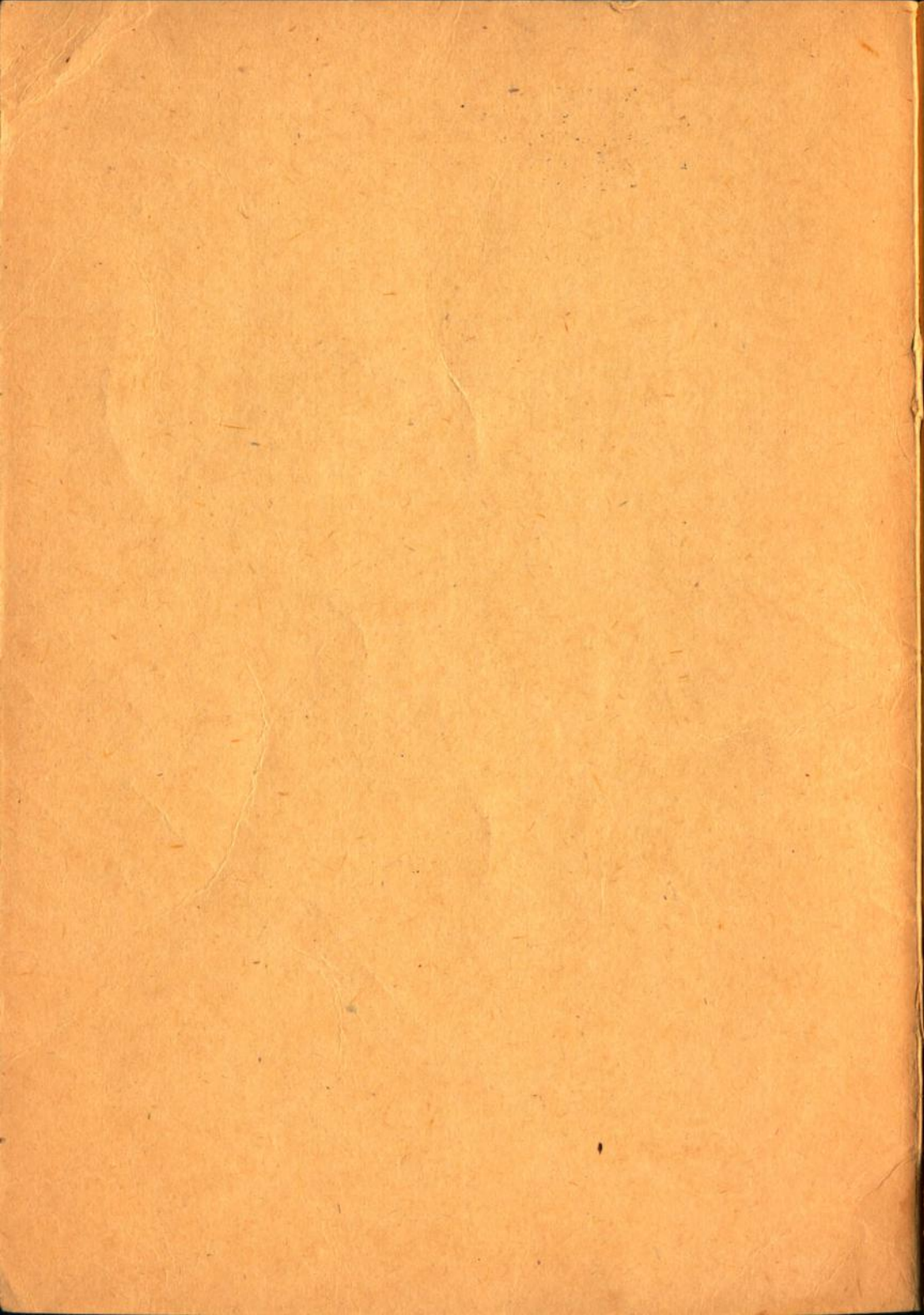


# UTAH BEACH TO SALZBURG

WITH THE 173 FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP

D  
769.34  
173d  
JAN  
1945





7  
Research Center  
Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
30 W. Mitlin Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
Ph: (608) 267-1790

WING-M-952

D  
769.34  
173rd  
US  
1945

# UTAH BEACH TO SALZBURG

WITH THE 173 FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP

Research Center  
Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
30 W. Main Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
Ph: (608) 267-1190



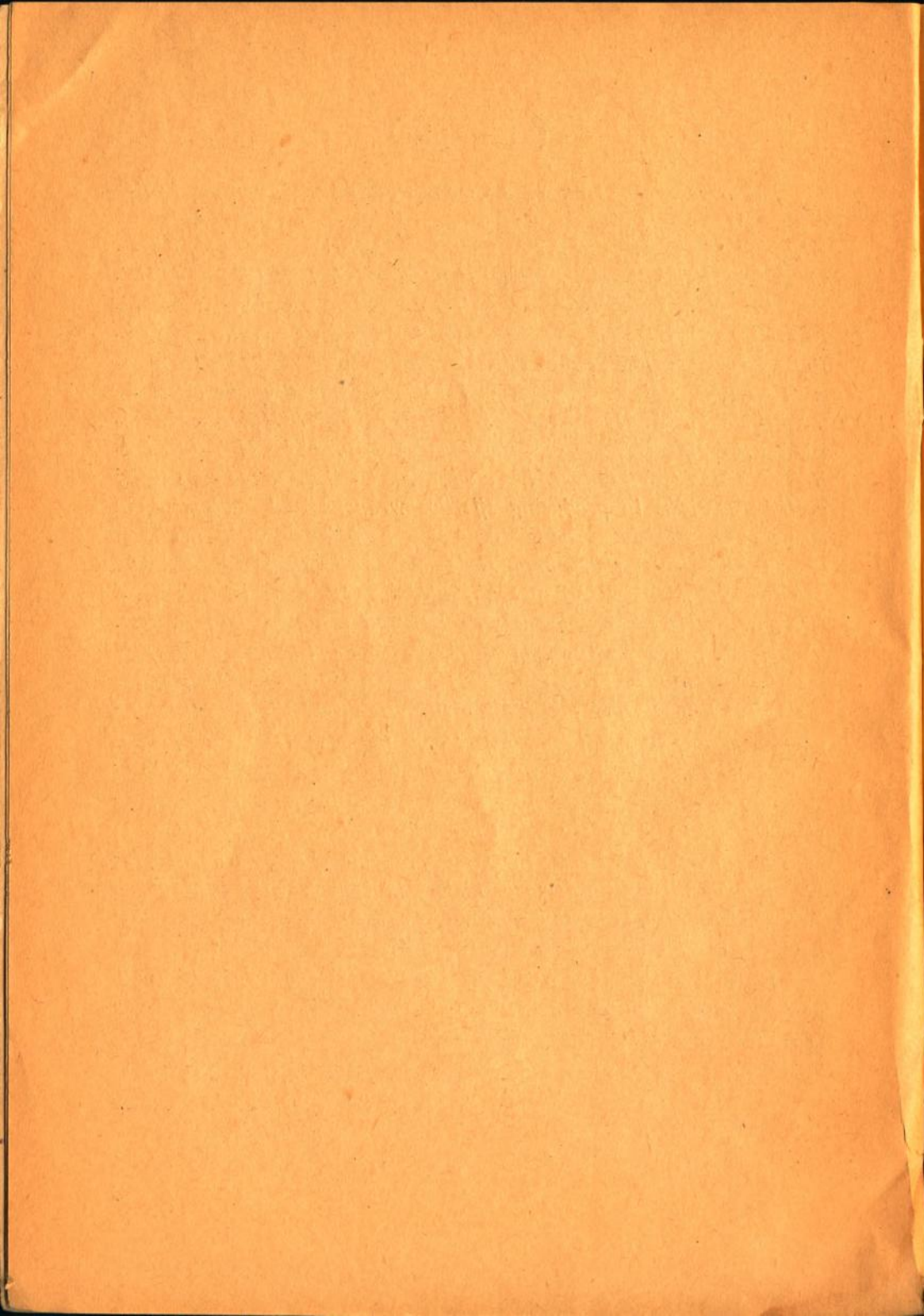
## FOREWORD

*The wreckage of German armies left behind the sweeping battles along the route: AVRANCHES — LEVAL — LE MANS — ALENCON — ARGENTAN; thence to DREUX — MANTES — GASSICOURT — and the Seine; then later JOINVILLE — NEUF-CHATEAU — CHARMES — LUNEVILLE; again, later, SARREBOURG — BITCHE — GROS-REDERCHING (with STRASBOURG as a lateral operation); again, later, HOMBURG — ZWEIBRUCKEN — KAISERLAUTEN; and finally, WORMS — the Rhine — MANNHEIM — ASCHAFFENBURG — BAMBURG — NURNBERG — the Danube — MUNICH — SALZBURG. BERCHTESGADEN is a wreckage attesting to the superiority of the American in producing effective weapons and equipment, in planning effective coordination of means in battle, and in handling and operating these weapons and this equipment with intelligence. The 173rd Field Artillery Group contributed its full share in that great sweep from Normandy through France and Germany into Austria.*

*By its active participation in four campaigns of World War II this unit helped to create one of the greatest victories in military history. It helped crush and destroy the once proud Wehrmacht as no modern army had ever been crushed and destroyed. Under the leadership of its able Commander, Colonel Wilbur S. Nye, the 173rd Field Artillery Group contributed in large measure to the continued amazing victories of the American XV Corps. Toward the end the German superman looked third rate; the master race had been mastered! This accomplishment will go down in history in bold print — a tribute to American bravery, ingenuity, skill, and fortitude. It is fitting that what has been accomplished should be recorded.*

*I am proud to have been associated in these great battles with such an outstanding unit as the 173rd Field Artillery Group. I know of no team which has done a finer job.*

EDWARD S. OTT  
Brigadier General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.





## *PREFACE*

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 173d Field Artillery Group, originally Hq and Hq Btry, 121st Field Artillery, 32d Division (Wisconsin National Guard), later designated 173d FA, was activated as a group headquarters at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, on 25 February 1943. Col. W. F. Breidster was commanding officer. The following day the unit moved to Camp Maxey, Texas, where it took over the training of the 250th and 251st Field Artillery Battalions, both 105mm howitzer, and the 731st, 733d and 734th Field Artillery Battalions, 155mm gun. The light battalions were attached for a short period only.

On 10 August 1943 Lieut. Col. E. A. Bolzendahl, Executive of the Group, assumed command upon the departure of Col. Breidster. On 24 August the Group (with its battalions) returned to Camp Gruber. Col. W. S. Nye took command on 5 October.

In November the Group, less 733d FA Battalion, went to the Louisiana maneuvers. Just before Christmas, Group Hq and Hq Battery was placed in a pseudo alert status and returned to Camp Gruber to complete its POM (Preparations for Overseas Movement). On 12 March the unit entrained for Camp Shanks, N. Y., the staging area. After a couple of alerts the unit steamed down the Hudson to Staten Island, whence on 28 March it sailed for England.

The Group landed at Avonmouth on 9 April and moved to Kington Camp, Herefordshire. On 29 June the unit moved to Llanover Camp, near Abergavenny. On 17 July it moved to the marshalling area north of Southampton. On 20 July it embarked for France.



and the 182d Field Artillery Battalion arrived on the 26th. The days were spent in improving camouflage of the bivouac and in visiting the front. About 2345 hours on 26 July a false gas alarm was started by an aggregation of chromatic harlequins. This threw the whole area into a glorious panic which lasted a half hour, accompanied by considerable wild shooting and hoarse cries. It produced some ludicrous incidents such as the executive of one of the battalions trying to put his musette bag instead of a gas mask over his face.

A few days after our arrival in Normandy, the planes of the Group, led by Captain Dearth, flew over from England.

The 693d Field Artillery Battalion, which had been with us in England, was in the same general area with us, and joined the Group when we moved down to the front.

On the 31st the whole Group, about to go to War, moved south to the vicinity of Periers.

### *PERIERS*

Periers was so recently liberated that the streets were still clogged with its rubble. But bull-dozers were shoving back the debris; and a few engineers were probing with bayonets in the gutters and along the walks for mines. In the main street stood an American tank that had struck a mine. There were several German tanks, too; burned out, with holes torn in their sides.

Our column entered the town from the west, about midafternoon of 31 July 1944. Heavy two-way traffic attempting to pass through the narrow street jammed us up for half an hour. The clear blue sky soon was obscured by clouds of dust from grinding tanks and trucks and from the dozers pushing aside the heaps of fallen masonry. After we turned left in the center of town and wound our way northeast on N171 (the highway to Carentan) things were not so bad. A few civilians on the outskirts had already returned to their smashed shops and homes and were trying to straighten out the jumble of furniture, bedding, clothing mixed with broken stone and



mortar. An MP slouching in an overstuffed armchair at a crossroad watched traffic roar by.

Just beyond a small Catholic shrine at the edge of town were apple orchards and pastures divided into irregularly-sized parcels by the typical Normandy hedge rows. Group Headquarters turned right into an exceedingly narrow lane and established camp in two of these fields. The 182d Field Artillery Battalion was farther up the highway on the same side; the 961st Field Artillery Battalion was across from them; and the 693d Field Artillery Battalion was northeast of the 182d.

By the time that the long summer afternoon had ended, all batteries were comfortably settled and every man had a deep slit trench beside or under his pup tent. But no one felt easy. Too many mines remained in the area. We had sent parties down from Bricquebec the day before to sweep our selected fields, but some of our mine detectors were of that cylindrical type that locate pebbles, match sticks — anything but mines. And our operators were still amateurs, we felt. The signs along the road — “Mines cleared to hedges” — did nothing to alleviate our unease; we were *beyond* the hedges. An explosion in the direction of Lieut. Colonel Moore's battalion did not sound like an artillery shell. It was not an artillery shell. In a few minutes we received a call from Coachdog (telephone code name for 182d Battalion) that an officer and several men from a nearby AAA unit had been killed by a mine in a lane.

Although the front was 8000 meters to the south, and was fairly quiescent, we saw a few winking 90mm bursts in the sky and heard the distant rumble of the AAA guns. It was a hint that we were getting closer to the war.

The next two or three days were spent by most of the personnel in “reconnaissance” which consisted mainly in an unrelenting, dawn-to-dark search for souvenirs. Several days prior to our arrival, the 90th Infantry Division had fought a battle in the area north and northeast of Periers. More than a battalion of infantry had been destroyed on a piece of terrain between the Seves and one of its tributaries, which they called “The Island”. Not all the dead, and little of the equipment had been picked up. Here for the first time many of our people saw the bloated, blackened corpses of what had



once been fighting men. They saw the tank tracks where German Tigers had entered the hedges and circled the little fields killing Americans at pointblank range as GIs crouched in their fox holes. Defunct cattle and horses lay in the fields and littered barnyards. The odor of the dead pervaded the whole countryside. When one of our men encounters it again, his mind will return at once to that grim Norman battlefield.

