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# The Cross of Lorraine: a combat history of the 79th Infantry Division, June 1942-December 1945

United States Army

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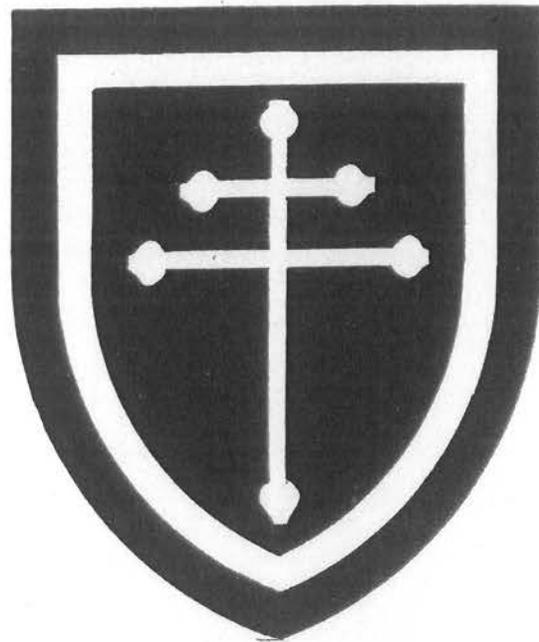
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# THE CROSS OF LORRAINE



A COMBAT HISTORY

OF THE

## 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION

JUNE 1942—DECEMBER 1945

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## STORY OF THE PATCH

This is the story of the 79th's shoulder patch.

In the latter part of 1918, American divisions overseas were requested to submit designs for a distinctive, identifying insignia to be worn on the left shoulder of the uniform. The 79th's combat history until then had been quite brief, and confined exclusively to the Lorraine sector of the Allied front in France. It was decided to adopt the blue and white Croix de Lorraine, a symbol of triumph dating back to the 15th century and recognized the civilized world over. Thus, from the sector where it made military history by its assault and capture of Montfaucon during the Meuse-Argonne drive in the closing stages of World War I, the Division derived both a patch and a new name.

# A B R I E F I N T R O D U C T I O N

On December 7, 1941, war came to the United States. It came quickly and without warning. Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese and within two days this country was at war with Germany, Japan, and Italy.

The War Department took immediate steps to expand the Army by training thousands of civilians to become tough and ready soldiers under any battle conditions. To handle the rapid influx, and train its citizen-soldiers, the Army re-activated many, and formed new, Divisions. Under this policy, the 79th Infantry Division was re-activated on June 15, 1942, with a cadre from the 4th Infantry Division forming the nucleus. Major General Ira T. Wyche assumed command, and the Blue and White Cross of Lorraine again appeared in force on the left sleeve of American fighting men.

The 79th Infantry Division was organized on August 25, 1917, when it was activated at Camp Meade, Maryland. The Division's members, chiefly from the Middle Atlantic States, were given approximately 10 months' training before being sent overseas in the summer of 1918. The organization of the Division was as follows:

157TH INFANTRY BRIGADE—313th Infantry Regiment, 314th Infantry Regiment, 311th Machine-Gun Battalion.

158TH INFANTRY BRIGADE—315th Infantry Regiment, 316th Infantry Regiment, 312th Machine-Gun Battalion.

154TH FIELD ARTILLERY BRIGADE—310th Field Artillery Regiment, 311th Field Artillery Regiment, 312th Field Artillery Regiment, 304th Trench-Mortar Battery.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS—310th Machine-Gun Battalion, 304th Engineer Regiment, 304th Field Signal Battalion, Headquarters Troop, Trains.

Advance units of the Division arrived in France, July 12, 1918, and the last, August 3, 1918. Ten days

later the Division was in the Meuse-Argonne offensive and, except for short periods during which the Division changed sectors, the 79th Division remained in the line through November 11th when the Armistice found its troops still driving eastward.

Less than a month after the Division had arrived on the battlefield, the 79th covered itself with glory when it participated in the general attack of the Meuse-Argonne campaign by capturing the town of Malancourt. This was on September 26th. On the following day Montfaucon (Falcon's Mountain) was taken. This was a strong fortified position which had long defied Allied efforts recapture it.

Just before the 79th Division was given the task of taking Montfaucon, General Pershing had said, "It is believed by the French High Command that the Meuse-Argonne attack can not be pushed much beyond Montfaucon before the arrival of winter will force a cessation."

For 30 hours men of the 79th Division took everything the Germans could unleash against them before taking the offensive to capture the most important spot on the entire Meuse-Argonne line.

From the summit of Montfaucon, the Cross of Lorraine attackers lashed their way through fiercely contested German lines and strongpoints. They captured Nantillois, La Borne du Cornouiller, famous Hill 378, Damvillers, Crepion, Wavrielle, Gibercy, Etraye, and Moirey.

By the night of November 10th, Hill 328, the town of Chaumontdevant-Damvillers and Hill 319 had been taken. Ville-devant-Chaumont was taken on November 11th, and at the hour of the Armistice the troops were advancing up the western slope of Cote de Romagne, with the enemy falling back along the entire front.

From November 11th to December 26th the Division remained on the battle front, taking over a sector extending from Damvillers on the north to Fresnes-en-Woevre on the south, for patrol and police. On De-

ember 10th the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, and Third Battalion, 314th Infantry, proceeded to an area around Montmedy, Stenay and Virton (Belgium) for the purpose of guarding property, listing material, and maintaining order. On February 1, 1919, this detachment rejoined the Division in the Souilly area.

Moving to the Souilly area south of Verdun on December 27th the Division found itself completely assembled for the first time in France, when it was joined in January by the Artillery Brigade.

The Division moved from the Souilly area during the last days of March to the Fourth Training Area northeast of Chaumont, around Anelot and Rimaucourt, where it was reviewed on April 12th by General Pershing. The movement from this area to Nantes and St. Nazaire began on April 19th, the Artillery going to St. Nazaire and the Infantry to the vicinity of Nantes and Cholet.

