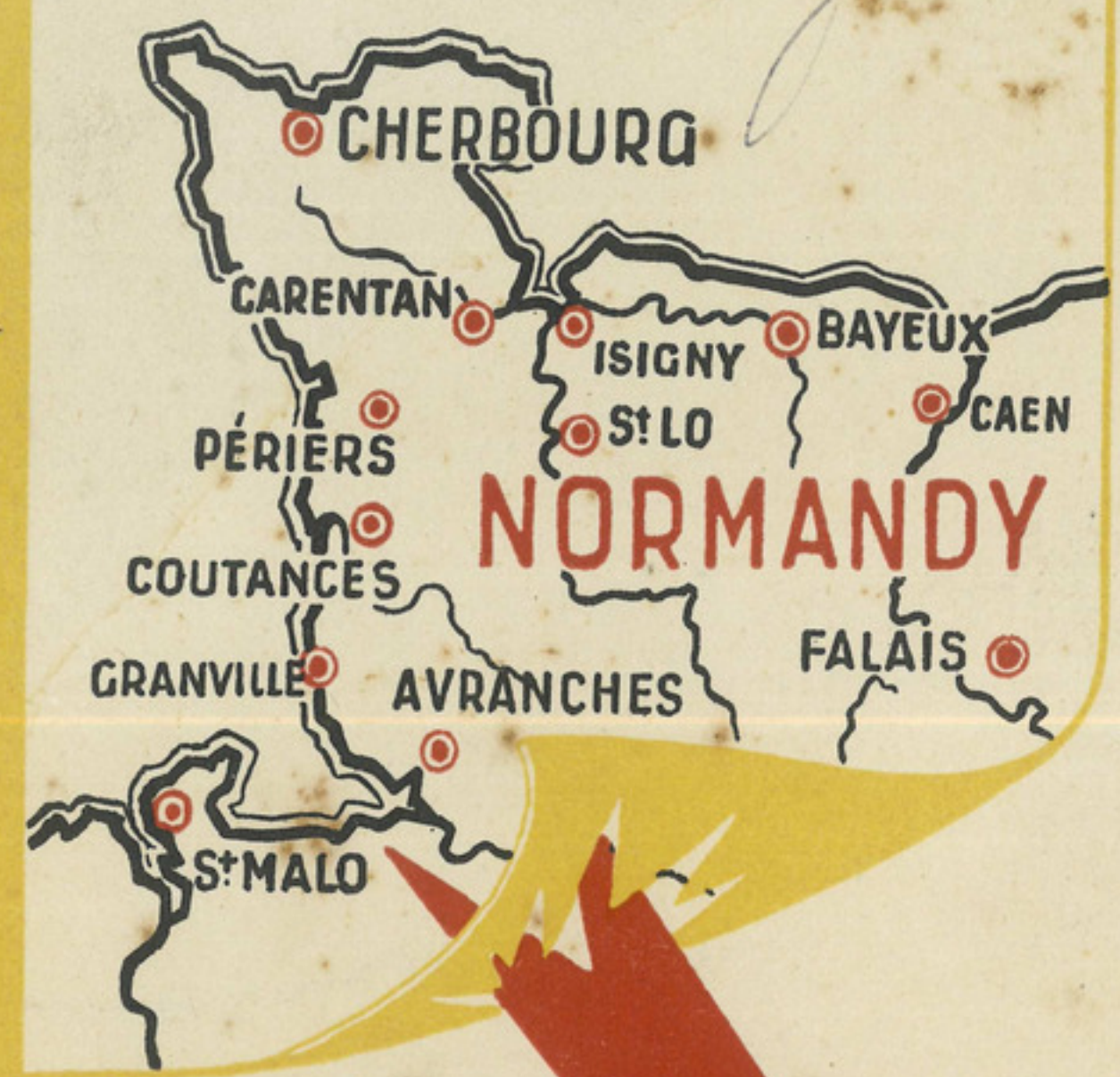


John Cleverger



**908 FIELD ARTILLERY
BATTALION
83 THUNDERBOLT DIVISION**



NEMETHA

Recu de Mrs. Cleverger le 4/4/97.

COMBAT HISTORY
OF
908 FIELD ARTILLERY
BATTALION

83 INFANTRY DIV.

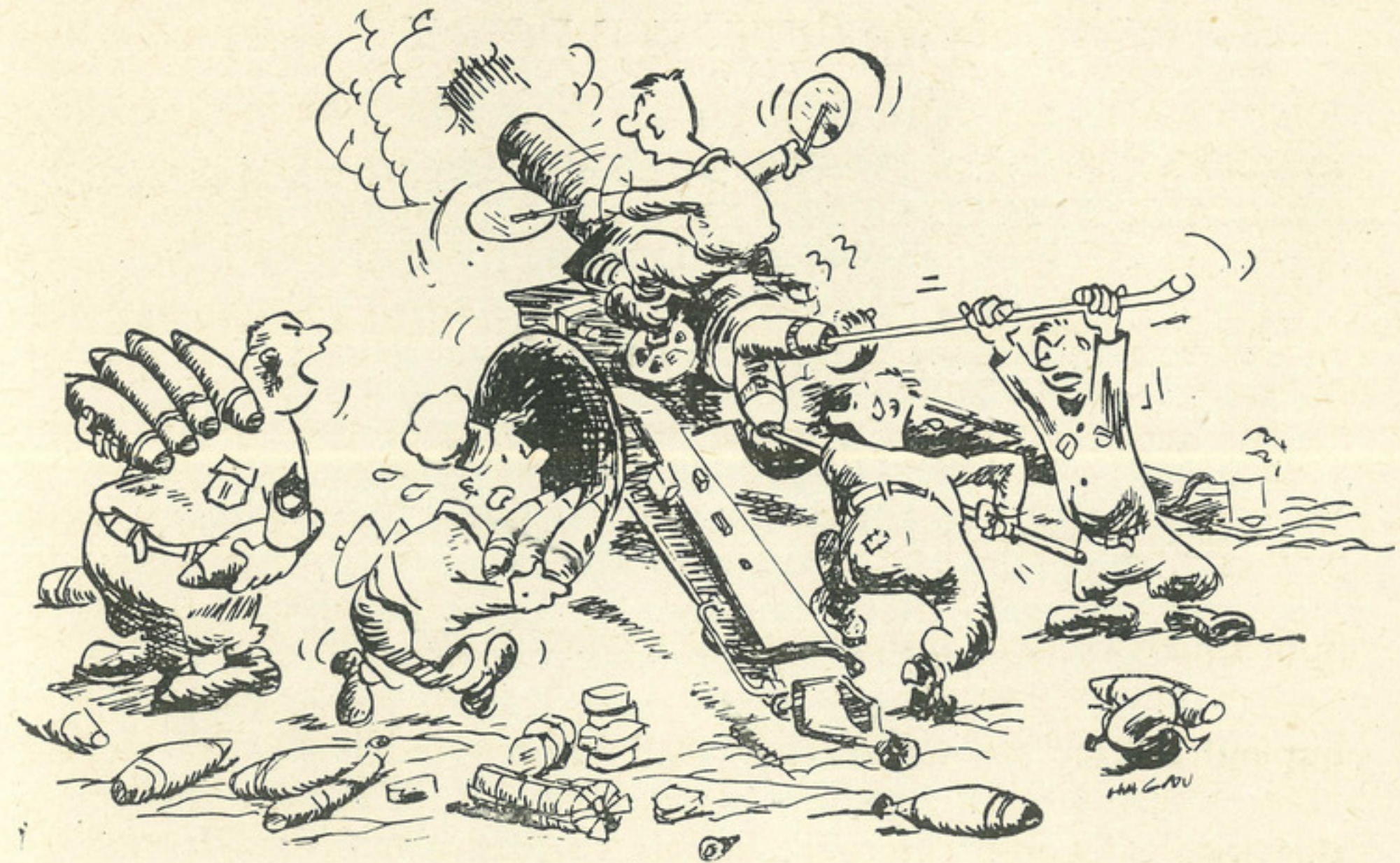
TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE BATTALION WHO MADE THE GREAT
SACRIFICE. THIS BOOK IS HUMBLY DEDICATED
MAY THE REST IN THE ETERNAL PAECE THEY
DIED TO INSURE.