Unmindful of these (to us) newer aspects of military life, Lieut. Col. E. J. (Dutch) Koehler sat at a long table under the apple trees and gave his staff of the 961st lessons in the theory of probabilities. Stud seemed more popular than Draw; there is reason to believe that his students understood the science better than he did.

The Group CO with a few assistants reconnoitered routes to the south. A possible rendezvous area or bivouac site for the entire Group was selected just east of Lengronne and between there and St. Denis le Gast. (This was never occupied.) The fighting had swept through there not long before; clots of blood on the grass were still wet. The search for routes then led south to Gavray, where the 1st Infantry Division was crossing the Sien River via a newly constructed Bailey bridge. The colonel tried the roads south and southeast out of Gavray, but was stopped a few kilometers from town by the heavy fighting between the infantry advance elements and the enemy. In reconnoitering along the front of the 90th Division a day or two before, in the vicinity of (29.0—61.5), the CO and his small party had come under burp gun fire at a range of about fifteen yards. This indicated that it was healthier to confine reconnaissance to territory in *rear* of the front.

The intensive route reconnaissance was at the direction of XV Corps Artillery, whose headquarters were north of the Periers—St. Lo road, east of a hamlet called Les Alouets.

On 2 August we were given opportunity to make brief use of our slit trenches. This made us very happy, because we had trained for this moment by digging up much of Louisiana and Oklahoma. Toward supertime, artillery in the area of the 90th Division commenced firing rapidly. As the 90th was supposed to be out of contact, we were discussing this with some surprise when a lone FW 190 appeared,



headed our way. We then realized that the fire was ack-ack. At this moment our supporting AA opened up with their multiple 50s and 40mm guns. The din these things can make will always astound one who hears them for the first time. We dived for our slit trenches, but were soon out again to watch the fun. The German plane scooted off in a wide circle, pursued by two P-47s who never came within a mile of him.

Each night, from then on, we were visited after dark by a German plane who circled over our area, his engines churning in beats like a concrete mixer. We got to thinking that it was the same plane each time. Doubtless a naive fancy, for there is definite evidence that occasionally this plane (in later months, at least) was British or American. This was the famous Bed-check Charlie, known to all fighting men in Europe. We never learned to love him, even though he only bombed us twice. We often wondered what the hell he was doing. One of the major unsolved mysteries of the war.

### *ST. HILAIRE TO LE MANS*

The heavy fighting which started about 25 July had resulted in the defeat of the Germans west of St. Lo. Third Army was to become operational on 1 August; the role assigned to the 173d Field Artillery Group was support of the 90th Infantry Division. On 1 August the 693d Field Artillery Battalion was attached to that division. Group established liaison with the Division Artillery, the party consisting of Captain Schuler and Sergeant Crosby. The 90th Division had moved south by this time but the Corps Artillery was unable to follow immediately because the roads were being used by divisions and their attached troops. Finally, on the afternoon of 3 August, Group got orders to move into the area of the 90th Division and to be attached to that unit upon arrival. The big breakthrough had occurred; the 90th Division was charged with securing a bridgehead over the Selune River east of Avranches, preparatory to an advance to the south or southeast. At first it appeared that we were to participate in the liberation of Brittany; but now some other role awaited us.



Movement of the Corps Artillery from the Periers area was to commence after dark. We were ready before sunset, eager to go.

The night was clear, warm at first but chilly toward morning. The route ran southeast from Periers along the St. Lo road, then turned near the hamlet of la Riviere, and headed south and southwest toward Coutances, following rather devious country roads. The 208th Field Artillery Group (Col. Erickson) and probably other corps troops were ahead of us. Soon we caught up with the tail of their column, after which there intervened a tiresome succession of starts, halts, long unexplained waits. Toward St. Lo could be seen the flashes of AAA fire; now and then the sound of planes were heard, but none flew over us. The country lanes and farm yards were dark; and silent except for a single howling dog. In the starlight we could see that some of the farms had been damaged by artillery fire.

As we neared Coutances the column ahead began to pick up speed. Suddenly it disappeared. We raced to catch up; the resulting dust was terrific. The head of our column had to check the route frequently, as too few markers had been posted. Eventually we reached the macadam highway leading into destroyed Coutances, which we traversed without incident. South of town the bombed arches of a railway bridge towered against a starry sky.

Another halt was made between Coutances and Gavray to allow the vehicles to close up; we had become strung out while rushing along the dusty country roads. An early morning mist was gathering. The night was getting colder, but individuals were beginning to drowse each time the column stopped.

It was still dark when we reached the northern outskirts of Avranches. Here our map showed that we were to turn east. However, there was no marker at the expected point, only an MP who said that the road east was under heavy shell fire, that we should follow a detour which led south. So we passed on through Avranches, despite a feeling that the MP was wrong. It was getting light when, three miles south of the town, we saw that there was no "detour". Major Dewey, Group S-2, was sent back in a jeep to pick up the correct route. Meantime the rest of us munched K-rations.

In the slanting morning light the highway was seen to be lined with destroyed German vehicles, including artillery. Here and there,



especially on the southern edge of the city, were waxenskin dead Krauts in the ditches. Evidently the fighting there had occurred recently, probably the afternoon before. In Avranches we met Capt. Griffin, who alternated as liaison officer. He guided the column rapidly east to the area of the 90th Division.

The division lay facing east in a half moon at least 20,000 meters long — a typical Leavenworth defensive layout. The "bridgehead" across the Selune was held lightly if at all, for actually no enemy were present in this area. Brig. Gen. Raymond McLain, formerly CG 45th Division Artillery, and one of the great fighting generals produced during this war, had recently taken command. The artillery was under Brig. Gen. John Devine, a cool and confident officer who seemed happiest when machine gun bullets and grenades were cracking in his immediate environs. His Executive, Lieut. Col. John Daly, an officer who seemed to be without fear, was killed by a German tank not long after this.

Gen. Devine's CP was along a dirt road in the shade of a grove of lofty poplars north of le Gd. Chemin Sta. The 173d FA Group CP moved in north of "Divarty" in a farm yard on the edge of le Mesnil Boeufs. Coachdog (182d Bn) was given a "goose egg" on the south near Virey; Hamilton (961st Bn) was in the center, south of Montigny; and the "Deuces" (202d Bn), whom Gen. Devine had attached to Group, were on the north flank on the high ground near Reufluvieille. The Deuces found a former German OP which gave a commanding view of the terrain for many miles to the east and southeast; but they saw no targets. Group spent the night installing thirty five miles of telephone wire, which was never used tactically. Battalions made strenuous efforts to register, but could not do so. The Range "was not clear". Too many French peasants in the impact area. This was the thing that many an artilleryman had feared in his peacetime training — in his first taste of combat the range would not be clear!

During the short time we were in this position heavy firing could be heard to the northeast. This was preliminary to the Battle of Mortain, in which we did not participate but where German success in driving through to Avranches would have isolated the XV Corps.



Luckily the Germans were repulsed. Gen. Jodl, Chief of Staff of the German Army, stated in June 1945 that their failure to break through at Avranches cost the Germans the war.

Bedcheck Charlie came churning over the division area after dark, dropping flares and bombs. None hit too near us, as the Germans were aiming for the bridges over the Selune; but the noise was sufficient to terrify our two battery dogs who ki-yied off into the outer darkness and have not been seen to this day. They lacked proper battle-field indoctrination and were creatures without pride of unit or ancestry.

The combat teams of the division, with attached troops moved out of the bridgehead on August 4, but it was not until the afternoon of the following day that there was sufficient road space for corps artillery. Initially our group moved in one column on the main road leading south from St. Hilaire. Although the combat teams far ahead were having considerable fighting, the attached corps artillery was not in action; and there was no danger except from bypassed snipers, from mines, and from air attack. We saw only one man who had been killed by a sniper — at the edge of St. Hilaire; mines were an ever-present danger but we suffered no casualties from them at this time. Air attack, however, soon materialized.

When the Group column was between St. Hilaire and Landivy, a number of German fighters strafed the road and adjacent fields. A few casualties resulted, and several planes were shot down. The Krauts were getting a demonstration of the effectiveness of our organic and supporting .50 caliber MGs. The main purpose of the Germans may have been to spot where the mass of the artillery was going to bivouac for the night. In this they probably succeeded, because already many units were beginning to turn off into the fields. There was no cover except to park the vehicles along the hedge rows and drape nets over them. Air photos seen afterwards showed plainly that this form of concealment was far from perfect. At any rate, the bombers came over about midnight and attacked for an hour with heavy bombs and antipersonnel bombs. First they illuminated the area with parachute flares, then they dropped green flares which served as aiming points. Finally they dropped explosives. Group Headquarters suffered no casualties; the battalions had a few, none serious.



Other corps units not far away lost a number of men and officers, and some vehicles. An ammunition truck across the valley from us continued to burn and explode for several hours after the attack was over. Most of our people will long remember their feeling of nakedness as they crouched in their slit trenches in the light of the flares while the bombs whistled down and the fragments zipped through the shrubbery. During the excitement, our agent Corporal Dibble came in from his "run" with the usual batch of secret papers, one of which was an approved release on supply depot G-25 in England for "1 ea brush, typewriter, toothbrush style". It is alleged also that during the bombing Lieut. Col. Bolzendahl and Lieut. Hughes tried to climb into the same pair of pants.

The march south on 6 August was a triumphal procession. The French, dressed in their Sunday clothes, were standing beside the highway to wave and cheer. Many gave the Churchill "V" salute; a few small children, too young to know better, started to give the Nazi salute until their arms were jerked down by their elders. Flowers were thrown at the passing vehicles; "cidre" was offered freely (and accepted when opportunity offered). Of wine there was none; the Krauts had looted and drunk the country dry. The people were genuinely glad to see us; and not, as were the Alsations later, afraid to show enthusiasm, lest the Boche return and cut their throats. The tri-color, and other allied flags appeared miraculously and hung from every building. Even the American flag was much in evidence, though often it was homemade and not too authentic. We saw one "Old Glory" which had but a single large star and only three stripes.

Coachdog and Group camped for the night just east of La Baconniere. Apple orchards offered good concealment; although Bedcheck Charlie flew over so low that we could see his plane, he apparently did not spy us, for there were neither flares nor bombs. A liaison pilot from the 693d Battalion, who had become lost or had run out of gas, landed in a pasture not far away. The French were horrified that he insisted on sleeping in the field alongside his plane instead of accepting the hospitality of their house. So they carried a poster bed out into the field and installed it beside his plane; and brought him breakfast in bed. He walked into our CP the next day.



them was fatally wounded by pistol fire and the other hid behind a nearby haystack. Staff Sergeant Meldau told the latter in German to give up or be killed. The German replied that a Panzer force was following him down that same road. The patrol, being cut off from the route to the battalion and being dismounted, ran back approximately a half mile to a nearby air strip, borrowed a vehicle and returned to warn the battalion of the alleged imminent attack. The battalion was alerted and I (Bn CO) accompanied Sgt. Meldau back to the scene of the encounter. It was found that the enemy vehicle was heavily armed with machine gun, grenades and mines. It was evident that the occupants had been so taken with surprise that they were unable to use any of their weapons. The driver was dead, the second member died a short time later.

Toward evening it appeared that Divarty would stop for the night along the road at (01.5—40.5) 2 km south of Blandouet. Consequently Group and Coachdog went into position (00.7—40.5) in the same area. No sooner had we done so than word was received that Divarty was on the move again. The Group CO and a small reconnaissance party started off at once to select a new area near Division; the Group Headquarters Battery and the 182d Battalion were directed to follow as soon thereafter as they could execute march order. It was dark by the time the recon party turned north at Chassile, which was on fire. Divarty was discovered in a field about 3 miles north, and another site was selected nearby for Group CP, 2 km south of Bernay. Coachdog went into position at about 2100 hours just south of Chassile.

Owing to heavy traffic, Group Headquarters Battery did not reach the bivouac until after midnight. Nothing was known of the enemy situation. The woods in the vicinity probably still contained some enemy troops. The 693d Battalion, which had been moving on a parallel route north of us, had a fight at their CP near Bernay that same morning. The story, because it is typical of the experiences of those days, is related here in some detail:

On the afternoon of 7 August the 693d Field Artillery Battalion was attached to that part of the 90th Division known as Task Force Barth. At 0100 hours on 8 August the battalion CP was established in the southwestern edge of the village of Bernay. The countryside, particularly the wooded areas and villages were generally occupied



by German forces of unknown strength which had been by-passed by our infantry during their advance.

At about 0200 hours the CP was attacked with considerable vigor by German patrols of unknown strength. Sergeant Major Claire Noyes, Corporal Jack Skinner, and five men deployed along the roadside ditch for the defense of the CP. They returned the enemy fire, and continued to exchange shots in the dark with the enemy for two hours. The distance from the Germans was about twenty-five yards. Finally the enemy withdrew, leaving two dead and one captured. It is believed that they were attempting to secure some equipment which they had left in the farm yard. During this two hours of intermittent carbine and pistol fire, the remainder of the CP personnel continued calmly to function in their regular role. Twelve Germans were captured by the battalion during the night.

At about 0830 Corporal Skinner and Lieutenant Haley were at the CP; Major Dittman and Captain Turner were interrogating one of the prisoners whom they had sitting in a nearby enclosure. A German truck with eleven SS troopers came dashing along the road. Their purpose was to rescue the Krauts whom the 693d had captured. When the enemy got abreast of the CP they opened fire. Lieut. Haley, Corporal Skinner, and the several others in the vicinity returned the fire. They killed three Germans, wounded three, and captured the remainder.

On the 8th of August the combat teams of the division were fighting their way toward Le Mans. A considerable force of enemy armor and SS troops was astride the main highway near L'Arche. The division attacked this frontally with Task Force Weaver, and brought Task Force Barth down from the north in an envelopment. A sharp fight resulted, in which the enemy force was practically wiped out. Much of this destruction was accomplished by the artillery, which fired continuously, using a Cub which circled directly over the battle and directed the fire accurately on the enemy. In this, Cobweb (693d Bn) participated. Meantime, their CP had another fight:

The battalion was in position 2500 meters NW of L'Arche. At about 1700 hours the command post (30.8—40.4) came under small arms fire; German forces attempting to withdraw from the action



were approaching through the woods south of the CP. Lieut. Col. Iosbaker, the battalion commander, had available as a defending force about twenty-five individuals who included a few staff officers, their enlisted assistants, and some drivers. It was imperative that the command post continue its primary mission of directing fire on the lucrative targets which were presenting themselves in the main action to the southeast. Yet the command post was about to be over-run by a superior force of infantry who were desperately trying to cut their way out.