Up to this time the Division had one permanent commander and two temporary commanders:

Major General Joseph E. Kuhn (assigned) August 25, 1917 until demobilization.

Brigadier General William Nicholson (temporary) November 25, 1917 until February 17, 1918.

Brigadier General Evan M. Johnson (temporary) February 1, 1919 until February 28, 1919.

During operations the Division captured 1,120 prisoners and suffered 7,458 casualties.

Division Headquarters sailed from St. Nazaire on May 18, 1919 and arrived at New York City on May 27th, 1919.

June, 1942—and the Cross of Lorraine was again being carried by high-spirited men, this time during preliminary and basic training at Camp Pickett, Virginia, and later at Camp Blanding, Florida. Then followed two months of rigorous field problems in the Tennessee Maneuver area, after which the 79th Division moved directly to Camp Laguna, near Yuma, Arizona, for three months of desert maneuvers.

Near the end of this period a section of the Military Police platoon, which had been sent to Africa follow-

ing Tennessee maneuvers for the purpose of guarding some of Rommel's Africa Corps on their way to American prison camps, rejoined the Division, the first Cross of Lorrainers to go overseas in World War II.

In December of 1943 the Lorraine Cross Division was ordered to Camp Phillips, Kansas, for further training afield under winter conditions.

Having been trained to a high degree of combat efficiency, the 79th Division was ready for the next move in April, 1944. Lorrainers reported to the Port of Embarkation at Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts.

The Division's advance party left Fort Hamilton and boarded ship on March 31, 1944 and arrived in Glasgow, Scotland, on April 7, 1944 after a quick trip across the Atlantic on the *Queen Mary*. The rest of the Division arrived in England in mid-April, disembarking at Liverpool on April 17, 1944. Billed in the vicinity of Cheshire, the men embarked on an intensified training schedule, with stress placed on details of amphibious operations and assault of fortified areas, as well as emphasis on intelligence work. As D-Day approached, the Division moved to southern England, concentrating in the areas around Tiveton in Devonshire.

While troops were practicing their individual jobs the Division's General and Regimental staffs were also training in working out all of the details of operations to come. The experience gained by General Wyche and key staff officers at the Command and General Staff School prior to coming overseas was valuable now. Teamwork and understanding were necessary for a smoothly functioning machine. This, General Wyche knew from past experience, and everywhere his men were determined to be ready to start and finish the job once and for all.

Shortly after the fateful day of June 6th, the 79th Division moved to Plymouth, Falmouth, and Southampton, finding itself on D-Day plus 4 at Ports of Embarkation preparatory to backing up the first waves of American troops who had landed on the beaches of Normandy.

**SECTION I**

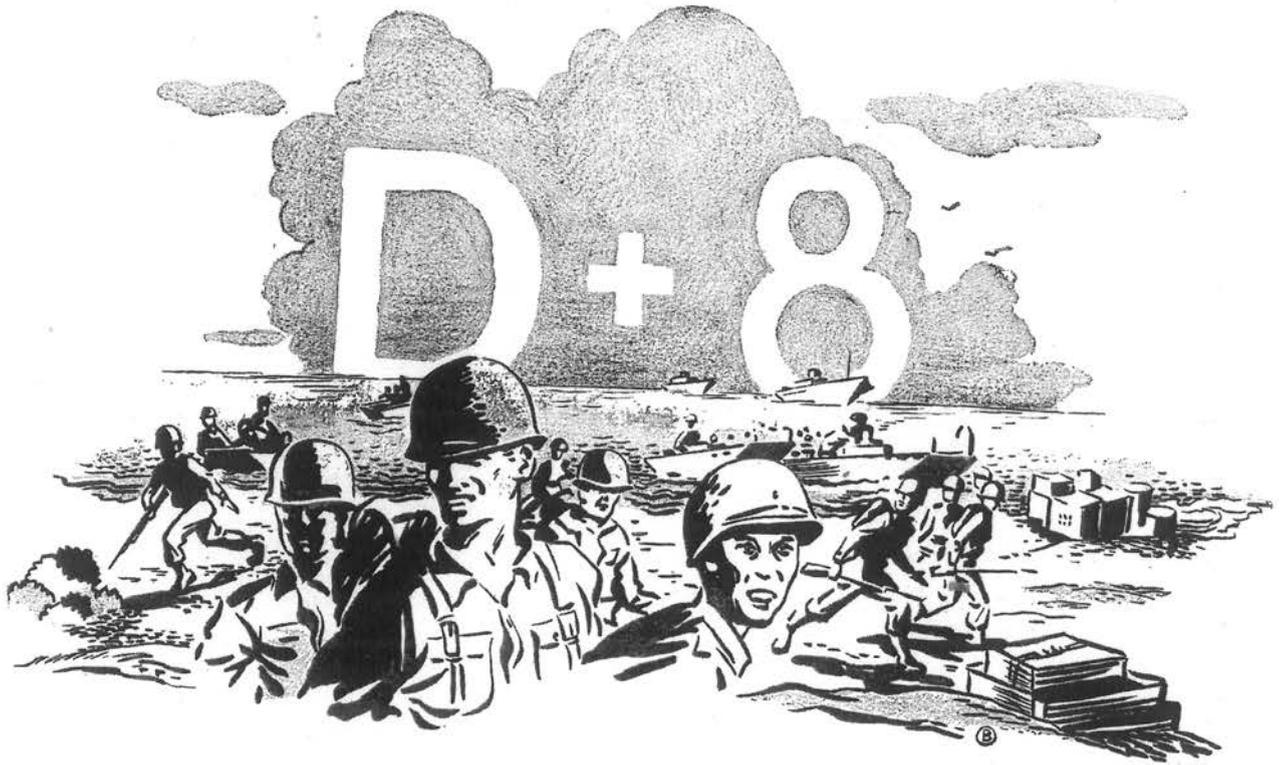
**T H R O U G H F R A N C E**

14 June 1944 — 29 August 1944

CHAPTER I—Cherbourg

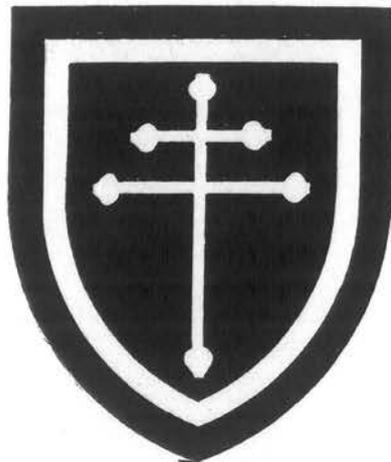
CHAPTER II—La Haye du Puits and the Breakthrough