Pvt. William F. Jackson	24 July	1944
Pfc. Cather P. Simmons	24 July	1944
Sgt. Richard F. Miller	26 July	1944
Lt. Col. Paul S. Thompson	10 August	1944
1st. Lt. John B. Goettke	10 August	1944
1st. Lt. Phillip J. Reichert	10 August	1944
Pvt. James C. Caylor	5 September	1944
Pfc. Frederick Columbia	10 August	1944
S/Sgt. Byron O. Kruse	17 December	1944

“DIRECT SUPPORT”

This is the story of an artillery battalion, a light artillery battalion. “Light artillery” means 105mm howitzers, guns that can be towed close enough to support the yard-by-yard advance of the infantry. Sometimes we fired preparatory barrages in the path of the advance, but more often we were called on to pulverize strong points which the doughs located and were unable to reduce with small arms fire. Often, too, we broke up counter-attacks by placing our fire on enemy tanks and troop formations as they attempted to strike back. We feel that we saved many lives in this way, and we are proud of our mission of “direct support”. We admire and greatly respect the doughboy, and we believe that he came to respect us. That is all the “glory” that we sought from the war.

INTRODUCTION



ALRIGHT ! ALRIGHT ! ONE AT A TIME !!

By Lt. Bill Hagan 1st F.A

ATTERBURY

The 83 Infantry Division was reactivated on 15 August 1942, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, under the new “triangular” type of organization. The 908 F. A. was attached to the 331 Combat Team and began training in November. Winter came early that year, with a vengeance and a lot of snow; the snow was cold, wet, and deep, and seemed to have come down from Div Arty as part of the Training Program. It made the hikes very tough and the outdoor classes were an agony of frozen fingers and toes. But the part that really hurt was that the entire training program was useless and silly, because everybody knew that the war would be over soon. Everybody was confident of early victory, and nobody foresaw another, more bitter winter in the Ardennes, when there were fire missions in the snow every night, and torn still figures in the snow.

Basic training ended in February, and as the men went home on furlough they expressed the fervent hope that they would do no more soldiering in the snow. They returned to find Atterbury a vast sea of mud, and before they pulled out in June they expressed the fervent hope that they would do no more soldiering in the mud. Fate glanced ahead in her engagement book, read an entry under “Hurtgen Forest”, and smiled.

MANEUVERS, BRECKENRIDGE, AND POE

Our convoy left Atterbury on 21 June and after 2 days and 310 miles we arrived at the bivouac area Hunters' Point, Tenn.. We participated in Bn., Combat Team, and Division problems before moving, on 4 July, to an area near Lebanon for Operation 1 with the Red Force. On the 4 August we were attached to the Blue Force and at 1800 25 August maneuvers came to an official close for the Division.

On 9 Sept. we began the march to Breckinridge, walking for a part of each day and then riding for awhile. We made the camp at noon of the 12th, having done, in all, 58 miles on foot. Garrison training began again, with emphasis on night problems. It was a better life than maneuvers, and the camp compared favorably with Atterbury, but when we got a pass there was no Indianapolis handy to spend it in. It was another cold winter and it always seemed coldest when a night problem was scheduled. The war was going slowly in Italy, and victory seemed further away than it had at Atterbury. There was a lot of talk about desert maneuvers in California, but many men began to wish that we would go overseas and do our bit in bringing the whole mess to a speedy close. We did not have long to wait.

On the 30 March we got on the train and on the 5 April we got on the George Washington, after a hectic six days at Camp Shanks. The trip over was uneventful and slow; we made harbor at Liverpool on 16 April and debarked on the 19th.

ENGLAND

We camped at Bryn-y-pys for two weeks, then moved to Aston Park for two more weeks of training. On 14 May we moved to Wales for service practice and remained in the general vicinity of Senny Bridge Range 'till the 27th, when we returned to Aston Park. It is difficult to recall a sunny day in Wales; it rained *all* the time, and the mud was almost as bad as at Atterbury.

D-Day was 6 June and everything suddenly changed. The girls at Aston Park became a secondary topic. War was very close now, and we knew it would get a lot closer very soon.

NORMANDY

Out of the fog and the mist and the rain loomed a dim line that was Normandy. To us it was an unknown quantity — it might mean adventure, it might mean glory, it might mean hell, it might mean death. We did know this; what lay ahead would be new and it would not be easy.

The rough weather prevented our landing. We talked to the sailors about D-Day and girls in Liverpool, and most of us crawled off the canvas that first night to watch the pretty ack-ack chase the Heinie planes around the heavens. Finally, on June 22, Charlie and Service Batteries and part of Baker hit the beach; the rest of us followed the next day. We drew into convoy formation, passed through a Division concentration area on the shore, and stared, unconvinced as we rode, at the piles of rubble that had been French homes but a few short days before. The French stared vacantly back — some looked half-heartedly happy that we had come, others were too weary to show any emotion, and still others appeared pretty well brassed off at the whole deal. We learned what "Achtung Minen" meant, and we picked up every sort of German junk in the first heat of souvenir hunting. The assembly area was near Bricqueville; we stayed there there several days, feverishly repairing and checking guns and equipment in preparation for the orders that we knew would come soon.