Lieut Col. Iosbaker quickly formed a defending force from the personnel available, which he divided into two parties. One, under his own leadership, engaged the approaching enemy in a heavy fire fight and succeeded in pinning the enemy to the ground. The other small force, under Maj. Shoemaker and Capt. Corby, went around to the flank of the Germans and attacked them vigorously. By this time the enemy were employing rifles, automatic weapons, and grenades. Our troops were using their carbines. Some friendly infantry passed by, but declined to help.

The fight lasted forty-five minutes, during which our artillerymen killed two Germans, wounded three, and captured 114, including a major and a lieutenant.

Immediately following the round-up of the prisoners (who came out of the woods with their arms in their hands), and while they were being disarmed, an excited civilian fired a shot at them from the upper story of a nearby house. At once the Germans, thrown into a wild panic, commenced to run in all directions. The Americans opened fire again, killing another German. A very critical situation presented itself, with both friendly and hostile troops "milling around". Col Iosbaker seized control at once. He forced the prisoners to lie on the ground; and quickly restored order. He later received a Silver Star for his part in this action; and several of his subordinates were also decorated.

#### *LE MANS — ALENCON*

Group Headquarters remained in its position until midafternoon, but Coachdog moved forward to the vicinity of L'Arche. The entry



into Le Mans was another triumphal procession, with the cheering populace jamming the sidewalks. Our principal reaction to this was fear, lest the Germans decide to bomb the city while all these civilians were massed on the streets. The city had not been damaged badly by bombing; neither had the attack of the XV Corps caused much wreckage. As we turned left in the center of town, fighting could be heard up a side street. Our column passed on through and went into bivouac in a field on the eastern edge. The cooks started to prepare supper while the Group CO went off on a reconnaissance north of town to select a new CP nearer the areas which had been assigned to the battalions.

The battalion commanders were encountered at a road junction north of the city; and the reconnaissance had just commenced when word was received that the CO was to report to Gen. Devine at his CP in the city park. Here the CO, Major Dewey, Captain Griffin and Sgt. Crosby remained for two stimulating hours while heavy street fighting raged in the square, about 50 yards distant. Upon their return to the CP they found that Lt. Col. Bolzendahl had in charge the first German prisoner which the Group Headquarters had captured. He was a rather sorry specimen who had removed his shoes and pants in order to appear less warlike; and was wolfing his supper in the weeds near the kitchen. Our air section also captured a dozen or more Krauts that evening.

The CP was moved about sunset to a new location a mile north of the city; the CP tent being pitched in a very deep and dark sunken road which nobody could find, not even the people who worked there. The night was quiet. Next day it appeared that we might get to shoot. At 1500 hours fifty German tanks were reported approaching from the northwest, across the Sarthe River. We put a plane up but never did see the panzers. This was one of a series of alarms of this type. We learned to point off one decimal place in every such report, then change the German tanks to American jeeps, whereupon the story would be about right. On this occasion, Hamilton registered on a road junction near St. Jean de Asse. This scared the hell out of one Frenchman who was riding a bicycle into St. Jean. He headed back to Ballon, where he reported that a large attack was in progress.



On the evening of the 10th, Lt. Col. Bolzendahl reconnoitered to Ballon for routes, OPs and goose eggs. He got tied up in traffic with the 2d French Armored Division, who had formed a fifty-mile-long road block on all highways; Bozie lost considerable time and his normally sweet disposition; and treated the French to an outburst of the purest Milwaukee expletive.

Next day Group moved to a goose egg northeast of Ballon, near a hamlet called Courteld. Nothing especial occurred except the usual fight with other corps units over goose-egg boundaries. Near La Saunerie we passed five of the French division's Sherman tanks — burned, and with their roasted crews beside them. They had been knocked out in quick succession by a German tank or SP gun who had ambushed them at short range. Group remained in this area until midafternoon of the 12th. Group and battalion commanders reconnoitered well to the front for routes and for the purpose of determining when the French division had made sufficient progress to justify our displacement. On arriving at the point where the French spearheads were engaged, it was evident that, if they lacked practice in marching, they needed none in fighting. They attacked in a headlong manner, reckless of immediate cost. The XV Corps acquired the utmost respect for Gen. LeClerc's division. Late in the afternoon the Group was able to move north to a goose egg 2 km north of Cherisay. The difficulty on this march was getting past halted French units who had the road blocked for miles. We had to take some very dusty and tortuous detours but made camp before dark. We still had no targets, and had done no firing.

Early the following day the battalions moved north through Alencon to position areas in flat open fields; choice positions were scarce because so many other units, both divisional and corps, were there. Group Headquarters went into the back yard of a ruined suburban house. This had been the site of a German 20-mm AA battery, which had left in great haste. Principal point of interest was a partly blown dump of 28 cm nebelwerfers across the railroad about three hundred meters to the east. At this time we all were aware that the Germans in the Mortain-Argentan-Falaise pocket were beginning to escape east owing to Allied slowness in closing the Argentan-Falaise gap. We knew that the XV Corps could close the gap; but the



reason for, first, slowing down the progress of the Corps, then stopping it entirely, has never been made public. There was little resistance ahead of us; we could have moved up there in one day. We understood, too, that our Corps and Army Commanders wished to advance at once to Argentan.

Next day (the 14th), Group and its two battalions moved about three miles northwest to support the division in mopping up the great wooded area called Forêt D'Ecouvès. Coachdog was near Chemoitou, Group CP about 400 meters southwest of them, and Hamilton about 1200 meters north of Group. The weather was hot and clear, the roads dusty. Divarty was in a chateau which the Germans had used as a QM warehouse; here we got our first taste of liberating pots and pans and tools. Our looting instincts at this time were imperfectly developed; one must conclude that the French were convinced that the Americans were fighting the war solely to secure fresh eggs.

### ORMOY — MANTES

We were lolling in our bivouac north of Alençon on 15 August when Hancock (XVF) informed us that we were attached to the 79th Division and were supposed to have established liaison with that unit the night before. The 693d Battalion was attached to us again; with the three battalions we were to join, by 1100 hours, the 79th Division at La Mele sur Sarthe. La Mele was twenty miles away. It was now ten o'clock.

Through a dint of rushing about, browbeating various innocent persons, and sending urgent messages to the 693d, we made it. Then we had to sit along the road for six hours waiting for the division's combat teams to clear the town.

Our destination, as given by Brig. Gen. G. D. (Doug) Wahl, was somewhere in the vicinity of Ormoy. He said that the division was marching on two roads, which he pointed out on his map. We were to follow the tail of the divisional column on the righthand route. Luckily we marked *both* routes on our maps; after the general had gone far ahead, we received word to march on the lefthand route.



It was to be a daylight march. Doubtless it *was* for the heads of the columns. But for us it was a night march; the damnedest one we ever made, with one possible exception.

At 1700 hours we were able to move out. Since there remained at least five hours of daylight, we hoped to complete the march by midnight. We rolled along smoothly on highway N 12 to Boece, thence south on a dirt road to Coulimer, then east. The march, pleasant while we were on the "black top", now lost its attractiveness owing to the dense clouds of dust. Furthermore, the 315th Infantry who were ahead of us in trucks, weapons carriers and jeeps, began to halt frequently. Soon it was evident that the march would be greatly prolonged. We attempted to send quartering parties and guides ahead, but it was impossible for them to double the long column on the narrow roads. We had been assured that the divisional MPs would mark the entire route, so we had not sent out any marking details. This was mistake which we later regretted heartily, for the MPs checked out at dark.

Lunch had been K-rations. Supper was more of the same, eaten at one of the various halts. Supplemented by marble-size plums which the poor but friendly natives handed out. They also offered "cidre"; and comforting words that the Germans had departed some hours before the arrival of our troops.

After crossing a railroad we followed GC 10 to Boissy thence north to Monceaux, and via IC 13 and GC 8 south of Longny. It now began to get dark; and the vehicles ahead of us rushed ahead into the gloom to close up so that they would not get lost. At a road junction we encountered a tank battalion from the 7th Armored Division who wished to cross our column. This division had been crossing the columns of the 79th Division all day, and caused no end of confusion. It was their initial combat experience, and they were having numerous skirmishes with the retreating German armored units.

A sudden rain squall hit us; this laid the dust. But by now the column was crawling again. As the night dragged on, the drivers of the vehicles ahead began to go to sleep at each halt, until the column became broken up and scattered. We thought we were following the *last* battalion of the 315th, but soon it became evident that we were



following the *lost* battalion. Passage through towns, such as Senoches and Chateauneuf, was especially difficult because the streets were narrow, black canyons, most of the signs had been destroyed, and our maps did not show sufficient detail of the urban districts to guide us accurately. Senoches was quiet when most of the column traversed it, but Lieut. Col. Bolzendahl at the tail of the Group had a small adventure there. He had halted in the streets to assist a gun and prime mover which had fallen out. Suddenly a wild burst of small-arms fire started in the dark streets. It came either from by-passed Krauts or excited FFI firing from the windows. About this time the driver of the tractor started his engine again. Evidently the Krauts thought this as a tank, for they quieted down and allowed our small group of strays to pass without further molestation.

Beyond Senoches we plunged through black woods. From time to time we would pass a knocked out tank or other vehicle in the road. We avoided running into these not so much by seeing them, as by their characteristic burned-out odor. Now there were flares going up from the ground to our front, flanks and rear. Perhaps most of our men thought that these were sent up by Americans, but actually they came from scattered German units trying to rendezvous. Some of the flares were fairly close, though it was impossible to estimate their range accurately.

Beyond Chateauneuf we could see something burning far ahead. As we drew nearer we found that it was the village of Tremblay, on fire from fighting which had occurred there earlier in the day. At this point we should have continued straight on via GC 26; but by error took a country road which led southeast. This mistake resulted in saving the column from an air attack; and also produced an interesting incident. The sudden light of a flare disclosed, parked in the field to the right of the road, about fifteen tanks. They looked like German tanks. Not a man was to be seen; no sentry challenged. They appeared to be very healthy tanks, with the muzzles of their guns all pointing parallel to the road, not at our column.

Here was a problem which had not been presented at service schools. Should we verify that they were hostile tanks, and thus possibly involve ourselves in a fight in which we could employ only



carbines? Should we halt the column as quietly as possible, turn it around and detour to the north? Or should we keep on marching, adopting a laissez faire policy? The third solution was chosen in the fifteen seconds available; but for sometime afterwards the CO half expected to hear firing break out in his rear. About twenty minutes later we hit the highway to the south, and while halting to check the route the following conversation occurred:

Lieut. Col. Koehler (who was also at the head of the column): Did you see what I saw back there beside the road?

Group CO: I sure did!

Some weeks later a wounded German captain was encountered in a collecting station, who told his side of that incident. He and his tanks had gotten, in the darkness, into an American column (part of the 7th Armored, probably) and had marched some distance, with them before discovering that he was not among friends. So he pulled off on a side road hoping to lie doggo until the Americans had gone far ahead. But for our having the wrong road no one would have seen him. As it was, he escaped anyway; because by the time we found someone to whom we could confide our suspicions, he had gone.

Soon after we turned north at La Peage, and had passed another small village off to the right, those who were at the head of the column saw one or more German planes strafing the road which we should have taken out of Tremblay. They were flying perpendicular to our present course, at low altitude; their guns were flashing viciously. To avoid this attack, and to wait until daylight to discover our situation, we pulled the column off the road and bivouacked for two hours in a wheat field, where the stacked grain and a few clumps of trees provided some camouflage.

At daylight the CO went ahead and contacted Gen. Wahl at his CP 2000 meters north of Ormoy. The general assigned us an area south of Ormoy, but urged that we look around for a better place, as the cover there was inadequate.

True words. Soon after daylight, while Group Hq. and the battalions were moving into this flat open country and looking around for suitable bivouacs, the fun began. All day long, German fighter



planes buzzed around singly and in groups of three or four, strafing ground targets. We heard of no casualties, except numerous Germans shot down. On at least two occasions 20 mm shells hit within a few feet of our dispersed vehicles, but no one was hurt.

By midafternoon we found a better area in the dense woods south of Feucherolles. We were unmolested here, though still on the fringe of the aerial attacks which kept up during most of the daylight hours. The following day was spent quietly in this bivouac. Hamilton was detached and sent back to the vicinity of Sees where under First Army it participated in the reduction of the Argentan-Falaise pocket. They rejoined us on 26 August.

The following evening we started another night march. But this time we profited by our sad experience in the march from La Mele. We marked the route ourselves; and marched under our own direction without attempting to keep closed on the units ahead. This satisfactory displacement ended just before daylight east of the village of La Fortelle, near Longny. Both battalions were now attached to divisional units, so Group had little to do. During the next two days various hostile and friendly planes were fired at with great enthusiasm by our machine gunners. Megdanis once showed exceptional promise by letting go a long burst of .50 caliber fire at a plane (probably friendly) which must have been at least ten miles away. Gen. Wahl referred to these gunners, a bit disparagingly, as "individual artists".

On Saturday, 19 August we moved the CP to a wooded area west of Favrieux. Coachdog and the 312th FA Battalion (Lt. Col. Kraft) were attached to us. Some of Lt. Col. Moore's men found in these woods several German tiny robot tanks, abandoned of course. The battalions moved nearer the Seine, and commenced firing on suspected targets on the far bank. Lt. Col. Moore personally adjusted on what looked like a bush, knocked camouflage off a German gun, then quickly destroyed a battery of 88s, including many Krauts. During the night Group executed a large number of harassing missions, which was the first firing directed by Group in the war.

In the evening of the 20th we moved the CP down to the river bottom to a heavily wooded area between Mantes-Gassicourt and Rosny. This had been a hunting preserve; numerous radiating roads and paths



led through the woods, at the hub of which was a small hunting lodge which we used for a CP. Other artillery units were in the woods and fields in the near vicinity; most of the nights were hideous with blasts from their guns which almost knocked us out of our pup tents. The main line of the railroad running to Paris also ran past our position; in the cut was considerable rolling stock which the Germans had been using.

While in the Mantes area the Group fired thousands of rounds, mostly night harassing fires; but also there were quite a few observed missions. Opposite us were one or more divisions of Germans who had been converted from the Luftwaffe into ground troops. Raw and untrained, they were thrown against what they were told were a few cowardly, ill-armed American paratroopers. They launched numerous counterattacks against the bridgehead, none in strength greater than a battalion. The result was a series of very bloody repulses for them, in which our artillery did most of the execution. The fields across the Seine, and the roadsides, were stacked with German dead; and parts of their bodies were hanging in the trees where they had been blown.

During the week we passed to First Army control.

The most exciting event of our stay in these woods was when a ME 109, mortally wounded, roared a few feet over our heads and exploded against the ground across the railroad.