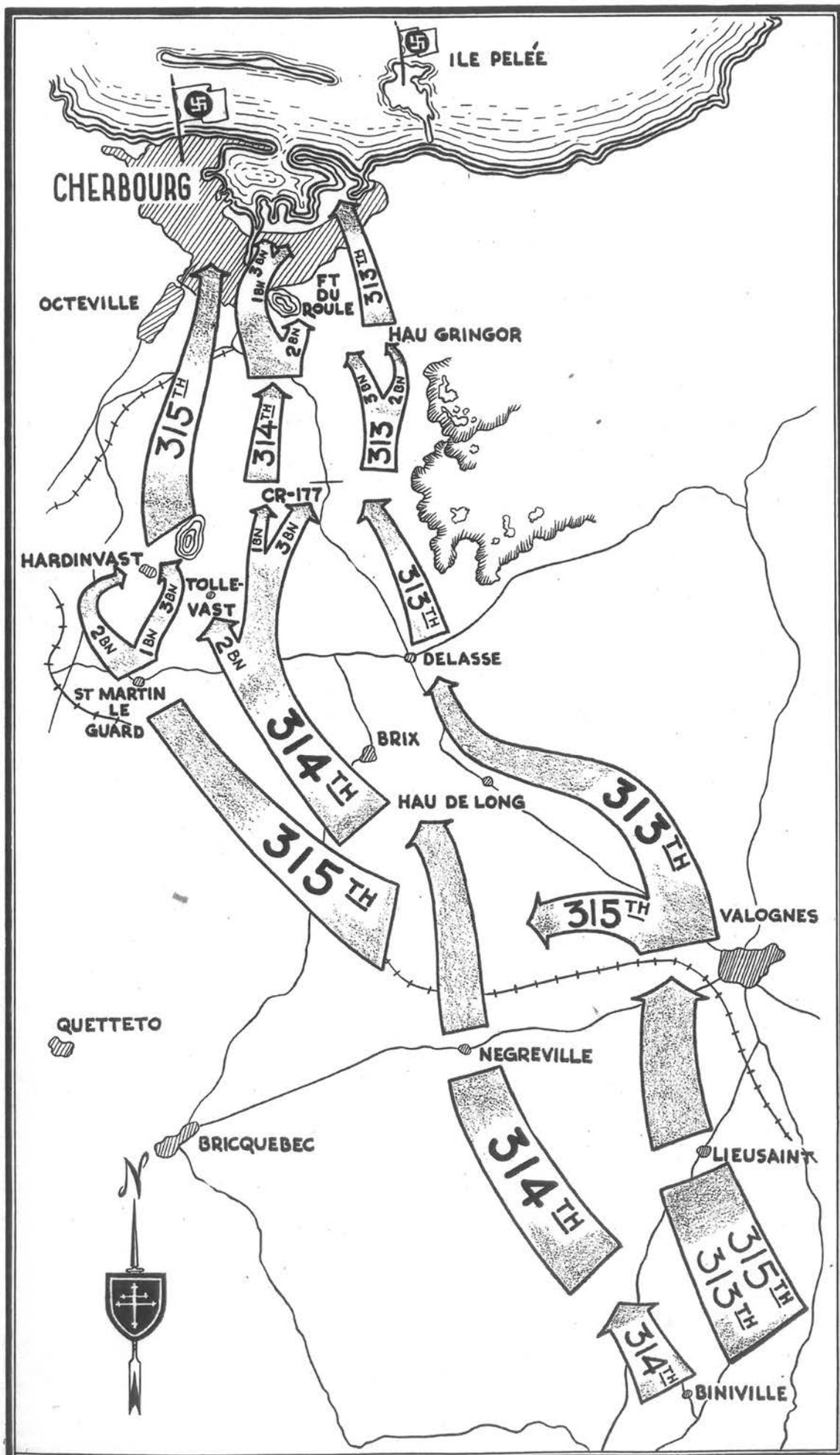
CHAPTER III—To the Seine Bridgehead



# C H E R B O U R G

## CHAPTER I





Allied landings on D-Day, June 6th, took place on a strip of beach along the Normandy coast. Months before D-Day, Allied tacticians realized that without the Port of Cherbourg and the peninsula at its back, no invading force could hope to withstand the inevitable Nazi counterattacks and beat the Germans back to the Rhine.

Among the Allied units that hit the beach on June 6th was the American VII Corps, under the command of Major General J. Lawton Collins. By D+6 the Corps was composed of the 79th, 4th, 90th, and 9th Infantry Divisions. To this Corps went the tremendous assignment of seizing the Cherbourg Peninsula, including the port city. For several successive days, landing men and supplies on the sandy, wind and rain swept beaches was almost impossible. Supplies were ferried ashore by amphibious vehicles while reinforcements waded in from LCIs through a pounding surf. Cherbourg had to be taken.

The Division hit the beaches in force on D+8; on the 12th, D+6, the advance party of the Division had disembarked, with the main body arriving on June 14th at Utah Beach, which still was occasionally shelled and bombed. During one of these bombings, T/5 Harry Rybiski, Headquarters Company, 315th Infantry Regiment, was wounded while still aboard ship, making the first battle casualty of the 79th Division in World War II.