Col. Thompson's command car was the last vehicle in the march column that wound along the beach to the concentration area. Riding with the Col. was T/5 Joe Robbin of Hq. Battery, and Joe had a broad grin of relief on his face when he caught up with the Battery. He had slept soundly through all the unloading operations, and when he went down to the galley of the LST for breakfast they told him that he was the only GI left on board. He rushed ashore, dashed down the beach, and jumped into the command car just as it was pulling out. Joe almost missed the war.

On 25 June the Division was relieved of its duties with the Third Army and assigned to General Hodges' First. On the 26th the alert

German Officers Died . . .



order came down and at 0200 on the 27th the long line of "cats" and tiny red tail lights began to move along the rutted roads — the march

. . . And Our Officers Died



had been scheduled for daylight and postponed 'till dark when it was discovered that the route was under enemy observation. We

stopped for a while in Carentan as the column of weary doughs, sweating under their loads of equipment, pushed through us. Gen. Macon was there, speaking soft words of encouragement to his men. A few shells landed nearby, the first that we had heard, and many of us lept from the trucks to hit the ditch. We were up close now and we knew it. At 0630 we pulled into our area — Service Battery was shelled in the wierd half-light of dawn and everybody grabbed a shovel. This was combat, that we had trained for so long, prayed against so fervently, and then almost hoped for as we slogged around in the mud of Wales.

Col. Thompson went up to the 2nd Bn. OP with Capt. Fleming and they detected enemy movement in the hedgerows 300 yards ahead. Capt. Fleming called in the mission, Able Battery fired it — this was the first of the 90,000 rounds that we would pound into Hitler's legions.

B Battery had an OP in Meutis. It was a pretty good OP, up in the steeple of the church. You could see the Heinies from there, and the Heinies could see the steeple, and one day they got tired of being looked at and started to poop all sorts of high explosives in that direction. Capt. McNamara was observing; he and S/Sgt. Spike Nelson, and Cpl. Moby Carter looked down at the long, winding flight of stairs and decided that the stairs might be too slow. They grabbed a bell rope apiece, zipped to the floor, and got away from that church in a hurry.

The 4th of July was a helluva day. The paddlefeet — already we were starting to call them the "poor, g-d-m doughs" — jumped off into that terrible swamp that had stopped 101st Airborne. We fired a 15 minute preparation, then concentrated on more distant targets in the anticipated line of advance. The anticipated advance failed to materialize. The infantry gave all it had but the Germans had more — our men were cut down like flies. Lt. Burr, observing with E Co., was hit three minutes after crossing the LD, and Lt. Cobble was pinned down with F Co. all day long. The situation became desperate and it developed that Capt. Fleming had the only communication with the rear. Runners sent back to Regt. were never again heard from. T/4 Hetrick had his radio shot off his back and Sgt. Warren's radio was also damaged by shrapnel. The battle raged on fiercely throughout the day, with casualties very heavy on both sides, and evening found the situation practically unchanged. The Bn. was fortunate in that little counterbattery fire fell in the area; our only casualty was Pvt. Thatcher of Hq. Wire Section, who was wounded by shrapnel in the arm and leg.

Some progress was made during the next few days and on 11 July we march-ordered to new positions near Sainteny, which had not yet been taken. On the 13th we made another big attack and pushed on toward the Taute River. In this action Lt. Roese, Capt. Griest, and T/4s Schisler and Kiriakou were cut off while working with an assault company and were forced to endure withering fire from all sides for two days, before elements of the 329th broke through to relieve them.

Hayes and Hatem were biching a little about the dirty detail they had pulled. They had to pick up all dead Germans in the Able Battery area and many of the bodies were, as the saying goes, ripe. But a job is a job and they went to it. They were just getting a hold on one corpse and — BAM — the whole earth rocked. Their first thought was that they had tangled with a booby-trapped body, but when they picked themselves up and looked around they discovered a very large bomb crater fifty yards away. Hayes and Hatem finished loading their bundles and registered a strong complaint with the 1st Sgt.

About this time we and the infantry and the Heinies began to realize the importance and the potency of the Maytag Bomber. In those situations, and they proved to be numerous, when our ground observers were unable to secure suitable OPs, the little liason planes flew up and down over enemy lines, adjusting fire and warning the infantry of strong points ahead. Their psychological value can hardly be estimated — German 88s could not fire at the Cubs without revealing their positions and bringing down a hail of fire on their own gun areas.

We had now fought our way to the LaVarde Peninsula; on 18 July the 908 displaced to positions near Bois Grimot. In the attack that took place that day Capt. Lysaght was wounded in the head and captured; (the hospital in which he was recuperating was later overrun and he was recaptured and returned home.) The fight was fierce and our troops were forced to give ground, but we all had more confidence in our own effectiveness, and we were sure that Le Boche was beginning to lose his grip in Normandy. We were borne out in our conviction by the activities which followed the terrific bombing of German positions on 25 July. So crushing and demoralizing was the effect of the bombardment that our infantry pushed ahead steadily for three days over the bodies of dead and dying Wehr-machters. The breakthrough was at hand! We moved, on the night of the 28th, to Marchesleux, across the bloody Taute, but by afternoon we were out of range and we march-ordered again, out into the clean fresh air of the Brittany countryside. The Battle of Normandy was over!



Johnny Samsa of Hq. Battery Liberates a Breton Town

BRITTANY

Brittany was different from Normandy in many respects, but war was always the same in that one German fought as hard for his life as another. There were bitter battles in several sectors, and the danger of death was omnipresent; still, there were factors which tended to alleviate somewhat the strain of war. First, there was not the terrible cooped-up feeling that we experienced in the hedgerows. And then the Bretons were most friendly and appreciative of our coming; they crowded around our vehicles as we rode through their streets, laughing and weeping, and they deluged us with food and drink. We were liberators, and it relieved our minds for short periods from the horror of the whole mess.