At 1600 hours on 27 August, the Corps (consisting of the 30th Division and the 79th Division) attacked to capture the high ground northeast of the bridgehead. This was preceded by a most powerful 15-minute artillery preparation. Viewed from Coachdog's OP upstream from Mantes, the battle was a magnificent spectacle. The whole show, spread out like a panorama, went smoothly. During the night we fired a heavy harassing program which, as later proved, broke up many German countermoves, and slaughtered thousands of Boche in the woods. In the morning the attack was resumed, and made good progress. We now were notified that the XV Corps would withdraw from the action when the artillery had reached the limit of its range. The corps artillery was to march in two columns to a bivouac in the Foret de Rambouillet, thence to skirt around south of Paris and rejoin Third Army near Reims.



## LA CROIX — FULIGNY

On 28 August the Group withdrew from the Mantes-Gassicourt positions on the Seine and marched south to a bivouac near Faverolles. Here we camped in a muddy orchard for one night and a day; then about sunset started off on a night march which led through Rambouillet, Etampes, Fontainebleau and Nangis to an area about a mile south of La Croix. It rained heavily during the first part of the march, but south of Rambouillet the moon came out and illuminated the road quite well until we passed through Fontainebleau. The latter part of the march was in darkness which got worse toward morning because of a mist. Our new campsite was in a small apple grove and thicket, grassy at first but very muddy by the time we had been there long. The sunny, dry days of July and August were over. From now on we were to experience almost continual rain, mist, and chill — coupled with MUD.

It had been expected that we would join Third Army on the Marne, but a gasoline shortage immobilized us in the La Croix — Nangis area for over a week. We feel sure that this gasoline shortage prolonged the war for at least six months; the Germans had been routed and were fleeing east in great disorder.

On 31 August the 242d Field Artillery Battalion, Lieut. Col. John Brownlow, commanding, joined the Group. The had just arrived from Utah Beach and had not yet been in combat.

During our stay at La Croix, many officers and men were given an opportunity to visit Paris, thirty miles away. Paris still showed the scars of the street fighting which had occurred during its liberation about ten days before. Few stores or cafes were open, and there were no officially recognized recreational facilities in operation. The people, however, appeared to be well dressed and fairly well fed.

We received, while at La Croix, a free issue of captured cognac and eau de vie; and our first issue of fresh eggs and meat since arrival in Europe. ("In case you don't know, eau de vie is a savage liquid made by boiling barbed wire, soapsuds, watch springs and old tent pegs together. The better brands have a touch of nitroglycerine



for flavor.... I think every American who connected with a glass of eau de vie should have got the Purple Heart." Excerpt from Ernie Pyle's "Brave Men".) Captain Hoffmann went to Sully to obtain officer's mess liquor from the NAAFI.

On the afternoon of 7 September, Group received orders to move to a concentration area southeast of Brienne, believed to be about 75 miles distant. Before we could complete plans, route reconnaissance, and marking, a succession of changes arrived by telephone and messenger. However, we managed to clear by 1600 hours. For the march we had our own four battalions, plus the 250th, the 3d Observation Battalion, and the 163d Engineer Combat Battalion (Lt. Col. Jakim). The latter was attached for our protection, since we were preceding the Corps to a large wooded area said to contain Germans; the Corps at this time had no infantry. Upon our arrival we were to dump all loads and send our trucks to Belgium to pick up the 79th Division.

The march went all right, although the distance proved to be 110, not 75 miles; and it was midnight or after before the battalions got into their areas. The 250th Bn actually did not close until nearly morning, having taken a wrong route through no fault of their own. It was very difficult to corral all the trucks and get them started, on account of the units being scattered through an unfamiliar, wooded area, and having to operate without lights. But it was accomplished successfully by Lt. Col. Bolzendahl and several assistants.

At daylight a Frenchman came to the Group CP just outside of Fuligny and reported that 2000 German troops were in Chaumont, some thirty miles to the south, that another 1500 were in Chateauvillian, and that they probably would attack us. His information, he said, came from one "Captain Jacques", nom de guerre of a British (French Canadian, probably) agent who had been dropped by parachute in this part of France some months before, and who had been operating undercover with the Maquis. The story sounded fantastic, but we could not let it go unverified. Captain Attkisson was sent to Bar-sur-Aube to contact Captain Jacques, and a reconnaissance party was organized to look for the Germans and see what they were doing.



This reconnaissance party was divided into two forces, each consisting of a platoon of engineers, a battery of 105s from the 693d FA Battalion, and a couple of half tracks with multiple mounts. The party which went to Chaumont, observed the Germans there in force, and remained in observation all day without making contact. The righthand party ran into a road block at Chateauvillian and had a rousing fight which lasted two hours. One man was wounded and Lieut. Col. Iosbaker shot up the town a bit. The Germans evacuated the place, but when Col. Nye and Lt. Col. Moore went down there next day to scout around, they had come back in force. We wished to attack these two towns in earnest, using our four battalions, but Corps would not approve this novel project. However, we had outposted the Corps by over a hundred miles and had had some fun. We also hauled the 79th Division some 175 miles without losing a truck. "Captain Jacques", incidentally, proved to be all that was claimed for him; he was a romantic character and a most courageous operative.

On 10 September the Group moved to an assembly areas north of Chaumont was repeated, with the 242d Battalion replacing the 693d, who badly needed rest and sleep.

### *BATTEXEY*

On 10 September the Group moved to an assembly area north of Joinville, with the mission of reinforcing the 79th Division. Our two light battalions were attached to the division, which indicated that the rat race was about to start again.

The following day we started off behind the 79th Division on a march which takes all prizes as the most difficult of our campaigns. The mission of the division was to seize Charmes and establish a bridgehead over the Moselle. It mattered not that between Joinville and Charmes were numerous Germans, particularly in the vicinity of Neufchateau, where a large garrison was holding open the enemy escape gap between the Third and Seventh Armies. All during the march, the enemy were moving on parallel routes to the south of us, having been flushed out ahead of Gen. Patch's forces. We, being



motorized, forged ahead of the Germans in this contest. When we passed through Coussey (at what should have been supertime) the enemy sniped with artillery at the road ahead of us. They had a 15 cm howitzer at Neufchateau, about 4000 meters to the south; and they could see our vehicles moving along the high ground east of Coussey. However, no one was hurt.

At Repel we were supposed to keep on the main route through Oelleville, but as the latter town was still in German hands, we took a detour northeast through Chef-Haut, Boulaincourt, and Diarville. Heavy firing was going on 500 meters beyond where we turned off. At Boulaincourt the advance party encountered the Divarty CG who gave them goose-eggs near Battexey. It was just getting dark, so the party hurried ahead to try to reconnoiter the place while there was still a little visibility. Approaching Battexey they were shot at a couple of times by friendly troops along the road; and luckily turned east at the bridge and thus avoided a road block which was still defended by Germans who pulled out during the night. On a rat race of this kind, the procedure was to dash ahead in the darkness and hope that you wouldn't have to fight for your bivouac area.

We didn't. A nice apple and plum orchard awaited us. The battalions went into action east of the village; but they didn't get in until quite late, in fact not entirely until daylight. Somewhat peed-off in a few cases.

We were now well east of most of the enemy. One combat team of the 79th Division attacked Charmes, but the other two had to turn back west and spend several days cleaning out the by-passed Germans — a mere division or two. This led to some complications. Our supply sergeant and message center chief, Lazarow and O'Connor, respectively, were captured at Oelleville, where they were misdirected by MPs, while they were on a trip far to the rear to get supplies. Lt. Col. Moore lost a man, shot while he and his party were reconnoitering for an OP to our right rear. And there were other adventures. The morning after we arrived at Battexey, Lt. Col. Moore established an OP on a hill overlooking Charmes. While he and Col. Nye were at this OP, they heard some rifle fire in the woods in back of them. It was only the Germans, killing a few people out of a neighboring artillery battalion who were surveying in the vicinity.



On the 13th there was so much racket to the right rear, that the Group CO led a small party up to a wooded hill about 1500 meters south of the Group CP to see what they could see. A good thing. There was a German outpost on this hill in the woods, who fired at them a little with his machine gun. Group Hq, on the basis of this reconnaissance, faced their local security south that night. Meantime Lt. Col. Koehler and his party, who were out on a similar mission, looking for OPs to adjust fire to the south and west (the so-called front was toward the east), had an even more exciting time. This is best described in the recommendation for a Bronze Star which Lt. Col. Koehler received:

"At about 1700 hours Lt. Col. Koehler, accompanied by two of his staff and a driver, was proceeding by motor vehicle east on the main highway leading from Mirecourt to Charmes. He had been on a reconnaissance for an OP and was returning to his CP. He had previously taken a detour to avoid a pocket of resistance, and as he arrived at the point where a road leads north to Xaronval (1000 meters south of Group CP) he noticed a road-block of felled trees across this secondary road. He stopped a moment to investigate. One of the party, Lt. Steele, warned that he saw some movement in the bushes to the left front. At once the three officers dismounted and took cover in the roadside ditch to the right of the car. They then proceeded cautiously toward the bushes mentioned above. Noticing that the driver had remained in the jeep, Lt. Col. Koehler ordered him to get out. As the driver complied, he saw two enemy soldiers in fox holes a few feet to the right rear of the officers. They had been asleep and were just getting to their feet. Upon receiving the driver's warning, Lt. Col. Koehler went into action fast. He ordered one officer and the driver to cover the Germans to his right rear. He himself, after firing rapidly on the Germans on the other side of the road, dashed across the intervening 20 meters, followed by Capt. Coffin, and seized two German machine gunners beside their weapons before they could recover from the fire with which he had forced them into their holes. Lt. Col. Koehler immediately placed his four prisoners and their weapons on the hood of his vehicle, loaded up his party and withdrew quickly in the direction from which he had come."



A short time later, a cavalry troop coming along from the direction of Charmes, encountered a strong German pocket within a hundred yards of where Lt. Col. Koehler had captured these four men. This pocket was in fox holes, and was armed with bazookas, machine guns, and other weapons. The only conceivable reason why these Krauts did not shoot at Koehler while he was so close to them was that they possibly were afraid of hitting their own men, or were confused by his rapid, bold movements.

Next day some of Koehler's detail coming down the side road from Xaronval blew up a wire truck on a mine at the road block previously referred to. Lt. Col. Koehler, Col. Nye and several other officers, investigating a short time later, walked all around this area, started to look into a clump of bushes a short distance away, thought better of it. Well that they did. There was a manned AT gun in those bushes. It is hard to understand why the enemy did not shoot at our party. Perhaps they were afraid that they would attract the attention of a cavalry troop which was bivouacked about a half mile away. Next day this cavalry was gone and the Germans were bolder. One or more of them shot at Col. Nye, Lt Col. Bolzendahl, Maj Zurn and M/Sgt. Rodaks, as they walked along the highway about a hundred yards from where the antitank gun was discovered in the bushes. Our people returned this fire, but it was getting dark, and not knowing the strength of the Germans in the wooded area, the small party did not move closer to the enemy. They contented themselves by firing into the bushes, which silenced the enemy. Next day all (well, nearly all) Germans in the area had surrendered to the U. S. forces. Lazarow, O'Connor and their vehicle were recovered. In addition, the Group got at Mirecourt a German Signal trailer which they used for some time thereafter as a CP.

During the stay at Battexey, the Group enjoyed movies in a barn, unaware that four German soldiers were hiding in the hayloft above the improvised theater. It is hoped that they enjoyed the movies too. They sneaked out after our departure, according to a story told later by natives.

While we were at Battexey, Bed-Check Charlie was active on several occasions, but we were not attacked. One night there was a lot of fire from the 90mm AAA in our area; next day the ack-ack



claimed that they had shot down six Bed-Check Charlies. A few hours later it was learned that the planes were British, dropping supplies to the FFI. The ack-ack people then said that the previous report was a mistake; they hadn't shot down anybody.

Two nights before we left, planes flew over unceasingly for what seemed to be hours. This was most alarming, until we realized that they must be Allied bombers; the Germans never were that strong in the air.

### *XERMAMENIL*

The 79th Division continued to reorganize its bridgehead over the Moselle and beat off German armored counterattacks. Meanwhile the 2d French Armored Division had established contact with the Seventh U. S. Army which had come up from southern France and was now on our south flank near Epinal. Third Army ordered a resumption of the attack to force the Siegfried Line, to secure crossings of the Rhine in the zone of the XII Corps, and to capture Frankfurt in the XX Corps zone. (It was many months before this was to be accomplished). The primary mission of the XV Corps was to protect the south flank of the Third Army. This required the corps to advance to the northeast and maintain contact with the Seventh Army on its right.

In accordance with the foregoing, the 79th Division marched on the night of September 18 toward Luneville. At this time it was known that a German armored column was moving north from Rambervillers to attack in the flank our 4th Armored Division then near Luneville; we in turn were to attack these Germans in the flank. It was to be the customary night march through an unknown country to an unknown area probably occupied by the enemy. Division orders were that our two artillery battalions were first to march southeast from the Battexey area to pick up infantry of the division, then carry them "piggy-back" northeast to the vicinity of Einvaux.

Capt. Sherman, liaison officer with us from the 182d Battalion went south of Charmes to Brantigny to contact the doughs and make the arrangements. In the darkness he could not locate the infantry,



who were not where Divarty had said they were. This, reported to Group by radio, looked like an impasse, but the CO knew that Sherman — an unusually resourceful officer — could find the infantry if anyone could. Sherman was told to “keep looking”. In this he was joined by his battalion commander; they found the infantry CP five miles south of where it had been reported to us.

It was a very dark night, and had been raining. About 0030 on 19 September, Group Hq. which had been waiting in the black odiferous streets of Battexey for the battalions to clear, commenced its trek northeast over the hills and down to the Moselle at Gripport. Thence we marched along the river and crossed near Bayon, moved through Froville, and pulled off into a field south of Einvaux. At daylight Gen. Wahl issued orders in the church at Einvaux which started our parties looking for positions between Einvaux and Froville. This search, which was a free-for-all competition with many other units, had about reached success, and all batteries were going into position, when Gen. Wahl sent orders for the Group and Bn COs to meet him north of Landecourt. Here he assigned new positions and missions. We were to emplace the battalions quickly to support the attack of the 313th Infantry which was to strike across the Mortagne River to the northeast. Direction of fire, 800 mils.

We were then about 2500 meters from the preliminary infantry fire fight, which was plainly audible but not visible on account of the fog, although we were on ground which sloped straight down to the stream where the front was. A German battery was dropping salvos about 500 meters to our front; the nose of one shell flew overhead and landed behind us.