The Allied front extended from Quineville to the west; with the 4th Infantry Division on the right striking up the coast toward Montebourg, the 90th Infantry Division on the 4th's left; the 9th Infantry Division pointed across the peninsula, sending out probing fingers toward Barneville on the western shore of the peninsula. The first Allied line across the peninsula had been established.

Then came the plans that committed the 79th Infantry Division to action. Its mission was to relieve the 90th Infantry Division in spearheading a three-pronged drive up the peninsula to Cherbourg.

North of the line Valognes-Barneville the peninsula was hilly, gradually increasing in height toward the Coast. South of the line the country was relatively flat with widespread marshes at the mouth of several small streams crisscrossing the area. Perhaps the most striking feature of the terrain was the hedgerows; those countless, centuries-old mounds of earth, stone and underbrush bordering all cultivated fields, orchards and roads, which were utilized with desperate ingenuity by the veteran enemy troops. Hedgerow fighting was something new in modern warfare creating changes in tactics and even in the types of wounds encountered. Advancing in the hedgerow country was like a game of checkers—one square at a time.

Augmenting these formidable natural defenses were scores of strong points, emplacements and concrete pillboxes. Each field was a miniature battlefield. Tanks were "sitting ducks" for the well-placed anti-tank guns, and a new weapon was developed to plow through the hedgerow—the tankdozer.

H-hour for the Division was 0500, June 19th. The initial objective was the high ground west and northwest of Valognes, commanding the Valognes-Cherbourg highway and blocking the feeder roads on that side of Valognes. The 313th Regiment jumped off from Golleville-Binville with the First Battalion on the left, the Third Battalion on the right and the Second Battalion in reserve. Attached to the Regiment were a tank and a chemical company. Artillery support was furnished by the 310th and 311th Field Artillery Battalions, and by the 90th Division's 915th Field Artillery Battalion for as long as it could fire from the positions it held at the time. Enemy resistance, at first little more than spasmodic small arms fire and occasional artillery bursts, soon swelled into the fierce concentration

that was to subside only with Cherbourg's complete surrender.

By 1400 that afternoon the First Battalion was on its objective in the Bois de la Brique. The Third Battalion met heavier resistance and needed the bulk of the artillery support before reaching its objective. On the right, the 315th Regiment had slower going. The 904th Field Artillery Battalion was supporting it while another battalion of the 90th Division's Artillery did the same as long as possible from the position it then held. The 315th Regiment was lined up with its First Battalion on the right, Second Battalion on the left and Third Battalion in reserve.

First contact of the 315th Regiment with the enemy was made near Flottenanville by the First Battalion, while the Second Battalion, after passing on beyond Lieusaint, was met by a counterattack at 1500 which held up the advance for four hours. It made further smaller gains and halted at dark. Meanwhile, there was still considerable opposition around Lieusaint, particularly from snipers, and the Third Battalion was brought from reserve to help clean out this area.

The 314th Regiment was in Division reserve in an assembly area in the vicinity of Binville, but at 1920 the Regiment was given the order to move up to the line and attack. The Second Battalion was motorized and moved to the attack immediately, reaching its objective at Croix Jacob, three kilometers north of Negreville, at 0415 the next morning. The other battalions were shuttled up to the assembly area.

This was the Division's first day of combat in World War II. It was good: a vicious enemy counterattack lasting four hours had been repelled with the Germans suffering heavy losses. All 79th Division units had reached their objectives, most of them ahead of schedule.

The next day, Tuesday, June 20th, the 313th and 314th Regiments made further gains while the 315th Regiment continued mopping-up operations in the area.

The next objective was the high ground south of Cherbourg. Using the main Valognes-Cherbourg road as the axis of its advance, the 313th Regiment bore the brunt of the attack on the Division's right boundary. Jumping off from the Bois de la Brique at 0600, the assault echelon moved in a column of battalions (Second—First—Third) north to St. Joseph and then northwest along the highway. In the vicinity of Hau de Long, the advance was so rapid that the enemy was unable to carry out his usual demolitions, and four light tanks and an 88-mm. gun were captured intact. The Regiment continued to advance up to Delasse where long-range artillery fire made further progress at the time difficult.

The First Battalion of the 314th Regiment crossed the LD at 0600, the Third Battalion in column and echeloned to the left rear. The Battalions continued their advance, keeping roughly parallel to the main highway, and during the morning the Third Battalion captured eight tanks, while the First Battalion discovered a robot plane platform near Brix. At 1800 the leading Battalion ran into pillboxes and other permanent fortifications just east of Tollevast and halted its advance.

The 315th Regiment spent the day cleaning up the area to the west of Valognes that had been by-passed. The Regiment took two strong points, some prisoners, and also some four-inch guns. At the end of the day the Regiment moved up to an assembly area near Hau de Long.

As the 313th and 314th Regiments had now run into the outer belt of the enemy's prepared defenses around Cherbourg, the Division ordered them to make a thorough reconnaissance of their zones. During the night of June 20-21, and throughout the day of the 21st, the Regiments sent out patrols to feel out the enemy's strength and they brought

back much information on the defenses and dispositions before them. Lee McCardell, war correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun*, who accompanied the troops, described the situation as follows:

*"So-called pillboxes in the first line of German defenses which the 79th Division assaulted in the attack on Cherbourg were actually inland forts with steel and reinforced concrete walls four or five feet thick.*

*"Built into the hills of Normandy so their parapets were level with surrounding ground, the forts were heavily armed with mortars, machine guns, and 88-mm. rifles—this last, the Germans' most formidable piece of artillery.*

*"Around the forts lay a pattern of smaller defenses, pillboxes, redoubts, rifle pits, sunken well-like mortar emplacements permitting 360-degree traverse, observation posts and other works enabling the defenders to deliver deadly cross-fire from all directions.*

*"Approaches were further protected by mine fields, barbed wire and anti-tank ditches at least 20 feet wide at the top and 20 feet deep.*

*"Each strongpoint was connected to the other and all were linked to the mother fort by a system of deep, camouflaged trenches and underground tunnels. The forts and pillboxes were fitted with periscopes. Telephones tied in all defenses.*