On 4 August we made a motor march of 107 miles through Coutances and Avranches to the St. Malo area. This distance represented far more mileage than we had made in six weeks in Normandy. The Combat Team had cleared its section of St. Malo by 9 August and we

took off again, on a 27 mile jaunt to positions near Dinard. Pleslin was the name of the place; we pulled in just after midnight. Early in the morning the Cub that was carrying Lts. Reichert and Goettke exploded in mid-air, apparently struck by a shell. Both were killed instantly. A little later a single German 150 mm gun began probing the Hq. Battery area, dropping a shell here and another there, searching, searching. Col. Thompson was killed by a delay-fuse round, which crashed through the wall of his room and exploded inside. Fred Columbia was killed a short time afterwards. Eleven more men were wounded.

The Medics were having a tough time. Doc Bruzza had a hole in his back and Les Adams was also hit. Both continued to treat the other wounded and everybody did a good job that day, but the calmest man in the Aid Station on 10 August was Russ Williams of Hq. Battery. Williams had both eyes torn out by shell-fragments and as he lay on the litter and waited to be evacuated, T/4 Don Smith tried to tell him that he just had blood in his eyes. "Don't kid me, Smitty", he answered, "I'm blind and I know it. But you'd better get some of these other men out ahead of me."

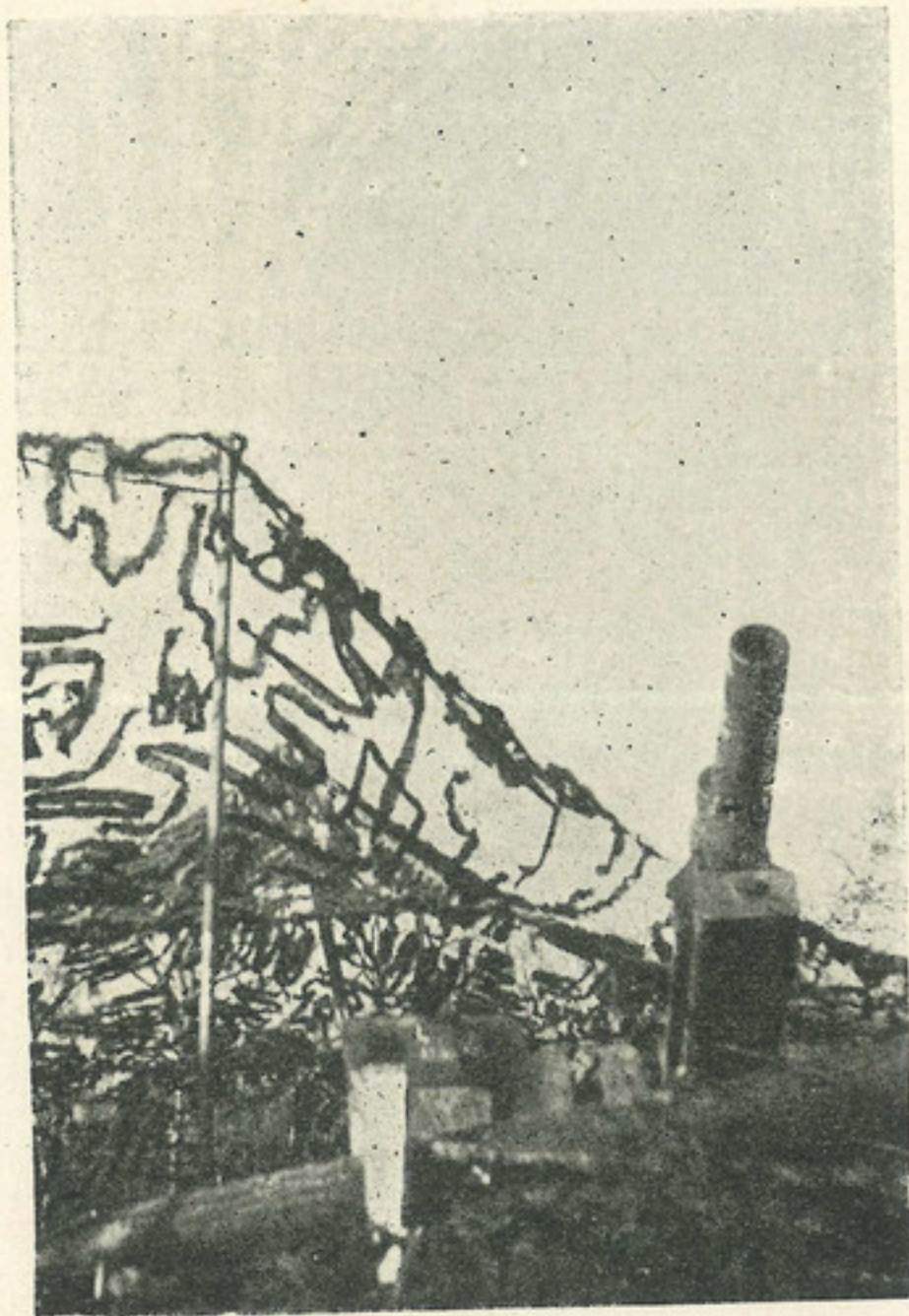
But Dinard fell, as did every city that lay in our path, and St. Brieuç was taken on the 16th by the 2nd Bn.. Fortress Paula on Hill 48 looked like a tough nut to crack — it was so strongly reinforced with concrete and steel that artillery would apparently be useless. Still, it was even more evidently a death trap for infantry; the interconnected system of trenches and pillboxes would have proved a slow and very costly objective for a frontal assault. So it was up to the artillery; we pounded and pounded and pounded, making minute adjustments in an effort to drop a round in one of the cave entrances. Finally we succeeded — our shell passed through an entrance, set fire to ammo stored inside, and sent flame and smoke pouring along the passageways. The German defenders, who had sworn they would never surrender, came out with their hands up.

For several days during the campaign ammunition was rationed to 36 rounds per howitzer per day — our first experience with such shortages. And we scored what was probably a first for the ETO — we sank a German gunboat lying off St. Malo.

LOIRE VALLEY-LUXEMBOURG

Our operations in the Loire Valley were mostly of a personal nature. The Division mission was to protect the right flank of the Third Army over a distance of 200 miles; the Combat Team had the special assignment of containing the 60,000 Germans bottled up at St. Nazaire. The Heinies seemed well content to stay bottled up — they made one abortive and costly attempt to break out at Blaine. Except for that one occasion, there was little activity of military significance.

That meant that we had free time, that we could move into a house without worrying that the Germans had it zeroed, and that we could get to know the French people a little more intimately. Vigneux, Nantes — familiar names to all of us, and especially familiar in Nantes. "Little Paris", we called it, and it meant more to most of us then than Paris did later. Drinking material was plentiful, and the girls were as friendly as they were numerous. We were living again; we had a respite from war. The firing batteries had



A Baker Battery Howitzer Points Menacingly at German Positions Across The Moselle

been detached through this period; on the 18 September we all moved to Montargis (a distance of 245 miles) and spent a pleasant week together in a similarly pleasant atmosphere.