The battalions were in position and ready to fire at 1300. Sherman and Cunningham of the 182d established their OP near Mamath, 1000 meters from Xermamenil, on the other side of the river, which the Germans were defending. They got some good shooting from that point. Upstream, Lieut. Osborne of the 182d, and Capt. Vandevort and Lt. Long of the 961st prepared to cross with the leading elements of the 313th Infantry. The infantry crossed without opposition and moved left along the highway on the opposite bank toward Xermamenil. A detachment was left at a road block to protect the rear against



Germans who might come upon them from the Gerberville area. Osborne stayed with this road block. He and the infantry were shot at by some light artillery of the division (possibly a cannon company), the fire causing about 50 deaths and many other casualties. The battalion which moved downstream arrived on the outskirts of "X" at about 1630. There were some 150 Germans in the town. The attack was completely successful; 60 were captured, a dozen killed, and the rest escaped toward Luneville. During the street fighting, ten tanks which were concealed in Xermamenil and in a draw northeast of the town started to counterattack. This was broken up quickly by Coachdog's observers in Lamath, who knocked out two tanks and drove off the rest. Capt. Vandevort, who entered the village with the infantry point, shot at a tank with a bazooka, and killed at least one German with a Tommy gun.

Group Hq remained in this locality two days, suffering principally from the ever-present ground bees who here were particularly vicious.

### *REHAINVILLER — LUNEVILLE — MARAINVILLER*

On 22 September Group displaced to Rehainviller, remaining there for a little over a week to support the attacks on Luneville and Moncel. The constant rain, the worsening condition of the bivouac on account of water and mud, make this place stand out in the minds of the men for its unpleasantness. On 28 September we moved to Luneville and occupied, for the first time, billets in buildings. Thenceforth Group Headquarters was never again under canvas. A day or so after we entered the city, the attack on the Foret of Parroy was launched. This grim battle lasted for over a month, cost many lives and was a severe test for the 79th Division. The Germans had declared that they never would be thrown out of these dark, thick woods. But they were, and they lost many men before it was over.

Weather was clear on day of the attack. The troops moved out in fine order across open country, without opposition. A tremendous air preparation had been promised, but it was a complete fizzle; the few bombs that were dropped missed the target entirely. When the



infantry reached the woods they came under heavy fire, and from then on it was slow, heartbreaking work under constant mortar, artillery, and small arms fire. Our forward observers participated intimately in this operation, and have many tales to tell of the dangers and horrors in the Foret de Parroy. The Germans occupied trench systems constructed during World War I, supplemented by newer works. In the dense forest it was difficult to get observed fire on them; and all roads and trails were mined, and covered by direct fire from AT guns and tanks.

Group Hq was billeted in the Faubourg Einville, the northern suburb of Luneville, just off the little square which lies above the second bridge. The building was a three-story apartment owned by M. Helle, with an enclosed courtyard in rear where we parked the kitchen and CP trailer; also a row of barns or garages where many of the men slept on straw. The wire section were across the street in a building owned by a friar. German officers had been quartered in M. Helle's apartment up until a day before our arrival. In the rooms were the usual evidences of their occupancy — wine bottles (all empty), scraps of food, letters, trash. The motor park was in the square under the trees. In the building the cooks slept in the kitchen, the officers' mess was in the dining room while the S-1 and S-4 section lived in their customary luxury in the parlor. Here too were the message center personnel, where Sgt. O'Connor reclined at ease all day long on a chaise lounge. In the dining room was also a piano, on which Hughes (Huggess) and Dewey made much music while the accordion languished in its case.

The most difficult work for our men was the installation and maintenance of the telephone lines, which ran through the city streets exposed to traffic and sabotage.

The bridge which all lines crossed was shelled one afternoon. Sgt. William L. Melvin and his crew had just returned from repairing a line, when the switchboard operator informed them that six lines were out. As they started out on the lines they were stopped by an M.P. who told them they couldn't go any further because the bridge was under fire. Melvin and Cpl. Platteter proceeded to the bridge on foot with a test phone and just as they approached the



bridge the krauts got a target hit, killing five French civilians. One woman had her leg blown off just below the knee, but didn't fall until she had lost so much blood she was too weak to stand any longer. Melvin and Platteter continued to check the lines, stepping over dead bodies and picking the lines out of the blood. The operation was halted every few seconds when the krauts would toss over another round, and the two wiremen would have to take cover among the dead bodies.

They made six splices on that bridge; Melvin said later that they were made in record-breaking time, and certainly not in accordance with FM 24-5. But the men got communications established; and the enemy gun shelling that bridge was silenced by our own artillery battalions, sending data over the same lines that Melvin and Platteter had repaired. General Marshall and Lt. Gen. Devers were visiting Corps CP, one block from the bridge, at the time. Possibly the Germans, who had many agents in Luneville, knew this and were aiming at the Corps CP rather than at the bridge.

At night the Germans also shelled a crossroad about 75 meters north of the CP. Occasionally fragments bounced in our courtyard, but none of our people were hurt.

One dark night we received a report from civilians that German soldiers were in the square. The battery "flew to arms". A search of the court was made, but no Krauts found. Enemy agents may have been in one of the partly destroyed buildings, because lights had been seen there, and a civilian was wounded by a mysterious shot from that direction earlier in the evening.

On 29 September the entire XV Corps was transferred from Third Army to Seventh Army.

The fighting in the forest resulted in a number of casualties to our battalions. Lieut. Stewart of the 961st, a brave forward observer, was killed on a knoll north of Croismare; Lt. Burton of the 242d was killed in the woods; and Lt. Col. Iosbaker of the 693d was badly injured on a mine while reconnoitering under heavy fire north of Croismare. Other men were wounded.

Coachdog had excellent positions just east of the city in the area of the old municipal airport. The 961st was initially west of



the city, immediately in rear of the Group CP. Later they displaced to the vicinity of Croismare, where they actually were in front of the infantry. They remained in this position for about a week, not over 1800 meters from the Germans who were in a southern tip of the woods. Lt. Col. Moore of the 182d maintained (and occupied personally) an OP during most of this period in Marainviller, a most dangerous spot. The town was regularly shelled by the enemy, using mortars, tanks, and artillery. This killed some soldiers and civilians, but we had no casualties.

During this time the Group did a lot firing, both from its two medium battalions and also from some TDs and 90mm AA guns. The ammunition rationing, imposed since we arrived at Mantes, gradually grew more stringent, and from then on until April we were always on strict rations. During our time in the Luneville area we were issued much pre-war ammunition, built for the old Schneider howitzer, which could be fired from our M1 but which had a much shorter range and was inaccurate.

During this time the Germans occupied the high ground at and near Ft. Manonviller. As the days passed, hostile resistance stiffened, so that the progress of our infantry slowed down and finally stopped. The shortage of supplies, particularly ammunition, was undoubtedly a contributing cause, as was the increasing exhaustion of the infantry of the 79th Division. They had been fighting continuously since June, and were greatly overdue for relief.

On 11 October the Group moved to Marainviller, as did Coachdog. Group Hq went into the Hotel de Lorraine and several nearby buldings. it was a fairly good set-up, but at first we were closer to the German lines than we liked to be; the morning of the day we arrived a shell exploded in the street, in front of the hotel. And soon after our arrival some rounds fell in the fields on the northern outskirts of the town. However, we were not touched. The Germans could have marched down the highway from Domjevin any time they chose, particularly after the 79th Division was withdrawn, for there was no security along the road in that direction. Finally the enemy did run a patrol into Manonviller one night which knocked off some MPs in the center of the town.



The 44th Division took over the sector late in October; Group was assigned the mission of reinforcing their fires. On Nov. 1 the ammunition situation improved slightly, but the weather continued to deteriorate. Our battalions were in deep mud, the airstrips were under water; the valley of the Vezouse and its tributaries were flooded. Hostile fire particularly in the Laneuveville—Embermenil area, was constant and heavy. The whole countryside was a morass of mud, shell craters, wrecked buildings, dead cattle, and abandoned materiel. In the area east of Embermenil, where some heavy fighting occurred as late as Nov. 1, there were still quite a number of dead, both Americans and German; and it was very risky to go there on account of the extensive mine fields. Our batteries began sweeping position areas here at this time, getting ready for a general offensive which was to occur soon.

At night the enemy broadcast from a sound truck near Leintrey, welcoming the 44th Division and inviting them to surrender. Dough-boys told us later that this sepulchral voice scared them half silly. Also at this time enemy agents in increasing numbers began to infiltrate through the lines. A few were captured, including a German officer disguised as an American.

XV Corps Artillery, next door, so admired our officers cadulator that they built one like it, then another.

Captain Dearth continued to fret because no one would let him have an L-5. Chaplain Rasmussen disapproved the pinup girls on the walls of the officers' mess.

### *THE SARREBOURG — VOSGES CAMPAIGN*

On 5 November the 961st was moved to an area east of Embermenil, within 500 meters of the front lines. During the night they were heavily shelled with the loss of one man killed and several wounded. Next day they moved back to Laneuveville. Two days later the 939th FA Bn (Lt. Col. Wm. Bailey), a 4.5 gun unit, arrived and was attached to Group. It moved into Koehler's goose-egg, crowding him a bit, but the growing concentration of artillery in



## LIXHEIM

Thanksgiving Day was gloomy, misty, cold, but the battery had a nice building in the southern part of Lixheim, which had been used as a German field hospital. Bloody bandages, stains, smells of disinfectants were still in evidence. In the basement was a great heap of bloody and muddy German uniforms, as well as some arms and ammunition. But after it had been cleaned up, the building was warm, dry, and comfortable. Mess Sergeant Morton and his experts started to prepare Thanksgiving dinner.

At this time the XV Corps, and particularly the 44th Division (which we were supporting) was in the process of passing east through the Vosges toward the Rhine plains. During the morning one infantry regiment commenced to move through the Dossenheim Gap. Our battalions, too, were moving east to await their turn to get on the roads leading through the hills. The 182d Battalion was at Berling; the 939th at Vesheim, a little southwest of Berling; and that day the 961st moved still farther northeast to Schoenberg. Only the 17th FA Bn at Fleisheim, was near Group. We laid a telephone line to them, and one to the 939th, but it was a difficult job on account of the rain, mud, and heavy traffic. The enemy were generally along a line demarked by the intriguing town names: Assweiler — Pisdorf. Although there was some fighting near the Dossenheim Gap, and some activity near the exposed position of the 961st, the enemy seemed to be on the run; so Group settled back to enjoy Thanksgiving in comparative peace and quiet.

The dinner was excellent, with turkey and all the "fixins". But about midafternoon an ominous message was received. The 44th Division heard from the 106th Cavalry Group, protecting the north flank, that a German armored unit was moving south from the vicinity of Tieffenbach. This information had been obtained from a PW picked up by the cavalry. The division stated that they placed considerable credence in the report, and were worried about it. During the afternoon confirmatory messages kept coming in. Nevertheless, as far as we could see, no definite preparations were made to meet the threat. Probably this was because the 4th Armored Division of the Third Army was known to be to our northwest, preparing to cross the Saar,



and it was felt that their advance would neutralize the German threat. Consequently the movement through the Vosges continued. No AT units were sent out of the north prior to dark. Only a single infantry regiment, spread over a very wide front, remained to stop the Germans. No tanks or tank destroyers were immediately available, they being farther east. Not much artillery was in position to fire in this direction, and none had registered for several days, owing to poor visibility. The 939th Bn faced in three widely divergent directions, so that only one battery of its 4.5 guns could actually fire into the threatened area. The messages received from the cavalry stated that the approaching enemy consisted of the 130th Panzer Lehr Division, a crack outfit.

After midnight the panzers came steadily closer; the cavalry were falling back under heavy pressure. The blind firing which we were directing along the routes of enemy advance seemed to be having no effect. About an hour before daylight, it seemed certain that the enemy either had seized Rauweiler, the village on the high ground to the north of us, or were about to do so. In the court yard in front of Group CP was a mass of vehicles belonging to Group and to the signal company of the division. If we had had to move in a hurry it would have been impossible to get these vehicles out; and if we came under fire soon, which seemed probable, most of these trucks and all our equipment would be destroyed. To avoid this, about daylight the excess administrative and supply vehicles, and all personnel not needed to operate the CP were moved to the rear. The CP personnel and their vehicles plus radio and wire sections remained in place. Some time after breakfast, an officer on duty at FDC of Corps Artillery informed us that the threat to the north was not serious, and consequently our vehicles had been started back to Lixheim. These vehicles arrived south of the town just in time to come under heavy artillery fire. As we had anticipated, the Germans started shelling our CP with mortars, 105s and 150s, employing observed fire. They had gotten Rauweiler, and were on the wooded crest south of that town, where they could look right down into Lixheim. It was lucky that our vehicles had been moved out of the court in front of our CP, for the shells dropping there killed one man (from Divarty), wounded two; and had our vehicles been there, it is likely that none would



have gotten out. The Germans shot at them on the road south of town, but they turned around quickly under fire and obtained defilade by moving south of a high railroad embankment about a kilometer distant.

Meantime the CP continued to function in Lixheim; the personnel in the exposed trailer bravely remained at their posts, though the danger was acute. The radio operators, particularly Tec 5 Fitzgerald, sat in their unprotected vehicles within a few yards of where shells were detonating. Officers coming to our CP narrowly escaped being hit by shells which chased them along the poplarlined highway running west from Herange. Major Wetherell of the 182d and Major Rossell of the 961st were both shot at there by German artillery which could see them plainly as they entered Lixheim.

The Germans in Rauweiler had seized American tanks and other vehicles which had been parked by our troops in the southern part of the town, and had the U.S. garrison trapped in the cellars. The enemy remained in charge of this village for several days. Though our Cubs could see them, and we wished to fire on them, permission was denied, for it was thought that the tanks and troops which we reported as being in Rauweiler belonged to the phantom 4th Armored (who were not there).

Some time after "dinner" the hostile shelling of our CP ceased. However, there was still fire on the outskirts of town which kept our lines continually cut. We therefore requested and received permission to move to Brouwiller, about 1500 meters distant. This displacement was made just before suppertime. By this time the situation had quieted considerably; but we felt that the Germans would attack again soon. An Alsatian deserter reported that enemy infantry was detrucking in Tieffenbach and would attack at daylight from Hirschland to Schalsbach.

Fortunately they did not renew their night attacks. However, in the morning (the 25th) they moved out in strength southeast from Hirschland toward Schalsbach, just as the deserter had predicted. Schalsbach was on key (high) terrain, and if they secured it, the way to Lixheim and Sarrebourg was open. The German intention (source: PWs) was to cut the corps in two.



We now had the 961st in position at Brouwiller, and the 17th Bn at Veschweiler. The 939th could fire with one battery; their others were still pointed east. Coachdog had been moved east of the Vosges; as had part of the division artillery. The Group Air strip had been established in a pasture immediately south of Schalbach. Planes were up, flying very high because of the heavy curtain of German flak. The 130th Pz Lehr Division was equipped with new SP quadruple-mount 20mm AA guns. The gray sky simply was alive with their bursts, like the "electric sparklers" we used to burn on the Fourth of July when we were children. A P-47 was hit and made a crash landing in front of our CP. It seemed a miracle that our Cubs remained aloft. Yet it was imperative that they observe.