*"Entrance to these forts was from the rear, below ground level, through double doors of steel armor plate which defending garrisons clamped shut behind them. The forts were electrically lighted and automatically ventilated.*

*"Below a casemated gallery in which the guns were located firing through narrow slits, were two underground bomb-proof levels packed almost solidly with cases of canned food, artillery shells and belted ammunition for machine-guns.*

*"In several instances after forts had been captured and apparently cleared of the enemy, more Germans were found hiding in these deep bomb-proof sub-basements. Sometimes the sub-basements were not discovered until our engineers had blown up captured works with dynamite.*

*"Such was the Cherbourg Line which the 79th Division cracked. How they managed to crack it still baffles us."*

The enemy did no patrolling but reacted vigorously to our patrols with small arms and artillery fire, and the assembly area of the 314th Regiment received shellings that caused some casualties, particularly in the Second Battalion. The 315th Regiment moved up to the vicinity of St. Martin le Guard and its Second Battalion put in a covering force north of Le Bourg. Plans were made for the following day's attack and the troops were issued the demolition equipment they would need to overcome the enemy's fortifications.

During the night of June 21-22 repeated broadcasts were beamed to the Germans in Cherbourg, urging them to surrender. This ultimatum expired at noon on the 22nd and at 1240 the Air Force began a tremendous eight-minute aerial bombardment of the German positions. Our troops had withdrawn 1000 yards behind the bomb line and the front was marked with smoke shells, but some bombs were dropped on and in the rear of our front lines and machine-gun fire from strafing planes was reported generally over the Division area. This bombardment, together with the subsequent artillery barrage, smoothed the path of the advancing doughboys.

As the Regiments neared Cherbourg's outer ring of defenses, resistance became even more desperate. The 304th Engineer Battalion worked side by side with the foot troops, blasted through hedgerows, and built roads under fire when the enemy's grip on the conventional routes could not be loosened.

The 313th Regiment on the right, jumped off at 1400 in a column of battalions (First—Second—Third) but the First Battalion was soon stopped by pillboxes to its front. The Third Battalion, moving up on the left of the other two battalions, attacked these pillboxes from the rear. Meanwhile, the First Battalion had also resumed its advance and soon came in contact with the Third Battalion. This made a reorganization necessary for the latter was headed east and the former north. When this was straightened out, the First Battalion was on the right, on the Valognes-Cherbourg road, and the Third Battalion on its left, and the Second Battalion echeloned to the right rear of the First Battalion. When the attack was begun again, the Second Battalion ran into enemy resistance and lost direction in the rough terrain. 69 men of this battalion, including a Heavy Machine-Gun platoon, continued the advance with the rest of the regiment. This advance met little resistance, and moved up to a point near Crossroads 177, which they reached at 0205, spending the rest of the night there. Probably the enemy did not know of the existence of this force for enemy traffic continued to use the roads, and their artillery and mortar batteries, located nearby, kept up fire. Our artillery was also active, however, and the artillery commander directed a serenade against the enemy batteries.

On June 22nd, the 314th Regiment also began its attack at 1400 in a column of battalions (First—Second—Third). The attack progressed until Company B ran into a fortified area and Company C moved around on the left by the town of Tollevast, running into heavy German fire. At 2200 the Third Battalion was ordered to the First Battalion's right flank to assist the 313th Regiment in securing Crossroads 177, while the First Battalion was to follow in column. However, not all the latter's companies were able to disengage from contact with the enemy and it was only on the following morning that the First Battalion could move up to the Third Battalion.

Throughout this period the Second Battalion of the 315th Regiment acted as a covering force on the Division's left flank, to the west of Tollevast and Hardinvast. All through the campaign the 79th Reconnaissance Troop operated on this left flank, maintaining liaison with the 9th Infantry Division and eliminating isolated strongpoints. The Third Battalion, 315th Regiment, met heavy resistance (on the 22nd), hence it was decided that the First Battalion would make a night attack around the right flank of the Third Battalion which would then fall into column behind it. The First Battalion attacked, but was forced to withdraw when it became evident that the Third Battalion would be unable to make contact.

On the morning of June 23rd, it was discovered that the enemy had cut the 313th Regiment's line of communication and its only contact was through an adjacent battalion of the 314th Regiment which had moved up on the left.

During this time, the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment had reached its objective, the east-west road through Crossroad 177, and the First Battalion had arrived on its left. The Second Battalion was ordered to keep the supply route to the other battalions clear. It accomplished this mission successfully and went into an assembly area behind the Third Battalion at 1500. Meanwhile, the other two battalions had jumped off. On the way Company I was the recipient of heavy fire and suffered severe casualties which



G-2 CP Truck

forced it to withdraw to a point back of the Third Battalion. The First Battalion, having lost contact, advanced well beyond its objective.

On the left flank of the Division, the Second Battalion of the 315th Regiment continued its patrol activity which was quite important inasmuch as there was a considerable pocket of enemy resistance in this area. The other two battalions were inactive, but later in the day they occupied some territory northeast of Hardinvast.

When the 313th Regiment resumed its attack on the morning of June 24th, its formation was a column of Battalions (Second—First—Third) and it succeeded in enveloping the enemy positions from the right, the advance being made in the face of much opposition from enemy strongpoints near Hau Gringor. The Second Battalion sent patrols out into the town, while the Third Battalion moved up on the left and the First Battalion remained in the rear in reserve. The Regiment cleared Hau Gringor, bagging 320 prisoners in the process. Earlier in the day, it had also captured some heavy artillery pieces, including three 155-mm. guns and many smaller pieces.

The 314th Regiment's plan of attack for the day called for the Third Battalion to make an attack from the southwest, while the Second Battalion was to advance from the southeast. The First Battalion was to remain in reserve and follow the leading battalion on order. After an aerial bombardment at 0800, the attack jumped off at 0825 and was successfully completed when the Second and Third Battalions gained their objective by 1000. The two battalions then pushed on and attempted to move forward to the

high ground outside of Fort du Roule, but were unable to do so since they were under fire from their open left flank.