Another long march of 236 miles on 23 September brought us into the Duchy of Luxembourg. There were some enemy pockets, and our infantry ran into tough fighting in several towns, but by 7 October all the Germans had been pushed back across the Moselle. We settled down to a holding action and fired occasional harrassing missions across the river. The Bn. was split up during part of the period because of the great length of the Division front; Able and Baker were at Canach and the rest of us were at Mondorf. On the 14 November we all moved to Flaxweiler; some of us got to Luxembourg City and we recall it as the most modern of the towns we saw in Europe. We began to wonder if the war were ending, if it might end right here. Aachen was falling and Ike said the war would be won this side of the Rhine. Ike was wrong and we were very wrong.

Ah Oui . . . Nantes



HURTGEN FOREST

On the 6 December we pulled out of Luxembourg and drove 140 miles north to relieve the battered 4th Infantry Division in the Hurtgen Forest. We were greeted by propaganda leaflets which told of the tough fighting that lay ahead, and the Heinies were not kidding this time. The woods were dense and the mud was knee deep — artillery officers of the 4th warned us that we could not get guns into position, and they were not kidding either. But we cut down trees and manhandled the howitzers and got them in there, and then we carried ammo on our backs, up the hills, through the mud. There were mines everywhere and there were always incoming shells. They threw big stuff at us — 150s and 220s. We dug in deeply, and for many of us it was the first foxhole since Normandy. We shivered, sweated, waited, and prayed.

The infantry pushed out of the Forest and prepared to attack the fortress town of Gey. Gey was a vital point, a road juncture, and

Hurtgen Mud . . . Remember?



We Cut Down Trees And Manhandled The Guns . . .

the Kraut meant to keep it. Every house was a fort, every window a machine-gun nest. We meant to take it. We pounded it with artillery, battered it, shattered it. Before dawn on the 10 December the infantry jumped off. F company moved up, over 1200 yards of open ground. They wore no overcoats and shot at everything that looked like an overcoat. They had attained surprise and they took part of the town, but they could not take the rest. A fresh company fought their way in, and another. Tanks crawled up through the mud and were promptly knocked out; all approaches from our positions in the woods were under direct fire. Another company tried, and still another. Almost every line company in the Regiment had a crack at Gey. Finally they took it, after two days in which the attacking doughs had no water at all and no food to speak of.

T/4 Ollie Weismuller found a whining little puppy and carried him back to the CP, following the white engineer tape that showed the way from Message Center dugout. Weismuller had a kind heart and the hound was cold; when he crawled into his roll he put the pup in his helmet and covered him with a wool cap. Ollie got up in the morning, put on his helmet, and quickly took it off again; the dog had used it for more than a bedroom. "War", said Weismuller, "is hell".

The doughs took Hill 8, behind a rolling barrage prepared by Capt. Coddington, and pushed the Heinies back across the Roer River. They were moving now and they were confident; they knew they were tough and they knew they could expect a lot from us. We were laying 'em in where they wanted 'em, and when they wanted 'em.

We were now well inside Germany, and the most forward element of all Allied troops. We had patrols in Duren and we were ready to go again, but Von Rundstedt had struck back and ours was a different task.

We Paid Dearly . . .



ARDENNES

On the day after Christmas our march column wound out of the Hurtgen and headed back toward the rear. We knew where we were going — to the Ardennes Forest — but we did not yet know that it would be just as dark, just as bloody, and a lot colder than the Hurtgen.

Von Rundstedt had planned carefully and well but he had not considered the incredible efficiency and ingenuity of Americans. He did not think that a division could be moved overnight through three countries and be ready for action in the morning. He didn't know, but he learned.

It was a cold ride, a bitter cold ride, in open trucks. We went into positions at Hogne, smack in the middle of Buzz Bomb Alley; between the snow and the V-1s we had a miserable time. We march-ordered the next day and during the next few days we moved often, firing a little from each position. Observation was well nigh impossible because of the snow and fog, and in some instances it was impossible to register the Bn.. On 7 January we were relieved of our mission of general support of 3rd Armored and reassigned to direct support of the 331. When we arrived at position areas at Jevigne the infantry had not yet moved up and we requested that Division give us some protection to our front. We got several armored cars.

On the morning of 9 January Lt. Roeser registered the Bn. from an OP in Ottre, ahead of the infantry LD. A platoon of doughs from F. Co. jumped off at 1130; they got over the crest of a gently sloping hill beyond town and all hell broke loose. The snow was waist deep — they could do nothing but press their bodies into it and take the terrible hail of fire directed at them from machine guns, 20mm ack-ack pieces, mortars, and tanks. Our observers had difficulty in locating good OPs and the weather precluded the use of liaison planes for adjusting fire, so that we could not lay down the accurate covering barrage that would have allowed the men to withdraw to safety. They lay there, many of them wounded.

At about 1400 five tanks, with 20 infantrymen riding them, moved up the hill and paused on the crest to search for targets. Three were knocked out by 88s within 30 seconds and the other two pulled back down. The 27 men still lay in the snow. At 2100 their platoon

Snow And More Snow . . .



One of Our TDs Stands Guard Alongside A German Tank Which It Had Knocked Out

The Krauts Were Cold Too . . .



Beaten, Frozen, But Still Defiant, These Three Are Typical of The Prisoners Taken in the Bulge



He Died in The SS Massacre at Ottre

Sgt. staggered in to the CP, frozen, shocked, half out of his mind. He reported that at dusk SS men had come out of the woods and walked up the hill toward the still forms. They kicked each man: if there was a groan, it was followed by a shot. The Sgt. played dead, was looted of his watch and wallet, and made his way back over the hill after dark. 26 men died in the snow because we could not cover their withdrawal. It taught the doughs how much one arm depended on another, and it taught us how much the doughs depended on us. It was a costly lesson, the kind you cannot learn in a class.

The next day S/Sgt. Pemberton crawled to a spot from which he could observe the enemy. He stuck to his post through intense fire of every nature, and we drove the Kraut from his strong positions and chopped him up when he tried to retreat down a road.

We moved to Hebronval that afternoon. The snow piled up higher and the thermometer dropped lower. Able Battery needed a snowplow and a bulldozer to get their guns into position. The wire crews had hardly a moment of rest; they had to maintain the longest trunk line we had ever used and the raging blizzard covered the lines five minutes after they were laid. Tanks slid into ditches and ripped out wire; tank aerials ripped out overheads, or worse, snapped the inside wire without breaking the insulation. The radio operators, too, had a flock of trouble. The life of batteries was cut in half, so that twice as many spares were carried. Vibrators froze. Great distance of communication often necessitated relay radio stations.