A regiment of German infantry debouched from the woods northeast of Rauweiler and headed toward Schalbach. The forward observer of one of our battalions reported that German tanks were within 200 yards of him and were overrunning our forward infantry companies. There was a column of German armor on the country road running from Hirschland to Schalbach; its spearhead had reached the outskirts of Schalbach. Our observers both air and ground were calling for fire missions. They had cleared with the infantry on the spot. The situation was critical. Yet we could not get clearance to fire! The Divarty still did not know where the 4th Armored was.

Finally, after a half hour, the clearance came. It would have been too late, but the 17th FA Bn had already opened fire, not waiting for divisional clearance. They were pouring volley after volley into the German armor and infantry. Hamilton joined in. So did the 939th. This fire stopped the German armor short of Schalbach, when they had already started firing on our air strip, then only 1500 meters distant from them. We knocked out a Tiger tank right at the bridge over the railroad north of town. The German infantry, taking losses from our observed fire, ran to climb on their tanks which were turning around in the muddy fields to retreat to Hirschland. The fire caught them there. Some German vehicles got back to Hirschland. Then we tried to get permission to fire on that town, which our planes reported as being jammed with enemy troops and vehicles. Permission denied. The 4th Armored "might be there". Finally we got clearance.



We dumped nineteen Group TOTs into the town, then let it have some WP.

A few officers from Group went over this battlefield a day or so later. They counted thirteen German tanks which we had knocked out, beside numerous dead. Hirschland was a shambles. The dead were in the halls, in the doorways, in the streets.

This artillery fire stopped the advance of the 130th Pz Lehr Division; they turned back to the north and commenced a withdrawal which never stopped until they were in Germany. Our only loss in the Group was one liaison plane shot down. Captain Black and Captain Griffin took off on their mission on the morning of 25 November to locate the enemy armor known to be debouching from Hirschland. After Captain Griffin returned from the hospital, we dug the following account of this mission out of him:

"We took off at 0900 hours, gradually feeling our way north. Neither of us had flown in this area before, and we knew nothing of the enemy situation. We reached Rauweiler without trouble, and could see hostile tanks and other vehicles in the streets. As we circled the town a second time we drew heavy machine gun and other small arms fire. It wasn't a healthy spot at the moment. We worked further north over open country, but saw nothing except four tanks that someone had already taken under fire. They had a good adjustment and didn't appear to need help, so we continued to the northeast. We saw nothing until we reached Weyer, where there was a group of eight tanks and a few half-tracks (which apparently were refueling) in an open field just north of the town. We moved in to make a positive identification, when all hell broke loose. We got a direct hit from a 20mm on the right wing over our heads, wounding both of us. We turned in the general direction of our field, but had to find a place to land closer, because we were losing altitude rapidly. We found a field but couldn't get into it because Black's right arm was paralyzed and he couldn't handle the plane. The plane finally came down hard, on its own, but neither of us was hurt by the crash. Not knowing whether we were in friendly territory, we started to walk south. We walked about a mile and a half, when Dearth and Crosby found us from the air. They flew by and motioned us to walk in the



direction they were flying. We walked right in to the 17th FA Bn aid station where we smoked the best cigarette we ever had."

As a matter of fact, though severely wounded, and in a dazed condition, both these brave officers, almost by instinct, removed all classified material from their plane before they left it. The plane was wrecked.

The following day the 4th Armored got across the Saar and retook Rauweiler. But now the whole Corps, in fact the whole Seventh Army stopped its advance to the east and turned north against these Germans whom we had been fighting for three days. The 17th FA Bn was sent back to VI Corps. Two P-47s ("friendly") strafed and bombed us in Brouviller. A ME-109 landed on our Group strip at Mittelbronn and the pilot was captured. But the big excitement was over.

#### *BROUVILLER — GUISEBERG — WOUSTVILLER*

While at Brouviller we found a poster advertising the public hanging of two young civilians who had refused to perform slave labor. This poster, signed by the German town commandant, required the whole population to witness this example of Kultur. Also the owner of one of the houses in which we were billeted told of how the Germans had shot his daughter about ten days before. She was taking milk to Sarrebourg, when two soldiers opened up on her with a machine gun apparently just for fun. This was the first authentic information we had had of atrocities, though we had noticed even in France that the farmers had Polish workers whom we later found to be slaves. At Brouviller we talked to a young civilian who had made his way south from Diemeringen, to escape service in the Volksturm. He told us in detail just which towns were friendly to the Allies and which to Germany. He also gave us considerable target information, which proved to be accurate. All this time, however, we were distrustful of the natives, particularly in Alsace. Actually their attitude was non-committal; they were pretty well fed up, they said, with being kicked around (for hundreds of years) by both France and Germany.



On 28 November the Corps began to push slowly north, the Germans resisting all the way with small groups of infantry armed with automatic weapons, and a few tanks and self-propelled guns. They had little or no time to plant mines, but the villages were strongly defended. The 961st displaced this date to Hirschland, the 939th to Schalbach. The following day was spent by the Group in making an intensive reconnaissance for positions in the area: Eywiller — Gungwiller — Bettwiller — Berg — Drulingen. For the next two weeks, reconnaissance of this type were a real headache, for any suitable positions were already occupied, or were in full view of the Germans. The constant rain had so softened the ground, that medium artillery could not occupy positions in cultivated fields; it was necessary to get firm sod under foot, and even this required considerable pioneer work. The Germans were generally on the high ground above Mackwiller, and they fired with artillery constantly at the area around Drulingen, particularly just north of that town. Some units of the 4th Armored were in here, but soon they sidled more to the west, toward Sarre Union. On the 30th our reconnaissance continued. Lt. Col. Bailey of the 939th set off a mine while walking down a lane in a prospective area. However, he escaped injury. At 1500 the 961st displaced to an orchard just north of Drulingen; the following day Group and the 939th moved also to Drulingen.

The Germans had been shelling Drulingen each day. We hoped that this had ceased; but just before breakfast on the morning after our arrival, a series of rounds landed close by. Some of them were near enough to throw fragments on the roof of the CP trailer, parked behind the gasthaus. We always lived in a gasthaus, if possible. Sometimes there was beer; and always there was warmth, tables, chairs, and sleeping quarters upstairs. We never did get used to the thick feather quilts which they used for bedding. Or the odor of stale cabbage in the halls. Or the manure pile. Or the pissoire, erroneously if phonetically dubbed the "epicerie", which means something else.

While we were at Drulingen we were joined by Capt. Oscar Gastring of the 961st. He acted as S-2 in place of Maj. Dewey who had gone to the states for special instruction in the use of the VT fuze. A true Texan, Gastring couldn't get through any of the doors without stooping.



On 1 December, Coachdog came back from the Hagenau area to rejoin us in a position northeast of Drulingen. This day the division made an attack on the German position which generally ran along the line: Waldembach — Mackwiller. The towns were subjected to heavy artillery fire and were bombed by P-47s. The infantry made little progress, that day. A German 105mm battery near Ratzwiller fired at our OP near Durstel; and the doughs caught some fire. Otherwise the hostile artillery was not particularly active; and the ack-ack was fairly quiet. It seemed that we were going to get an undisturbed night's rest. However, it was reliably reported the following morning that Megdanis got zipped up in his new sleeping bag and couldn't get out; also that during a spell of somnambulism he used his helmet for a night jar, unfortunately failing to remove the helmet liner.

Five days later we moved to Diemeringen, where we occupied the former gestapo headquarters in the north end of town. On 8 December, Group Hq and the 939th moved to Bitten, the 182d to Montbronn, and the 961st to Janau Farm. Coachdog involuntarily on top of a hill at Montbronn, was shot at by SP guns or tanks. The enemy was at Enchenberg, a couple of kilometers down the road; and the infantry had a hell of time driving them out. The 12th Armored Division, new to combat, came up on our left; we furnished liaison to them and reinforced them with at least one battalion, in addition to our mission of reinforcing the 44th Division. The Germans now were on the high ground running along the line: Maierhof — Rohrbach — Singling. We watched our P-47s knock out several Kraut tanks east of Singling, near the forts of the Maginot Line.

On 13 December we moved to Guisberg, the 182d to Heilingenbronn Farm, the 961st to vicinity of Rohrbach, and the 939th near Bining. There were a lot of mines south of Bining, which the Germans had laid to stop the advance of the 12th Armored. Our battalions were now receiving considerable fire from the direction of Sinserhof Fme, which we thought was from ordinary field artillery. Coachdog had an officer (Capt. Benjamin) and a man wounded at the entrance to their CP. The flashes of the enemy guns could be seen from the air, and we fired counterbattery repeatedly as did several heavy battalions of the Corps, without the least effect. Our batteries near



Rohrbach received unusually heavy harassing fire during the night; but, being well dug in, they took no casualties. In a few days it was discovered that all this fire was coming from guns in Fort Sinserhof; and no ordinary counterbattery could touch them. On the 17th and 18th the Sinserhof ensemble of forts was reduced by special measures. We participated in the fire. Both our 155mm howitzers and our 4.5s were able to penetrate the fort, firing from ranges varying from 3000 to 4000 meters, but using indirect fire, axial.

Our strongest memory of Guisberg is probably that of the dead infantry soldier lying in the turnip patch, while children played beside him. We notified his unit to pick him up, but they left him there for about ten days.

About the 18th, the 80th Division came in on the left, relieving the 12th Armored. They were preparing rapidly to make a powerful drive north through the Siegfried Line; but the Rundstedt offensive in the Ardennes changed all this. In a day or two it was obvious that the 80th, in fact the whole XII Corps, would move to the "Battle of the Bulge", and that we would take over their sector.

Early on December 21 the Corps Artillery side-slipped to the left to support the XV Corps in taking over the sector of the XII Corps in addition to its own. The relief was effected smoothly, a tribute to the ability of U.S. forces to make motor movements of great complexity, on a vast scale, and without devious planning. Our orders had come by phone at midnight; there was little information available as to routes and destination, and even this was changed before we started. Nevertheless by noon of the day of the movement, we were in our new positions and firing. By nightfall we had the "complete picture", and full maps of the area; our OPs were coordinated, and we were registered. The commander of the XII Corps complimented Gen. Haislip on this operation.

Group set up its CP in Woustviller, south of Sarreguemines. The inhabitants were badly frightened because of the departure of the 35th Division. We were the only troops in town, and they felt sure that the Germans would return and "cut all their throats". In fact, the Krauts *were* beginning to show offensive tendencies. They threw our infantry off the high ground above Bliesbrucken and from south



of Ober Gailbach, which the 35th Division had won before our arrival. Our opponents were the 17th SS Pz Gr Division, the same who had fought the 35th Division. We had no cause to doubt their skill, tenacity or courage; they gave us plenty of trouble for several months, meanwhile absorbing an awful beating day and night from our artillery. Many times we heard from the Alsatians that the German soldiers had said that it was those "sonsabitches the American artillerymen" who were tearing the heart out of them.

### HERBITZHEIM

The next two or three days were spent in readjusting the positions of the battalions. Heretofore they had been accustomed to offensive-type goose-eggs, well closed up. Now we were required to organize in depth; it was hard to convince the subordinate units that this depth must be as much as 5000 meters, so that they be able to conduct a continuous defense during a withdrawal. One battery in each battalion was moved considerably to the rear. Also we put out a strong local defense with organic machine guns. At this time we were warned that special groups of German assassins sifted through the American lines in the Ardennes, disguised as U. S. soldiers or civilians, whose mission was to kill senior commanders. We were cautioned that airborne attacks might be expected at any time, especially at night. We had G-2 reports of paratroops landing at various places along the front, particularly near Guisberg, the CP which we had just vacated. Actually, there had never been any confirmation of these reports, but we had no reason to doubt them at that time. We were warned not to spread rumors: We didn't; there were plenty floating around. Fortunately Gen. Ott was always able to get authentic information, even before divisions got it, and he kept us accurately posted, which was a real help.

The weather, which had been cloudy since September, now cleared for a day or two; however, it was so cold that the ground was frozen to a depth of a foot. We started to build bunkers for our Cub planes, to protect them from air attack which we were led to believe was



imminent. We also started to erect shelters for them, to keep ice and snow off the wings.

The 939th Battalion, on the left flank, was transferred to another group; so to shorten wire lines, and to secure better accommodations, we moved a few kilometers eastward to Hambach. Here we had fine billets in a gasthaus; the CP was in the railroad station. This was the first time it had been moved out of the trailer. Also, for the first time, we had a hard-surface street instead of mud and manure in front of the CP and mess. Christmas dinner was as fine as Thanksgiving; however, as on the former occasion the situation became tense in the afternoon, which took all the pleasure out of the "holiday". For one thing, we were worried about affairs up north. Owing to the security "blackout", we had no way of knowing whether the general situation was being remedied or was continuing to deteriorate. And on our own front we were spread so thin that there was danger that the Germans, if they tried, could punch through anywhere. We knew, too, that there were few if any reserves; and our ammunition allowance was exceedingly small, at one time only six rounds per gun per day.

On Christmas night the Group fired 200 rounds of Pozit as a Christmas present for the Jerries; this being the first time we had used this weapon, heretofore secret.

Two days later we moved to Herbitzheim, which was to be our winter quarters, though we didn't know it at the time. All the officers and men got fairly good billets; the men had their mess in a rather drafty Vereinshaus, and the officers in a private dwelling. The CP wasn't so well off; the building in which it was located had been damaged by shell fire, the roof leaked, and the ceiling sagged rather badly. The mud and manure in Herbitzheim were pretty deep; and cadulator sites were not of the best. Most of the time the ground was covered with snow.

We had hardly settled in Herbitzheim when the Germans began shelling Sarralbe and Sarre Union with long range railway guns. We could hear the shells going over all night long. Each projectile produced *two* ballistic waves which doubtless were mistaken for the sound of the gun. Then the "sifflement" or rustling of the shell could be heard, which was like a box car with a flat wheel running loose down



a wobbly track. When the shells landed in Sarralbe, some two or three kilometers distant, we would hear the explosion of the shell. The Germans apparently were ranging on the bridge. They finally got it with a near miss which set off the TNT with which the bridge had been prepared for demolition. We picked up fragments of the shells. They weighed (the fragments) as much as fifty pounds, were two or three feet long and about four inches thick. The gun was a 380mm French job. It never was determined just how the Germans adjusted this piece, but they appeared to do so. The shell seemed to have some flash element in the base, which may have produced a preliminary air burst before the main detonation. Possibly the Krauts could see this flash from their OP north of Sarreguemines; but this seems doubtful. Another theory was that they had an OP within our lines, using a clandestine radio. Such a radio was heard on one occasion, but never located. The shells caused some casualties, particularly in Sarre Union, where fifteen soldiers were killed in one house. However, it had no effect on the progress of the war.