The 315th Regiment during this period continued mopping-up operations. The Second Battalion tried to take Hardinvast but was repulsed and forced to withdraw. The next day, the Regiment came at the town from two directions, the Second Battalion coming in from the west and the Third Battalion from the east, and wiped out the troublesome pocket.

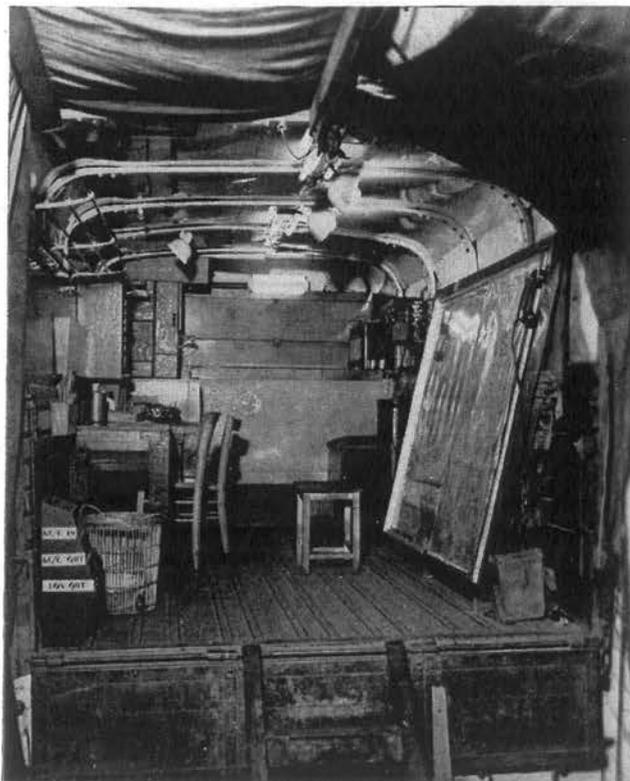
Describing the appearance of our troops the week after the offensive began, Lee McCardell, the *Baltimore Sun* war correspondent, remarked:

*"The Regiment had been in the attack for exactly one week. The Joes looked like they could stand a Saturday night bath anywhere—not necessarily Cherbourg. Those with beards looked like burlesque tramps. All were beginning to tire a little.*

*"Many a Joe hadn't had his shoes off for a week. His feet were killing him. He would have given ten bucks for a clean pair of 10-cent socks. Aside from canned rations and hand grenades which filled all the pockets of his grimy, mud-stained fatigues, he carried only what he wore plus his canteen, a shovel, an ammunition belt, an extra bandolier, a knife, bayonet and his rifle.*

*"Many soldiers had lost their blankets or had dropped them farther back to lighten their loads. During the week of steady advance and almost continuous fighting they had slept in foxholes at night with any cover they could find. That is, they tried to sleep. The German artillery never allowed them too much rest even after dark."*

G-3 CP Truck



He might have added that the nights were very cold and shirts and pants covered by impregnated anti-gas clothing were all the officers and men had to keep them from freezing.

The 313th Regiment spent the morning of June 25th in patrol activity and at 1400 moved in a column of battalions (Second—First—Third) from the high ground down to the flats southeast of Cherbourg. Patrols were sent out again and penetrated the outskirts of the city, returning with 19 prisoners. The guns in Fort du Roule had not yet been silenced by the 314th Regiment and the 313th Regiment was heavily shelled before these guns were stilled.

The enemy's last major defense south of Cherbourg was Fort du Roule, and, as many doughboys had predicated, it was the kernel of this tough nut and had to be cracked. Perched at the northwest end of a high ridge commanding the city, it had been sufficiently armed and supplied to enable a defending force to hold out indefinitely. The French had fortified it before the German occupation and it had been improved by the Todt Engineering organization who modernized and strengthened it. Before the 314th Regiment began its advance on this position, the Air Force made one of its dive-bombing attacks. The Second Battalion captured the strongpoint, and in doing so Company F took a motor

pool containing large amounts of enemy material. Company F and Company E then stormed the Fort itself and their action was such that the Corps Commander recommended that they be awarded Unit Citations. After a furious fight, the first white flag appeared at 1145, but although one section surrendered there were others that were willing to prolong the fight. Company E attempted to take some positions lower down on the Fort, but was unable to do so owing to fire from above and from the exposed left flank.

The first Presidential Citation received by a unit of the Division resulted from the action around Fort du Roule.

During the siege of the fort, T/Sgt. (then Cpl.) John D. Kelly, Company E, 314th Regiment, won for the Division its first Congressional Medal of Honor. His platoon was inching up the fortress face when it was pinned down by enemy machine-gun fire from a deeply entrenched strongpoint on the slope below the peak. The area was almost bare of natural cover. In a few moments casualties skyrocketed. The Congressional Medal of Honor citation takes up the story:

*"Kelly volunteered to try to knock out the strongpoint. Arming himself with a pole charge about 10 feet long, with 15 pounds of TNT affixed, he climbed the slope under*

## CITATION

*In the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction.*

*"The Second Battalion, 314th Infantry Regiment, is cited for extraordinary gallantry in action during the assault and capture of Fort du Roule, on the 25-26 June 1944. In securing this highly fortified position, which guarded the port city of CHERBOURG, France, against land, sea, and aerial attack, the Second Battalion, displayed outstanding courage, determination, fortitude, and fighting spirit.*

*"Fort du Roule is located on a high, precipitous cliff overlooking CHERBOURG. At the time of this action it was protected by numerous concrete emplacements and pillboxes, troop shelters, heavy and light artillery, anti-aircraft artillery (depressed to fire point-blank into attacking troops) interlocking bands of machine-gun fire, an anti-tank ditch 20 feet wide and 10 to 30 feet deep, stone-walled mortar positions high on the cliffs (from which hand grenades were also used against the attackers), and concentric bands of barbed wire entanglements. In addition the Second Battalion was subjected to the fire from large caliber guns across a valley on its left flank.*

