almost everyone can drive an automobile and make simple road repairs. Everyone uses a telephone, all have radios and are familiar with electric power as a commonplace of life. Our standards of education are relatively high.

In Russia this is not true. The great majority of the Russian population still lives in the Dark Ages. Automobiles are few, telephones scarce, and both limited to only the politically powerful. Even a pocket watch is a mark of distinction among the common people of Russia. Under such conditions, what kind of an effective fighting division can the Russian Bear possibly assemble and maintain?—one filled purely with manpower armed with the simplest type of weapons. That their soldiers are brave and will fight to the death does not enter into the question. They are willing, but they can't—they don't have the know-how—to operate and maintain the complex mechanical weapons and machinery of the modern fighting division. Their leaders are proportionately as backward. When we consider but for a moment the moronic statements of their leaders that they, the Russians, were the first to bring to modern civilization such advantages as electricity, telephones, radios, motors, airplanes, etc., their stupidity is evident.

The only sound basis of life, whether of the individual in his daily dealings or of a nation in its international relationships, is that of truth and honesty. Russian leadership does not countenance truth nor honesty. In its dealings the lie is as common as breathing. It is readily used if thereby the desired end is gained. Today our Western European statesmen have for the first time met this type of dealing, this lack of ethics. The counter-charge has been made, and maybe rightfully so, that European statesmen have in the past said one thing and done another, but be that as it may, they have floundered around in their dealings with Russia, and it has taken them a long

time to understand the situation. The wonder is that they are still contending with it.

As to the Russian menace to peace, the claim is made that the Russians have under arms about 300 trained fighting divisions armed with modern weapons. That may be true, but the Iron Curtain is not maintained because they are proud of what they can show the rest of the world, but rather because they wish to hide their shortcomings from the world and at the same time hide the progress of the outside world from their own people.

Even if we were to concede that Russia has 300 modern divisions under arms, the question arises as to their size, their effectiveness, and their ability to maintain them at full effective strength. How much of a threat are they?

The Russian division was about one-half the strength in manpower of an American division. When we add to this difference the higher I.Q. of the American soldier, his more modern weapons, and his greater technical and mechanical ability, the ratio becomes instead of two to one, a ratio of three or four to one.

The great bugaboo of manpower which Russia has continually used as a threat must be disregarded. It has the manpower, but neither the materiel nor the intelligent manpower to operate the materiel of a modern fighting machine. It is no menace except in the imagination of people, and this imagination has been enhanced by the Iron Curtain of blackout. Russia can be likened to a great moron whose keeper is playing a slick game of bluff. This bluff has kept the world on edge and will need to be called some day. When this happens, the result will astonish the world. Russia will be forced quickly to withdraw within its ancient borders, where it should remain until some time in the far distant future, when its standards are sufficiently high so that it can take its place among the enlightened nations of the earth.

The United States need have no fear. Our people have a sound appreciation of freedom and liberty. They inherited it from their forefathers who fought for it. They, in turn, have defended it successfully. As long as our manpower remains virile, our people need not worry about the future, for our nation can then, if necessity calls, put fighting troops in the field, such as the 99th Infantry Division of World War II fame, to defend itself again successfully and retain its freedoms. That our people will always be able to do against any power or combination of powers on the earth.

ITINERARY OF 99th INFANTRY DIVISION
 COMMAND POST LOCATIONS
 From 10 Sept. 1944 to 9 May 1945

| | | | |
|--------|---|-----------|---------------|
| Dep. | Camp Maxey, Texas | | 10 Sept. 1944 |
| Arr. | Boston (Camp Miles Standish, Mass.) | | 13 Sept. |
| Dep. | Boston P.O.E. | | 29 Sept. |
| Arr. | Liverpool, England | | 10 Oct. |
| Arr. | Blandford, England | 6:30 P.M. | 12 Oct. |
| Arr. | Dorchester Barracks, England | | 16 Oct. |
| L.S.T. | Southampton, England (boarded) | 9:50 A.M. | 3 Nov. |
| Arr. | Le Havre, France | | 4 Nov. |
| Arr. | Aubel, Belgium (advance C.P. Butgenbach) | | 7 Nov. |
| Arr. | Butgenbach | | 11 Nov. |
| Arr. | Camp Elsenborn | | 17 Dec. |
| Arr. | Dom Rurhof (advance C.P. Town of Elsenborn) | | 27 Dec. |
| Arr. | Hunningen | | 4 Feb. 1945 |
| Arr. | Klasterhof-Montenau | | 13 Feb. |
| Arr. | Aubel | | 20 Feb. |
| Arr. | Duren—tactical C.P. | | 28 Feb. |
| Arr. | Elsdorf, Germany | | 1 Mar. |
| Arr. | Neurath | | 4 Mar. |
| Arr. | Gohr | | 5 Mar. |
| Arr. | Meckenheim | | 9 Mar. |
| Arr. | Linz—east of Rhine River | | 11 Mar. |
| Arr. | Neiderbreitbach—east of Wied River | | 24 Mar. |
| Arr. | Strassenhausen-Jahrsfeld | | 26 Mar. |
| Arr. | Moschheim | | 28 Mar. |
| Arr. | Krofdorf | | 29 Mar. |
| Arr. | Gemunden | | 1 Apr. |
| Arr. | Schwarzenan | | 4 Apr. |
| Arr. | Wingeshausen | | 7 Apr. |
| Arr. | Saalhausen | | 10 Apr. |
| Arr. | Fretter | | 12 Apr. |
| Arr. | Amecke | | 13 Apr. |
| Arr. | Sundwig | | 15 Apr. |
| Arr. | Frankfurt—tactical C.P. | | 17 Apr. |
| Arr. | Trossenfurt—assembly area headquarters | | 18 Apr. |
| Arr. | Langenzenn | | 21 Apr. |
| Arr. | Schwabach | | 22 Apr. |
| Arr. | Hilpolstein | | 24 Apr. |
| Arr. | Greiding | | 25 Apr. |
| Arr. | Sollern | | 26 Apr. |
| Arr. | Abensberg—tactical C.P. | | 28 Apr. |

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| Arr. Siegenburg—tactical C.P | 29 Apr. |
| Arr. Pfeffenhausen | 29 Apr. |
| Arr. Pfettrach | 30 Apr. |
| Arr. Geisenhausen | 1 May |
| Arr. Lager Hammelburg—occupation | 8 May |
| Arr. Kitzingen—for duration of occupation | 9 May 1945 |

Division returned to U.S. via Marseille for inactivation in September 1945.

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