Alex Friedman and George Fedarko and some other members of the wire crew were laying a line into Ottre. Suddenly a plane streaked down at them, machine guns chattering, and dropped its bomb a short distance away. As the boys lifed themselves from the snow another plane started its run and they dove for cover again — Friedman crawled under a knocked-out tank on the roadside. Everybody got through all right but Friedman was a little upset when he discovered later that he had sought safety on the bullseye. The Tank was a Tiger Royal which had erroneously been reported as a target to our own P-47s.

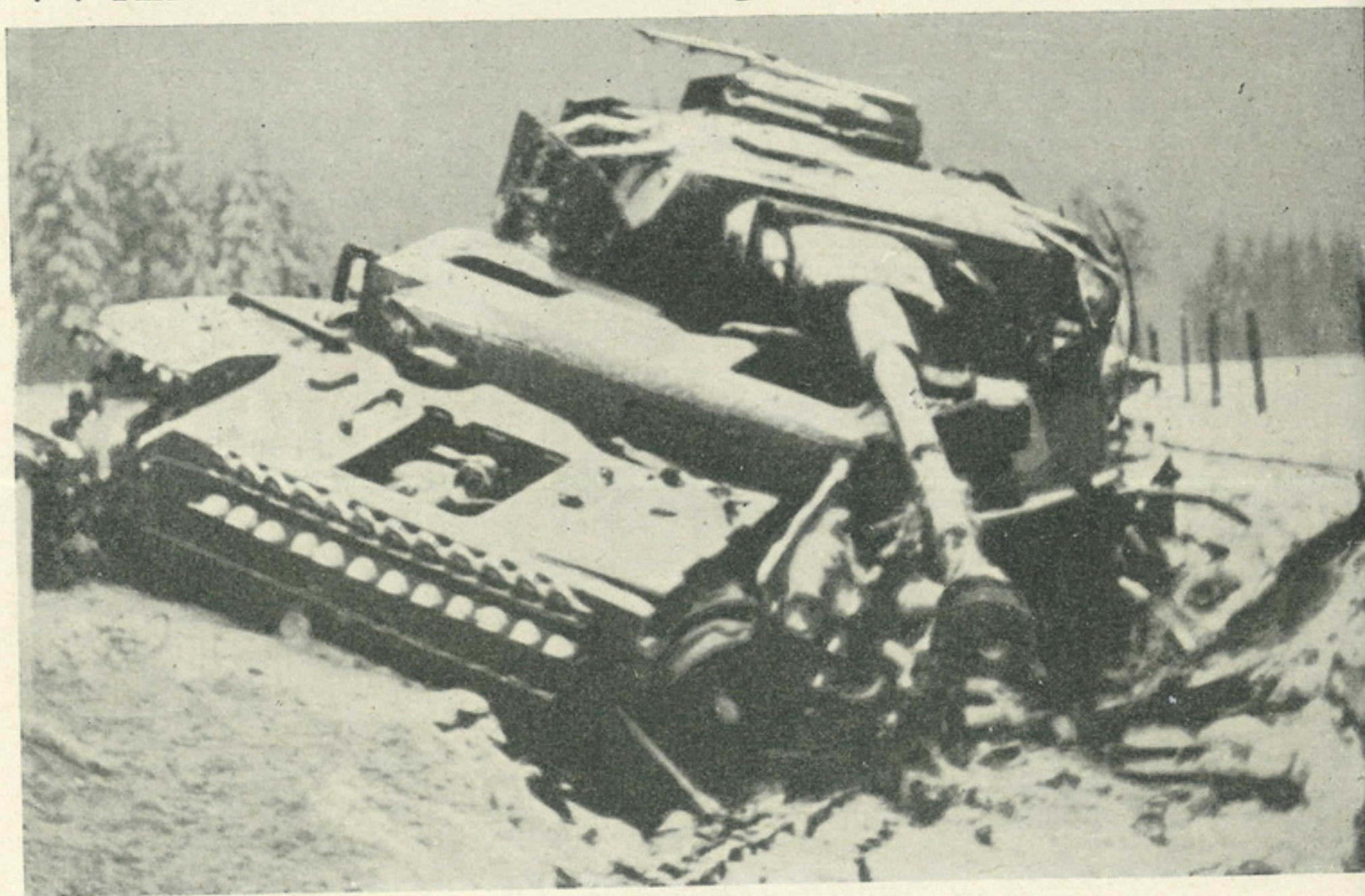
Morphine froze in the Medics' Aid Kits. Everybody was worried about frostbite and trench foot. We were under observation a good part of the time and when we weren't firing harrassing missions we grabbed a couple of hours' sleep in a hole chiseled out of frozen earth.

On 17 January Lt. Robbins spotted a tank counter-attack forming from his OP on the edge of the Courtil Forest. He and T/5 McCoy radioed in the mission and we broke up the thrust, knocking out several tanks in the process. In the afternoon the 2nd Bn. crossed the Courtil-Houffalize highway and our part of the battle was finished; 3rd Armored took off down the road. On the 22nd we were relieved and moved back 15 miles to the town of Mormont for a two week rest. By the end of the first week we were all warm again.

We Got This Tank in Normandy . . .



. . . And This One in The Bulge



We Hit Pill-Boxes at St. Malo . . .



From Normandy to The Elbe We were Called On To Fire At All Conceivable Types of Targets. Sometimes We Missed, But on These Two Pages Are Shown a Few of The Targets We Hit.

. . . And Flattened The Town of Gey





We Poured 2600 Rounds Over Englesdorf . . .