*"At 0830 hours the Second Battalion was ordered forward to attack Fort du Roule. It immediately came under dense artillery and mortar fire, suffering casualties that included many key leaders. Despite this devastating fire, it continued its advance without faltering, soon arriving at a position from which demolition squads could place pole charges and "beehive" charges into the embrasures of several pillboxes. So much demolition equipment was required to reduce the strongpoints that ammunition bearers were required to make repeated trips forward under the continuing enemy fire.*

*"Reaching the top of the fort and gaining access to the numerous enemy troop shelters thereon, the Second Battalion was forced to work through small tunnels in order to reach the fort's lower levels, site of the enemy's large-caliber, emplaced naval guns. Since enemy defenders within the fort were still displaying bitter resistance at this juncture, this work in proceeding through the tunnels required extreme courage and determination. During the morning of 26 June the top of the fort was swept by fire of anti-aircraft guns located on neighboring hills, adding materially to the Second Battalion's task of neutralizing enemy resistance. On the afternoon of 26 June the last of the enemy's big naval guns was silenced. Although most of the Second Battalion believed the fort was mined and might be blown up at any moment, its units did not swerve in reducing this strategic enemy position as speedily as possible.*

*"In its assault on the fort the Second Battalion captured 882 prisoners and killed an undetermined number. The vast amount of enemy material captured by the Second Battalion was turned over to VII Corps authorities for appropriate inventory. It consisted generally of motor vehicles, food, ammunition, small arms, and large-caliber guns. Eight large sacks of large denomination bills were also captured and handed to the proper authorities.*

*"The Second Battalion's speedy and effective reduction of this strongpoint aptly described by the enemy as impregnable, was a magnificent display of courage and devotion to duty."*

a withering blast of machine-gun fire and placed the charge at the strongpoint's base. The subsequent blast was ineffective, and again, alone and unhesitatingly, he braved the slope to repeat the operation. This second blast blew off the ends of the enemy guns. Corporal Kelly then climbed the slope a third time to place a pole charge at the strongpoint's rear entrance. When this had been blown open he hurled hand grenades inside the position forcing survivors of the enemy gun crews to come out and surrender."

The First Battalion had followed the Second Battalion echeloned to the right rear and by 1000 had taken the position. It consolidated itself and spent the night there. The Third Battalion was ordered from reserve to mop up scattered points of resistance and to cover the Second Battalion's attack on the fort. This attack continued the rest of the day and it was until 2148 that the fort finally surrendered, though some of its sections continued to fight on. Don Whithead of the *Saturday Evening Post* described the surrender of General von Schlieben, who commanded the German garrison fighting to hold the city:

*"Major General Collins and the 9th, 4th, and 79th Divisions—his troops—shortly were on the outskirts of Cherbourg, with the defenders under General von Schlieben making their last desperate stand. Collins sent an ultimatum to the Nazi leader to surrender his garrison or else be responsible for the consequences. The General refused and ordered his troops to fight to the death.*

*"But then a strange thing happened. A few hours after the ultimatum was refused, Von Schlieben came out of a hole 30 feet underground and surrendered, while many of his troops fought on. With him were Rear Admiral Hennecke, second in command of Cherbourg, and 800 other officers and enlisted men. The German General never did explain why he surrendered while his men continued to fight—or why he was not with them."*

The next day the Second Battalion remained in position on top of the fort, while the Third Battalion and First Battalion advanced abreast through the city. The enemy resisted stubbornly and the Regiment's left flank suffered for there was still a gap between it and the nearest American troops. A row of pillboxes at the water's edge made trouble for some time, but the Regiment advanced to the beach. At about 1600, the guns in the still unoccupied lower face of the fort opened fire again and it was not until 1900 that they were finally silenced and the fort entirely in our hands.

The 313th Regiment had also attacked early on the morning of the 26th and, by 0800, had reached the beach in its zone. However, sporadic street fighting continued through the day and there were four heavy concrete pillboxes in particular that delayed the clean-up for hours. These were finally neutralized by small arms and mortar fire from the First Battalion and then battered into surrendering by anti-tank guns. These anti-tank guns later in the day directed a concentration against the guns in the lower part of the fort, shortly after, it finally and completely surrendered.

The 315th Regiment, on the 26th, moved up for Hardin-vast towards Cherbourg and cleared the rear of all enemy opposition. At one point, a large number of disorganized enemy troops were spotted. They were left-overs from numerous units that had been destroyed or bypassed. A truck with a public address system was brought up and the Regimental Commander, Colonel Bernard B. McMahon, talked these troops into surrendering. The German colonel was unwilling to give in without a prior display of overwhelming American strength. To satisfy German "honor" some white phosphorous grenades were thrown. He handed over the garrison, following which an enemy field hospital with more than 1,000 patients surrendered, and the Regiment's toll of prisoners in this single operation was raised to more than 2,000.

Entering Cherbourg with the troops, War Correspondent McCardell described the appearance of the battered city:

*"Rain was falling on our faces when we awakened. It was a cold, gray, misty dawn. The column was forming up in the mud for the final advance into Cherbourg.*

*"We moved forward into a deserted quarter of the city, evidently a section in which working people had lived. Concussion had shattered every window, every bit of glass. The telephone and electric light wires were broken tangles. But most of the buildings did not appear to have been damaged seriously by either the bombings or shellfire.*

*"The Germans had bricked up many windows and doors, leaving only narrow embrasures from which machine-guns would sweep the street."*

The quality of the opposition that the Division faced ranged all the way from excellent to poor. Contact was made with elements of the 77th, 91st, 243d, and 716th Infantry Divisions, all of them composed of fine German troops. There were also several Ost Battalions, so-called because they were recruited in Eastern Europe, in territories occupied by the Germans, and composed of men of many nationalities: Georgians, Tartars, etc. They were unenthusiastic soldiers and our troops found that they would surrender if the opportunity came their way and the Germans were not around. Our prisoners also included some anti-aircraft artillerymen from the German Air Forces and navy-trained men who were at the coastal defense guns in Cherbourg. Approximately 6,000 prisoners were captured by the Division during this campaign out of the 45,000 against whom it fought. Vast quantities of material were seized intact. It was the first city of any size liberated in France and its citizens were grateful. Snipers' bullets ricocheted overhead, but civilians packed the streets to welcome their liberators.