On New Year's Eve all units were alerted for an imminent German attack. One-third of the battery was placed on guard duty. The security platoon of division headquarters (in the same town) consulted with us, but put out no guards. At 3 o'clock the next morning the enemy did attack, advancing about 1500 meters on the right and in the center of the division sector. During the next two days they kept up their pressure; the situation continued very tense. The enemy made all his attacks at night, to secure surprise and avoid observed artillery fire. On January 3 he broke through the lines above Gros Rederching, then went on through the Maginot Line without opposition. By ten in the morning he was in Achen. There were now no U.S. troops between the Germans and Division Headquarters, except a single sentry on a bridge three miles east of Herbitzheim. The enemy had effected a local breakthrough, fortunately not in much strength.

Corps ordered up a portion of the 2d French Armored Division, which constituted the Corps reserve. But neither the 44th Division nor anyone else had any knowledge of where the German advance had reached, where our troops were, or what they were doing. One of the battalions of the 194th FA Group on our right had not been heard



OP who were dressed in complete U.S. uniforms. They were identified by their German dog tags. They may have been part of the crew of a German-operated Sherman tank which we knocked out about 1 km southwest of Rimling. When we shot at this tank on the 14th, we knew it was not one of our own, because prior to H-hour on the day of the attack there positively were no American-operated tanks on the front of the Corps.

The limited objective attack of the 63d Division was to follow that of the 44th by two days. They jumped off several hours before daylight on the 17th, and everywhere were successful, except initially in Bliesbrucken Woods, which required extra time to reduce on account of mines. In their crossing of the Blies River near Sarrguemines the division was supported solely by our 961st Battalion who fired a finely coordinated and accurate preparation on the far bank, only 70 meters from the assaulting troops.

On the 18th the Germans started their customary counterattack. They were slower to react this time, because the 63d had advanced so far the first day that the enemy had no good place from which to gather for a counter blow. But on this morning, it being foggy, they got down along the Saar to the outskirts of Auersmacher without being discovered. The 63d did not have the full width of the front covered. The 961st had a forward observer (Lt. Ballinger) up there, on the west bank opposite Auersmacher. He heard the German tanks but thought they might be our own. However, he and his sergeant went down to the stream to investigate. Then they recognized the German voices of the tank crews and accompanying infantry. They were only about 150 meters distant. He called for fire from his battalion. The 63d Division wisely pulled their troops out of Auersmacher temporarily to give the artillery full play. We poured the fire in, and the Germans were thrown out with heavy losses. Our fire knocked out two tanks.

The following day Lieut. Ballinger was shot in the chest by a German burp gun at this same OP. His sergeant adjusted smoke from the battalion to cover his evacuation.

On the 20th Coachdog moved to the vicinity of Singling. The next day Group moved to Etting. Some tears were observed in the eyes of



some of the women folk of Herbitzheim when we pulled out; but not, so far as is known, on the cheeks of the famous Belle of Rimling, that beauteous and innocent creature, Val.

We had a fairly good set-up in Etting, with the mess and kitchen in an old school, and the CP in the priest house. The people seemed more friendly than in Herbitzheim. Positions for the 961st were selected near Rohrbach, but they remained for the time being at Sarreguemines supporting the 63d Division. On the 27th, the 63d Division having passed to another Corps, the 961st moved to its new positions.

In March we began to get hints that the final push would start soon. On the 12th the 933d Battalion (Vox Pop), Lieut. Col. Sam Long, arrived for attachment to the Group, and was put in positions at Sarreguemines. The 768th Bn (Destructive), Lt. Col. McDonald, arrived and went into an area near Woelfling. Hamilton moved back to an area along the bend of the Saar east of Saarguemund. It was known that we would reinforce the 45th Division, which with the 3d Division was coming in to make the assault of the corps.

### *ETTING TO BORRSTADT*

The big Seventh Army offensive began at 0100 15 March, with the Rhine as the objective. The mission of the group was general support of the 45th Division, which was to pass through the 44th Division and with the 3d Division spearhead the advance of the corps.

On this day the attack across the Blies had advanced 3 kilometers against very stiff resistance. The enemy was defending ground they had prepared for months with mines and booby-traps. Group Hq. displaced at 0900 on the 17th to Reinheim, our first CP on German soil. The route ran through Singling, Gros Rederching, Brandelfingerhof Farm, Nieder Gailbach and other parts of a churned-up battlefield of four months winter fighting, past shell-stripped woods, mine fields, Obergailbach, to which the 182d displaced that day, was a particularly horrible place. It was a mixed mass of rubble and long dead



animals. Civilians were still living there — the Germans would not evacuate them. One poignant sight was a five year old girl standing in a scarred doorway staring apathetically at our passing column. The people all appeared shell-shocked, numb, from months of our continuous bombing and shelling.

The Group CP was established among a row of new houses near the railway station. The only units which had fired at these houses were our own battalions, and the difficulty we had in selecting a suitable building for our CP was evidence of their accuracy. The following day Group moved to Breitfurt, a shell torn village quite close to the front. This town had been evacuated of civilians, booby-trapped and mined. Several time bombs went off in the area we had occupied a few hours after we left. From this position Group directed the fire of its battalions in the softening of the Siegfried Line, firing on such targets as pill boxes and communication trenches. On the 20th, the 45th Division pierced the Siegfried Line, and the 6th Armored Division was committed to exploit the breakthrough. Fleeing German columns were jamming the roads and our air OPs were having a field day. One cub knocked out 33 vehicles with one concentration. On the 21st, the 6th Armored linked up with elements of the Third Army that had raced down from the north and taken all our objectives from Homburg to the Rhine. The same day Group moved into Homburg, still burning from the bombing and shelling. The streets were littered with twisted masses of wagons, artillery pieces and dead horses, part of an artillery column our cubs had caught trying to escape the city. Hundreds of liberated Russians, French and Poles were wandering the streets in search of food. The carcasses of some of the horses had been stripped by these starving slaves. Many German soldiers were also wandering the streets trying to surrender, in order to get fed. From Homburg, Group displaced to Borstadt, a village untouched by war. We captured 20 prisoners here.

We spent two days here trying to discover our next move. Third Army was still blocking the roads between us and the Rhine, and we heard rumors that Patton had crossed the river. The search for Lugers and eggs continued. Lt. Kennedy joined the unit and Lt. Hughes wrote an original song, "Moments Like This".



## WESTHOFEN TO REUTH

On 24 March, Group CP moved to Westhofen, in the Rhine valley. The 768th Bn was already north of the town, the 182d was south, near Abenheim, and the same day the other two battalions moved in near Osthofen, several kilometers east of us. We occupied the home of some wealthy people who owned thousands of liters of Riesling, for they were vintners. However, we did not touch their stocks. Believe it or not.

The Seventh Army was preparing to cross the Rhine, but first they had to get Third Army out of the way; the latter had already crossed, and we could not fire until they removed themselves! On the 25th we registered, using air OPs. The weather was fine, and we had fairly good positions, though there was not much cover in this open plain which looked so much like the Fort Sill country. There were even herds of wild deer feeding in the vineyards and fields. Down near the river the country was so flat that we could not see the enemy and they could not see us. But at night a number of German bombers flew over, first looking for Gen. Patton's bridge to the north of us; then perhaps, looking for us. The ack-ack put up quite a fireworks display which we all turned out to watch. A number of enemy planes were hit and blew up with great flashes of light.

On the 26th the Corps attacked across the Rhine. Our two veteran divisions had rehearsed this, and it went off very smoothly. There was considerable opposition from small arms, from SP guns and from 88s to the south. Our first wave of infantry took rather severe losses. However within 60 hours the entire corps was across.

The 173d Group crossed on the 27th, Group Headquarters using the ponton bridge at Hamm, which they traversed at 1500 hours, almost to the minute one year after embarkation at New York. The 768th was detached just before we crossed, and the 933d afterwards. On the far bank we moved under guidance of our Cub plane (Capt. Black) to Alsbach. We spent the night in this very pretty resort town, where the fruit trees were in full blossom. We had a nice gasthaus-with beer. The two battalions were nearby. There was no firing.

The following day we marched leisurely to Pflaumheim, near the Main River. Coachdog was in the woods to the north of us, near



a large German air field, and Hamilton was in a clothing factory in Gros Ostheim. Our CP was in the Verein Hall of the local Nazi chapter.

The corps spent the following two days crossing the Main; there was fanatical resistance in Aschaffenburg which held out against one infantry regiment for several days. But when this regiment captured the city it took many times its own numbers in prisoners. On the 31st we moved to a school building in Niedernberg, the 961st being directly across the river in Sulzbach.

On April 2 Group made a march late in the afternoon through the hills to Ober Bessanbach; the 961st being in Hain, and the 182d still east of Aschaffenburg.

On the 3d we made a tiresome march to Lohrhaupten, which we entered just after it had been liberated by the armor. We had marched all afternoon behind a very slow moving column of various units, and did not reach our new location 'till almost dark. Again we were in a gasthaus. The German civilians did not seem hostile; quite the contrary. Lt. Col. Bolzendahl assisted by Lt. Thomas, Beeman and Baker captured three Krauts after an exchange of shots.

At this time our two battalions were practically attached to the division, whose organic battalions moved them and gave them missions. It was a typical rat race, very decentralized. Neither ourselves nor Divarty had much to do except tag along. We got ambitious to make ourselves useful, so we captured as many prisoners as we could, going out after them each evening. Maybe the search for Lugers had something to do with it. However, our urge to get up front nearly got us in wrong with division. We marched to Uttrichshausen on the 5th, about ten thousand meters in advance of Divarty, and even out of range of one our battalions. We were, in fact, in the town right on top of the leading doughs. The dead Kraut in the yard was still bleeding when we got there, the prisoners were still milling around in the pen, and we had to take them over. Also, just after supper we were in the midst of a very brisk battle between two of our own infantry units who killed and wounded several of their men. Just an unfortunate mistake. We were in a little hollow, so that the machine gun bullets and tank shells went over instead of through us. It was



noisy, and at the time we thought that the Germans were attacking the town.

We stayed here in a hotel for two days; the Kraut was never buried, but his friends finally jammed him in a home-made box, after Hoffmann thoughtfully removed the pistol from his pocket. While at Uttrichshausen, Cpl. Bogaard captured Maj. Schilling, a German regimental commander who was skulking in the brush about a mile out of town. Our men also went out after some other Krauts, whom they subdued and brought in.

On 7 April we marched to Sparbrod, a pretty little village in the hills. Although the pastures were green, and the leaves were coming out, there was snow on the heights ahead of us, and the air was chilly. After supper some of our commandos under Zurn and Griffin went into the hills two or three miles away, where they captured twenty Krauts who had holed up in some pill boxes and fox holes. They had to shoot one officer who preferred liberty to K-rations. Meantime, in the village, we found three Krauts home on leave, after the burgomeister had assured us that no German soldiers were in town. This lack of candor on the part of the mayor irritated our group executive somewhat; he expressed his annoyance in a manner which must have been embarrassing to the burgomeister, Nevertheless, when we departed next morning, at least two persons, including the village padre, came to tell us how well we had behaved, and thanked us for our kindness and forbearance.

Wulfershausen, a very old town, was our next stop. The beer in the gasthaus was excellent, the people most cooperative. They certainly acted as if they had been liberated instead of conquered. In this town we encountered some American and Australian prisoners of war, just escaped from the Germans. The Americans, captured in the Ardennes, had experienced cruel treatment. The Britishers, who had been well handled, had nothing to complain of. In fact the civilians (for whom they worked on farms) had been very kind to them. While in this town we enjoyed seeing thousands of German prisoners collected and hauled to the rear in DUKWS. On 9 April, Lt. Col. Koehler indulged in his usual carbine fight with Germans; for three hours he and two other officers (Norton and Webster) were besieged in a building.



On 12 April we made a long march to Heubach, near Ebern. We informed the schoolmaster that we were going to set up in the school, and inquired if he had any weapons or Nazi flags. He said that he did not. Our men found several of each within a few minutes, also some splendid pictures of Adolf. The pictures and flags were treated with marked disrespect. About thirty minutes later, the school teacher, who was also an *ortsgruppenleiter*, shot himself. He couldn't take it.

Next day we marched south to Baunach, where a very lively fight was going on in the woods about 1000 meters west of us. We were unable to lay wire to our two battalions who were in that direction, because there were too many angry Krauts in between. That evening three cooks and Capt. Black at our air strip, a few hundred meters away, were wounded by a butterfly bomb. That night the German planes kept aiming at a bridge and strafing and bombing our area. Two small bombs burst across the street in a yard, shattering the glass windows in our CP.

On the 14th we moved to Drossendorf, but in order to cross the Main River we had to go way back up through Ebern, across the hills to the east, and then south again. Passed many 88s which had been defending Bamberg, nearby. The following day we marched to Reuth, which we liberated, but had no trouble. There was a lot of firing that night to the west of us, in the sector of the 3d Division. We were moving fast, but the German SS troops were still putting up a fanatical resistance.

## NURNBERG

On April 16 the Group moved to Lauf. The corps was attacking Nurnberg by a double envelopment, the division which we were supporting going around to the east and southeast of the city. The Germans were defending with SS troops, and with over one hundred and twenty 88s which were a part of the permanent AA defenses of Nurnberg. Lauf had been under fire about an hour before we entered. It was difficult to get through the narrow streets on account of



halted traffic. Group CP set up in an imposing chateau on the southern part of town; the home of some wealthy Italian, it was full of Oriental rugs, fine paintings and furniture. Luckily it had a spacious basement, which we were going to need. We hadn't been there more than two hours before the Germans began to shell the city, then bomb and strafe it. During the two days we were there, we were seldom free from danger from air attack or shelling; in fact it was one of the liveliest experiences which we had during the entire war. The Germans were employing jet-propelled planes. We could see the bombs fall. Luckily none hit too near us, but Battery B 3d Observation Battalion, who had been marching with us, had eighteen casualties. The Germans also strafed the autobahn in rear of us almost continuously after dark each night.

That afternoon Lt. Col. Koehler was killed at 1500 hours about four miles north of our CP. He was reconnoitering for a battalion position near Olendorf, when he ran into some Germans in the edge of town. In the fire fight which followed he killed one or two with his carbine, but was himself shot through the head and instantly killed.

Our air section knocked down a German light plane which started to land on our strip. U.S. ack-ack also destroyed one or more German fighter planes; the cowling of one of them fell just back of our kitchen.

The nights were hideous; most of the officers and men slept in the basement for the first time since we arrived in Europe. One night twenty or more 88mm shells screeched past the house, very close, and hit across the street. Not one exploded; the Krauts must have failed to set the fuzes. We had movies in the basement — Laurel and Hardy — interrupted frequently by several ancient female servants living in the basement who had to head for the can every time a bomb burst outside.