ROER TO RHINE

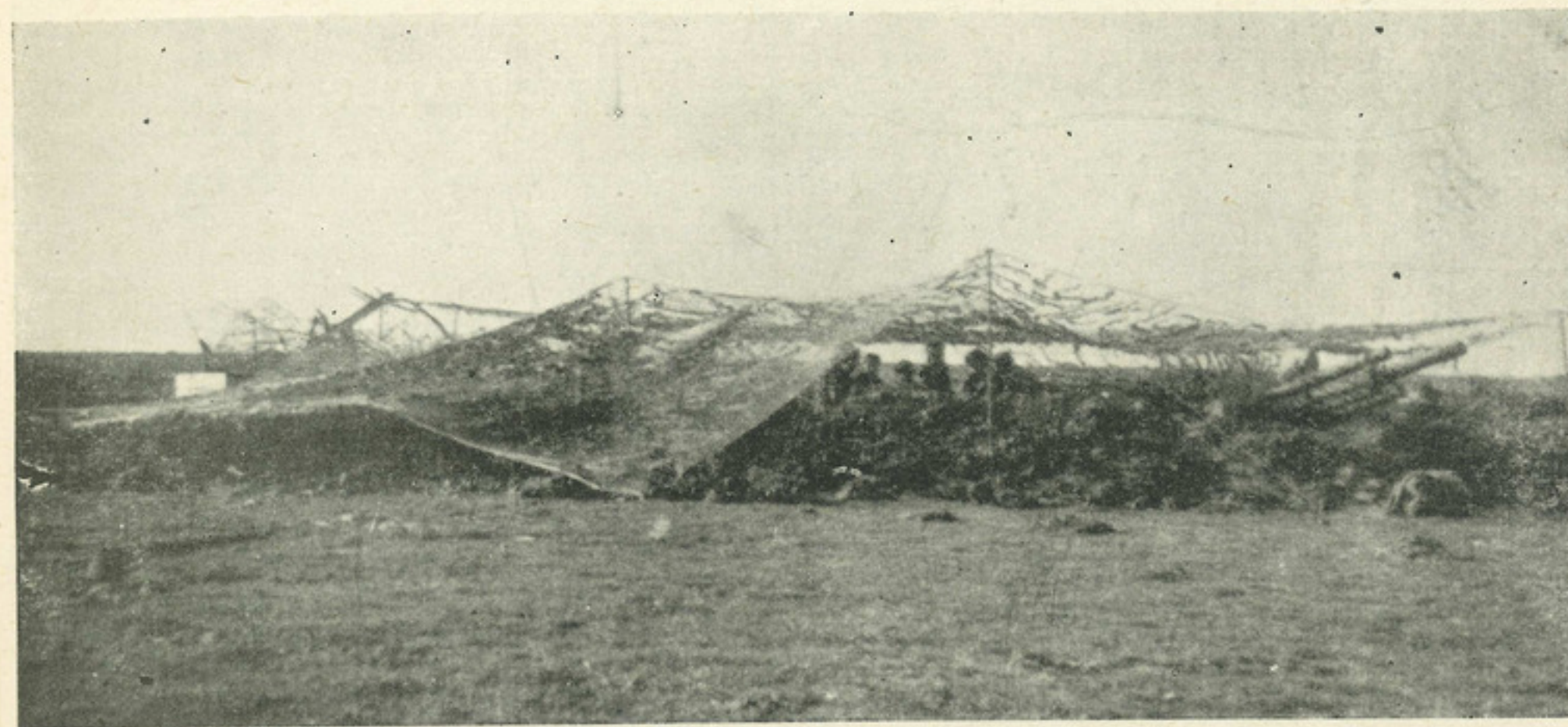
On 2 February the Bn. was alerted for a move to Germany, and with the alert came orders for the strictest security measures that had ever been imposed on us. All unit designations had to be removed from vehicles; patches were taken off outer garments; addresses were scratched off letters at APO, or else letters were pulled out of envelopes at mail call and the envelopes burnt on the spot. From this we judged that we were to be in something big, and from Arnhem Radio we learned that the main force of the attack across the Roer would come from the Ninth Army sector. We guessed correctly — we were relieved of assignment to VII Corps, First Army, and assigned to XIX Corps, Ninth Army.

On the 6th we march-ordered, at night, to the little town of Mersch, Holland. We saw, for the first time, the "artificial moonlight" in the British sector; giant searchlights played over the front, making enemy patrol activity difficult. The next evening we took off again, under strict blackout regulations, with windshields and tops down. Through Aachen (we had seen it before, on the trip out of the Hurtgen), then north to Alsdorf, and east to Englesdorf. A

small town, badly battered, was Englesdorf; a flat plain stretched out ahead to the Roer and Julich on the other side. No flash defilade, no natural protection, and no billets were available. Guns were dug in, nets erected, and damp foxholes constructed in the soft spring mud.

The big jumpoff was scheduled for 8 March but flood waters prevented a crossing. We registered and waited. Harrassing fire fell in the area often but we were not permitted to fire counter-battery missions — our presence in the sector was a strict secret. On the 20th the German bombers came and they kept coming, every day and every night until after the attack.

Baker Battery had an MG outpost to the left of their area. On the night of the 20th three bombs whistled down; one struck, on an angle, 8 feet from the dugout. It was a dud, and it came to rest directly under the post. The MG was moved to another position; the next night more bombs fell and one exploded 20 yards from the new position, wrecking the pup tent and wounding Underwood. The boys began to think of throwing that MG in a river somewhere.



The flood waters subsided and on 23 February all was ready for the attack. At 0245, we joined the other 32 battalions of artillery along the bank in the greatest preparation of the war. Through the day we fired more than 2600 rounds into Julich and strong-points in the line of advance. On the 27th we crossed the river and began the big push to the Rhine. German resistance was disorganized and feeble, except in pockets — Hitler seemed to have struck the bottom of the manpower barrel and he could not muster enough even of the scrapings (Volksturm and Hitler Jugend) to hold a

Proud And Happy . . .



Maj. Lalliberte, Col. York, and Lt. Col. McDonald of the 331 Pose For a Snapshot in Neuss.

line. At Glehn we watched the great might of 2nd Armored rolling up to the front; all day the tanks roared by, and the half-tracks, and the trucks. It was an awesome sight, and the hundreds of prisoners who trudged along the roads must have thought they were well out of it. From this position, at 2013 on 1 March, we fired a Bn. TOT at a factory in Dusseldorf — this was the first light artillery fired across the Rhine in the entire northern sector.

There was a tank counter-attack against our unprotected right flank on 2 March that threatened to overrun our positions and cut us off. We were firing a mission for the infantry at the time, but soon all three batteries were firing in different directions. The tanks drew closer, and Hq. set up a hasty defense line of foxholes manned by men with bazookas. At what seemed to be the last minute P-47s arrived on the scene and dive-bombed the panzerwagons back where they belonged.

The 2nd Bn. had pushed through Neuss at 0900 on 2 March and thus become the first Allied troops to reach the lower Rhine. But

the first men in Neuss were three members of our liason party; Sgts. Bastien and Schisler and Cpl. Samsa became separated from the rest of the party while moving from the OP to Objective 2. They could find no landmarks in the dark and unwittingly moved to Objective 3, the southeast corner of Neuss. A machine gun chattered, a figure dashed across the road and into a bunker. They followed him in, took 30 prisoners who were hiding there, and made their way back to the OP.