After sweating out two days and nights at Lauf we were given the privilege of moving if we desired, so as to be nearer the battalions. Coachdog was in Feucht, about five miles down the autobahn. This sounded like a good bet, so on the 18th we displaced to that point. Since the autobahn was generally under attack from the air, we marched at 200 yard intervals; but no planes appeared. Feucht was a suburb of Nurnberg; here we set up in the fine home of a manufacturer.



The Germans seemed to have everything — new furniture, oil paintings, oriental rugs, modern plumbing and kitchen fixtures. They hadn't been pinched by the war, at least not until recently.

At midnight the duty officer, Major Dewey, awoke everyone with the news (received from the cavalry) that three Panzer divisions were headed our way from the southeast, with an apparent mission of relieving besieged Nurnberg. We agreed with the cavalry squadron headquarters to defend the town; so we all got up, rolled packs, issued extra ammunition, and contacted the two artillery battalions (250th and 182d) who were also in Feucht. No infantry was present, since we were supposed to be *behind* the front. This new development put us in front of the infantry again. We had been there before but never under more threatening circumstances. Coachdog got a prisoner who gave out the same information as the cavalry had received. It looked pretty serious. However, for two or three hours everything was quiet. so most of us went back to bed to sleep in our boots.

At 0400 a terrific explosion a mile away blew in several windows and even tore a locked door from the hinges. It knocked Adcock and the CP switchboard onto the floor in the middle of the room. Later we found that it was a German ammo dump which some time bomb, or a Kraut, had touched off.

Our two battalions were going to move, early this day, close up to Nurnberg for the final assault. We planned to move with them, to get near Divarty and shorten wire lines.

At 0730 Coachdog displaced. Thirty minutes later a German tank started to shell Feucht from a range of less than 2500 meters. This indicated that the enemy was actually coming in from the southeast. The cavalry pulled out. We were already practically ready to follow Coachdog. This did not slow us down any. We went up to a point south of Nurnberg, where Divarty and Coachdog were. Gen. Meyer faced some of his artillery toward Feucht, but it was not necessary to fire. An unknown amount of German armor had come up from the southeast; and it engaged the 14th Armored Division there for several days. They never got closer to Feucht than the tank which shot at us.

Our new location was interesting, it being just south of a huge German PW camp, in which most of the now liberated PWs were



still living. Lt. Col. Moore, on reconnaissance, got shot at by some 88s, which the doughs had bypassed, at a range of 100 meters!

On 21 April we were ordered to support the 14th Armored Division, then in Altdorf. To contact them, our party had to pass close to and within sight of the Germans. We were not shot at, though some shells landed on the road outside Altdorf just after we passed. Col. Kurtz and his CP of the new Divarty moved to Feucht, as did we. The division was attacking south to clear out the Germans in their front. They were supposed to bypass any resistance. One of their combat teams started to do so, but it later was found necessary to clean out these Germans who proved strong enough to make it too dangerous to leave them behind. On the 22d Coachdog moved to Harlach, down the autobahn. A large pocket of German tanks, infantry and artillery at Allersberg was still giving trouble. Hamilton was displaced still further, near Hilpoltshiem, well south of these Germans. Lt. Bateman, liaison officer from this battalion, returning to Group after dark ran into a hot situation along the autobahn opposite Coachdog's position. He got into some shelling and was also shot at by German infantry along the autobahn. Up until midnight we worried over our two battalions who seemed to be very exposed, and quite separated from supporting troops. Reinforcing an armored division is apt to be exciting for an ordinary medium artillery unit. However, the 14th Armored had attached a few tanks to each battalion. The Allersberg Germans attacked the 501st FA Bn near Coachdog for about two hours that night but were finally driven off. There was also a considerable number of Germans between us and our battalions, which a cavalry group of Third Army, cutting across our front, was not able to handle. We finally pulled out around them and never did learn how this situation was liquidated.

On the 23d we marched south to Hilpoltshiem, passing within 1000 meters of the Allersberg Krauts; however, we were defiladed from them, and they were about "through" anyway. The 975th FA Bn had been attached to us the preceding day.

The evening of the day we arrived at Hilpoltshiem we received orders from Corps Artillery to march to the sector of the 45th Division and resume our role of reinforcing that unit; the 14th Armored was to pass to Third Army. We were to bring the 975th



no way of knowing how many diehards were still left in the Salzburg area; and after Munich that was known to be our objective.

Salzburg and Berchtesgaden! The fabled hideout of Hitler and his Nazi bigwigs! We had never really believed that we would actually see those places.

On May 2 we moved south from Perlach to Egming, where we had our two medium battalions as well as one of the light battalions of the 42d Division, whom we had joined the previous day at Perlach. The only adventure here occurred when four Tiger tanks surrendered within 400 meters of our CP. They could have blown us all to hell, but were ready to quit.

The next day we marched to Wasserburg, enjoying a fine view of the Alps en route. We billeted in a former insane asylum; the ancient doctor in charge stated the Nazis had put to death all the inmates, long before. The place had been shot up, when some SS troops resisted there that morning. Shortly after we arrived, a German liaison plane flew over slowly. He was on some surrender mission, but we didn't know it. Everyone let fly at him and down he came.

May 4 was clear and frosty. XV Corps Artillery notified us to be on the lookout for Field Marshal Kesselring who was coming through the lines, somewhere, to surrender his armies to General Devers.

On May 5 we were given the mission of reinforcing the 86th Division, and told to move into the Laufen area, north of Salzburg. We tried to make arrangements to march in *rear* of the division, who were far north of us, but the only word we could get from them was that we had better stay where we were, that the situation up front was not clear. We had already waited two days for this division to catch up, so with another Group (Kraft) we marched on to Laufen *ahead* of the 86th. We arrived there early in the afternoon after passing a column of eleven thousand prisoners along the road. We put up in a big school building, after ousting some 125 German refugees. Here a British internee showed us a small cache of Wehrmacht champagne. Since we were informed that Kesselring had surrendered, and that the war was really over, we celebrated.

The official surrender two days later was an anticlimax, as it was to the people at home in the U. S.



On May 8 we moved to Maxglan, the western suburb of Salzburg, where we were joined by our three old battalions, and a few days later by the 342d.

We had marched and fought over 1500 miles. We had seen many things which we could never describe. We had had some uncomfortable moments. But no man of the Group Headquarters and Headquarters Battery had been killed (while with us), and few wounded. We were lucky. And very thankful.







*ROSTER OF OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO UNIT  
SINCE LEAVING POE*

NYE, W. S.	Colonel	Washington, D. C.
BOLZENDAHL, Edward A.	Lt. Col.	Milwaukee, Wis.
DEARTH, Robert D.	Major	Auburn, Mass.
DEWEY, Richard L.	Major	Dubuque, Iowa
HICKS, Clarence C.	Major	Milwaukee, Wis.
ZURN, Harold W.	Major	Hartford, Wis.
ATTKISSON, Guy D., Jr.	Captain	Louisville, Ky.
BLACK, Merlin D.	Captain	Central City, Neb.
BRETT, Thomas	Captain	St. Joseph, Mo.
GASTRING, Oscar B.	Captain	San Antonio, Texas
GRIFFIN, Harold F.	Captain	Ft. Smith, Ark.
HOFFMANN, Walter F.	Captain	Wauwautosa, Wis.
RASMUSSEN, Halbert J.	Captain	Minneapolis, Minn.
SCHULER, Rollin R.	Captain	Western Springs, Ill.
STARK, Kenneth O.	Captain	Rice Lake, Wis.
WILTON, Richard R.	Captain	Rochester, N. Y.
ALEXANDER, Ulysses N., Jr.	1st Lt.	Bryan, Texas
BATEMAN, Donald W.	1st Lt.	Lansing, Michigan
BOLATIN, Louis	1st Lt.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
HARRISON, Sidney L.	1st Lt.	Washington, D. C.
HUGHES, Frank C.	1st Lt.	Ada, Okla.
LARSEN, Howard G.	1st Lt.	Chicago, Ill.
STADIUS, Arnold A.	1st Lt.	Eveleth, Minn.
THOMAS, James F.	1st Lt.	Oilton, Okla.
GOODRICH, Warren M.	2d Lt.	Jacksonville, Fla.
KENNEDY, John M., Jr.	2d Lt.	San Francisco, Calif.
NORTON, Harris E., Jr.	2d Lt.	Grand Prairie, Texas



*ROSTER OF ENLISTED MEN ASSIGNED TO UNIT  
SINCE LEAVING POE*

Abernathy, Robert B.	Tec 5	Lake Village, Ark.
Adcock, Molwin E.	Tec 5	Baltimore, Md.
Alberts, Samuel L.	Tec 5	Anderson, Ind.
Allen, Joseph E.	Tec 5	Providence, R. I.
Anderson, William J.	M/Sgt	Kenosha, Wis.
Baczewicz, John	Pvt	Chicago, Ill.
Baker, Daniel H.	Tec 5	Ashland, Ohio
Beeman, James D.	Cpl	Covington, Ohio
Bell, Robert S.	Tec 5	Wilkinsburg, Pa.
Benz, Otto W.	Tec 5	Abbotsford, Wis.
Black, Theodore R.	Pfc	Aplin, Ark.
Bobbe, Darrel N.	Pfc	Abbotsford, Wis.
Boese, Wilbur A.	M/Sgt	Milwaukee, Wis.
Bogaard, Robert W.	Sgt	Abbotsford, Wis.
Branton, Ernest M.	Pvt	Pittsfield, Mass.
Bunnell, Frederick W.	Pfc	Abbotsford, Wis.
Burhop, Ercell F.	Pfc	Colby, Wis.
Cameron, Russell H.	Pfc	Beloit, Ohio
Christy, Howard P.	Tec 5	Tideoute, Pa.
Colby, Leonard G.	T/Sgt	Abbotsford, Wis.
Connor, Edward J.	Tec 5	Rochester, N. Y.
Crosby, James G.	T/Sgt	Greensburg, Pa.
Deitch, Alex	Pvt	Coltchester, Conn.
Despain, James M.	Tec 5	Brushy, Ky.
Devries, Peter H.	Tec 3	Yakima, Was.
De Witt, Joseph M.	Tec 4	Green Bay, Wis.
Dibble, Arthur G.	Tec 5	Oconomowoc, Wis.
Dabenedetto, Salvatore	Pfc	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Duke, Clark R.	Tec 5	De Leon, Texas
Eastman, Robert D.	Pvt	Exeter, N. H.
Erwin, Edwin B.	Cpl	Huntington, W. Va.



Eppstein, Walter S.	Pfc	New York City, N. Y.
Evans, Arthur	Pvt	Pittsburg, Pa.
Fitzgerald, Louis H.	Tec 5	Portsmouth, N. H.
Franz, Alfred E. H. W.	Tec 5	Alma, Mo.
Graap, Edward P.	Cpl	Praire Du Chien, Wis.
Hamilton, Niles H.	M/Sgt	Wausau, Wis.
Heggesta, Gordon E.	Cpl	Abbotsford, Wis.
Hein, Paul A.	Pvt	Colby, Wis.
Herman, Clifford A.	Tec 4	Dorchester, Wis.
Hicks, Clyde R.	Tec 5	
Jenkins, James M.	Tec 5	Quitman, Ark.
Jones, Raymond W.	Tec 4	Kansas City, Mo.
Kaski, Harold C.	Tec 5	Stetsonville, Wis.
Key, Ezra	Pvt	Del Valle, Texas
Kowalski, Joseph J.	Tec 5	Pittsburg, Pa.
Lazarow, John T.	S/Sgt	Detroit, Mich.
Lopez, Manuel M.	S/Sgt	Miami, Fla.
Lovejoy, Merdith W. A.	Tec 5	Brookline, Mass.
Martens, Harold J.	Tec 4	Dorchester, Wis.
Marx, William S.	Tec 5	Elizabeth, N. J.
Maines, Harvey E., Jr.	Pvt	State College, Pa.
Megdanis, Thomas J.	Tec 5	Lowell, Mass.
Melvin, William L.	1st Sgt	Abbotsford, Wis.
Morton, James B.	S/Sgt	Enid, Okla.
Newkirk, William J.	Pfc	Donbury, Conn.
Newman, Arthur G.	Tec 5	Cicero, Ill.
O'Connor, Raymond W.	S/Sgt	Milwaukee, Wis.
O'Donnell, James F.	Pfc	Pittsburg, Pa.
Orth, Conrad J.	S/Sgt	Colby, Wis.
Ovans, John L.	Pfc	Milwaukee, Wis.
Parsons, Amos F.	Pfc	Colonia, N. J.
Parsons, James J.	Pfc	Paris, Texas
Pearman, Herschel G.	Tec 5	Gainesville, Texas
Pelzer, Henry A.	Tec 4	Little Falls, N. Y.



Platteter, Merlin A.	S/Sgt	Stetsonville, Wis.
Priore, Vincent .	Pfc	Columbus, Ohio
Ridinger, Harry D.	S/Sgt	Gettysberg, Pa.
Rodaks, Frank J.	M/Sgt	Hales Corner, Wis.
Rodriguez, Jesus	Pfc	San Antonio, Texas
Ryan, Joseph P.	Pvt	Euclid, Ohio
Sather, Chester J.	Pvt	Roland, Iowa
Savercool, Harold J.	Pfc	Pen Argyl, Pa.
Schnegelberger, Leonard G.	Cpl	Hebron, Neb.
Schneider, Anthony M.	Tec 5	Detroit, Mich.
Shaffer, David E.	Tec 5	Springboro, Ohio
Sharlein, Robert J.	Tec 4	Milwaukee, Wis.
Shelbourne, Robert A., Jr.	Cpl	Paducah, Ky.
Shields, Frankie B.	Pfc	Sharpsburg, Ky.
Shipman, James E.	Tec 5	Hollywood, Fla.
Smith, Jack H.	Pfc	Elm City, N. C.
Stachour, Donald O.	Tec 5	Sibley, Iowa
St Marie, Gerald H.	Pfc	Menasha, Wis.
Strange, Raymond W.	S/Sgt	Henderson, Texas
Sweeney, Francis F.	Tec 5	Medford, Mass.
Tague, Phillip J.	Pfc	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Thompson, Millard L.	Tec 5	Logan, W. Vo.
Thorne, Charles F., Jr.	Pfc	Augusta, Maine
Tittel, Vernon F.	Tec 5	Russell, Kan.
Toth, Andrew V.	Pfc	Bridgeport, Conn.
Verbance, John S.	Tec 4	West Allis, Wis.
Walden, Casual L.	Pfc	Coward, S. C.
Weintraub, Hyman	Pvt	New York City, N. Y.
Wilcox, Robert	Tec 4	New Brighton, Pa.
Wilensky, Myron	Pfc	Dorchester, Wis.
Woodard, Arrie D.	Pfc	Tahlequah, Okla.



PRINTED BY ETZENDORFER & NEUHAUSER, SALZBURG