Lt. Robbins and T/5 Bob Needleman got Silver Stars for a little job they did on 2 March. They were observing from the second floor of a house and they observed that a sizeable counterattack was coming their way. They called in the mission. The Krauts got closer and our rounds fell closer. Needleman began sniping at them with his carbine, between radio transmissions. They got to within 25 yards and the fire which Lt. Robbins was adjusting came even closer, but the two of them stuck and sweated it out. They made it all right, and the ribbon is pretty, and five is a lot of points, but they both decided there were easier ways.

Schnell . . .



One of Our Observers Makes Time Past The Bodies of 2 Kaput Krauts

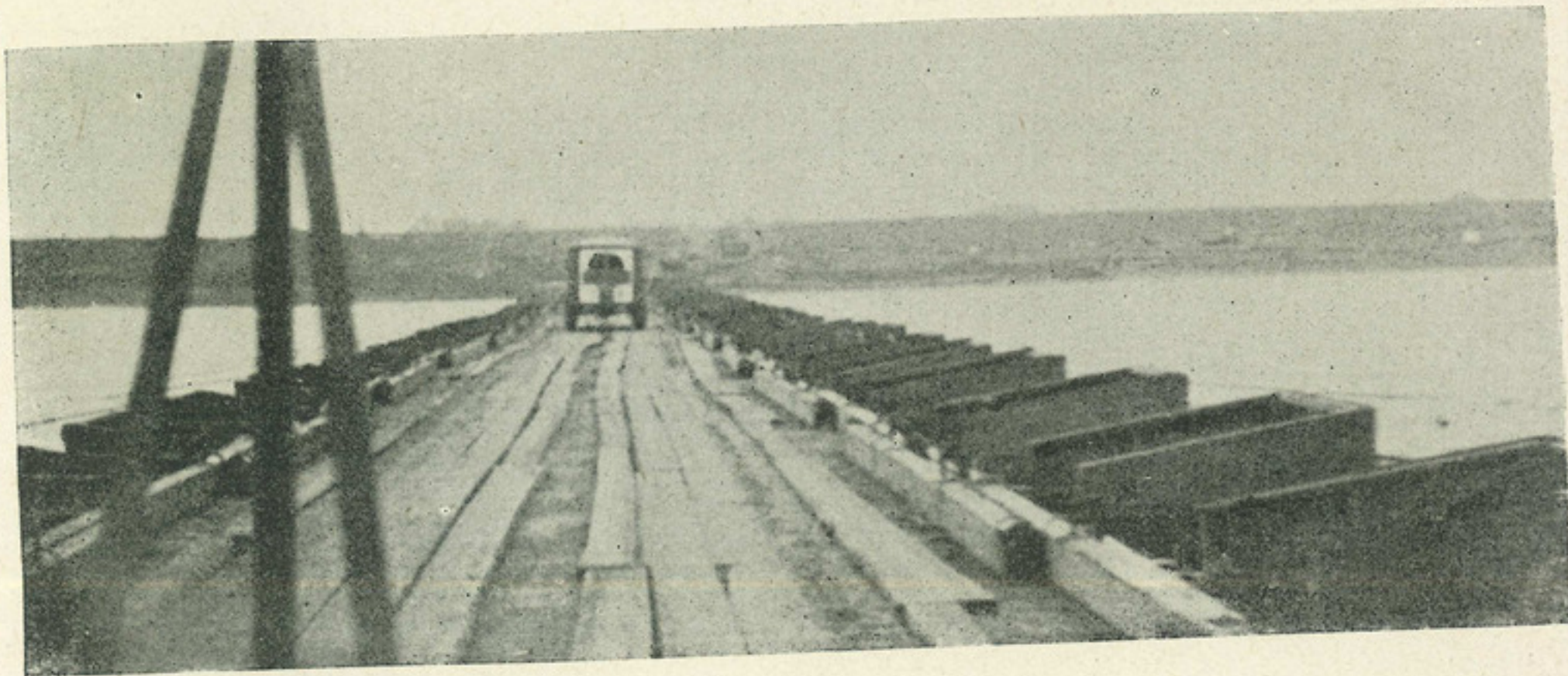
Fatigue . . .



*That Beat-Up Dough on
The Left Is Lt. Col.
McDonald of The 2nd Bn.*

*At the right:
Capt. Fleming Holds His .45 Ready As He Interrogates A Prisoner.*





RHINE TO ELBE

The Rhine was just another river. It wasn't very wide where we crossed, nor was it pretty. The barrage balloons looked like ack-ack for a minute, and that was the most notable feature of the trip that we had anticipated since Normandy.

On the 1 April we went into position at Ahlen and supported the attack across the Erft Canal to Hamm. It was costly and rough up there for a while, but the doughs hung on to their bridgehead until relieved on the 4th. The Division had another mission. The Division was to take off on the road to Berlin.

On the 4th we passed through Paderborn and on the 8th we crossed the Weser River, after firing missions into Hoxter, Polle, and other towns. At Bevern all three gun batteries were firing in different directions — the Heinies were all around us but they could not manage to stay out in front of us. Once again the Division flank was unprotected, over a distance of 80 miles, exposed to an estimated 65,000 German troops.

Charlie Battery was attached to the 1st Bn. for a special mission — cleaning out a pocket in the Harz mountains. The mission was accomplished in late afternoon but Capt. Tetlak was unable to obtain communication with the rest of the 908; they had continued on down Victory road and no one knew just where they were. The Battery bivouaced overnight in a field and went on the road early in the morning. They traveled 60 miles, without seeing another GI, before catching up; in every town there were beaucoup Krauts with their hands up, trying to find someone to surrender to. Reports noted that "the situation was fluid and the advance swift."

We rolled on and on and on, 20, 30, 40 miles a day. 2nd Armored was somewhere to the north and we heard news that they too, were making good progress, but they were motorized and we were an infantry division. The doughs rode tanks, TDs, jeeps, fire engines, busses, anything that would roll — this was the "rag-tag circus" that the papers made so much of and that Gen. Simpsom couldn't understand.

This was the "rag-tag circus" that outran the best of American armor, that ripped through 200 miles of the Fatherland in 13 days, that crossed the Elbe River, 65 miles from Berlin, on 13 April, and held the only Allied bridgehead across that river against the furious, frenzied, fanatical counter-attacks of lunatics who did not know when they were beaten. We were "rag-tag" but we were mighty damn tough.