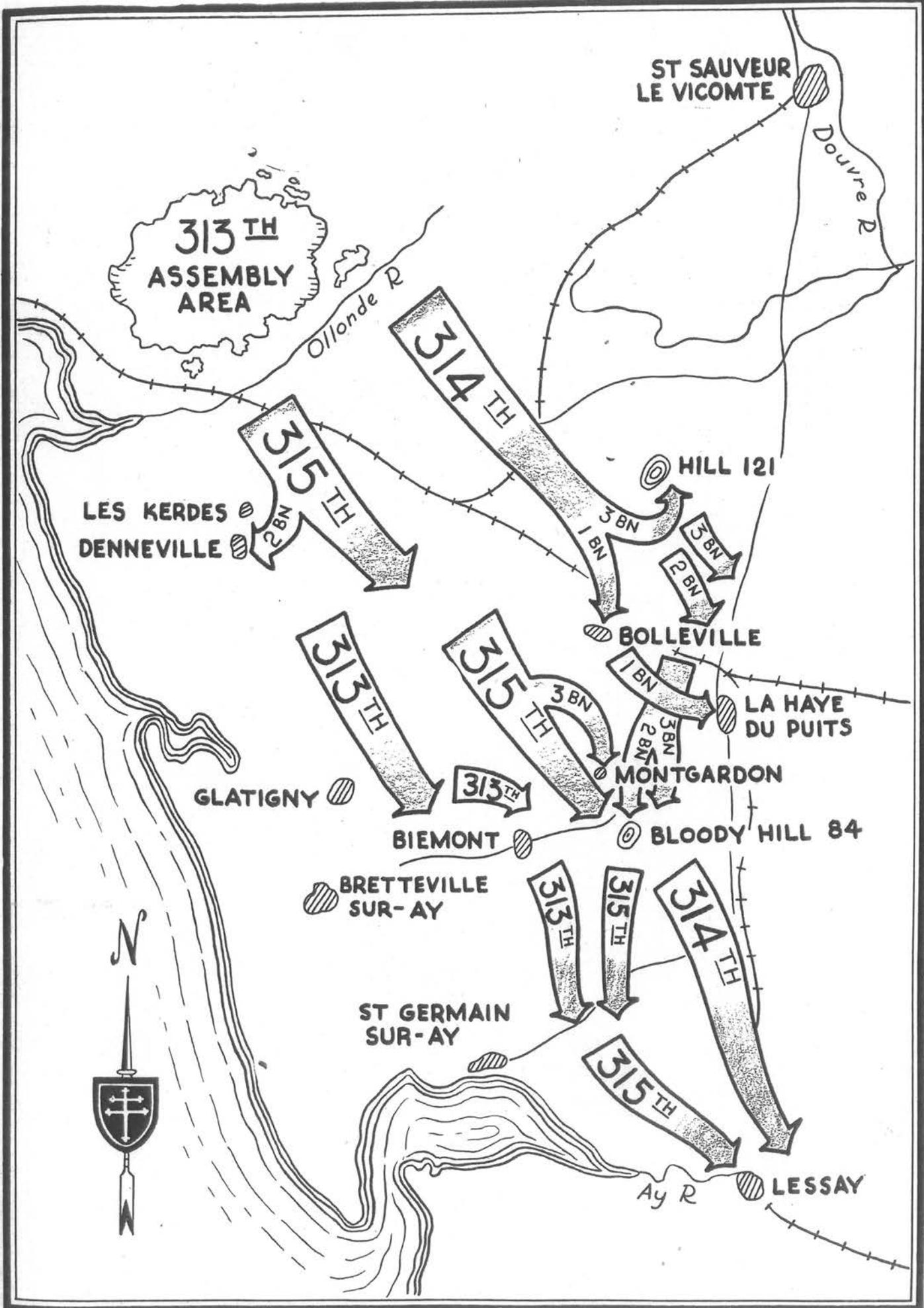
In two weeks of combat, green troops had become veterans. Advancing against numerically superior German forces, the men of the Cross of Lorraine Division had once again proved that they were more than a match for the best that the Wehrmacht had to offer. The heritage of Montfaucon lived again at Fort du Roule!



# LA HAYE DU PUTS AND THE BREAKTHROUGH

## CHAPTER II





On June 27th the Division moved south from Cherbourg to relieve the 90th Infantry Division on the extreme right of the Allied line and preparations were begun for a drive south under VIII Corps. Phase II in the Allied timetable—the liberation of Cherbourg—had been completed, and with the port facilities of the city being rebuilt and the Cotentin Peninsula at their backs, the Corps was ready to crack the German line in the west. Plans called for an attack by the 314th and 315th Regiments, with the 313th Regiment in Division reserve and ready to follow the former on order. The 314th Regiment was to move southeast across a tributary of the Douve River and capture Hill 121; while the 315th Regiment, making the main effort, was to attack southeast in the direction of Hill 84. The 79th Reconnaissance Troop was to operate between the 315th and the sea, reporting on German positions in the area. Attached to the Division were the 749th Tank Battalion, the 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 463d Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion.

The Division jumped off at 0530 July 3 after a 15-minute artillery preparation. The 314th and 315th Regiments contacted the enemy who resisted desperately. Hedgerows bordering roads were honey-combed with automatic weapons and light artillery pieces augmented by an occasional dug-in tank. Snipers operated with maddening efficiency and 88-mm. air bursts spread sheets of flying steel into infantry foxholes.

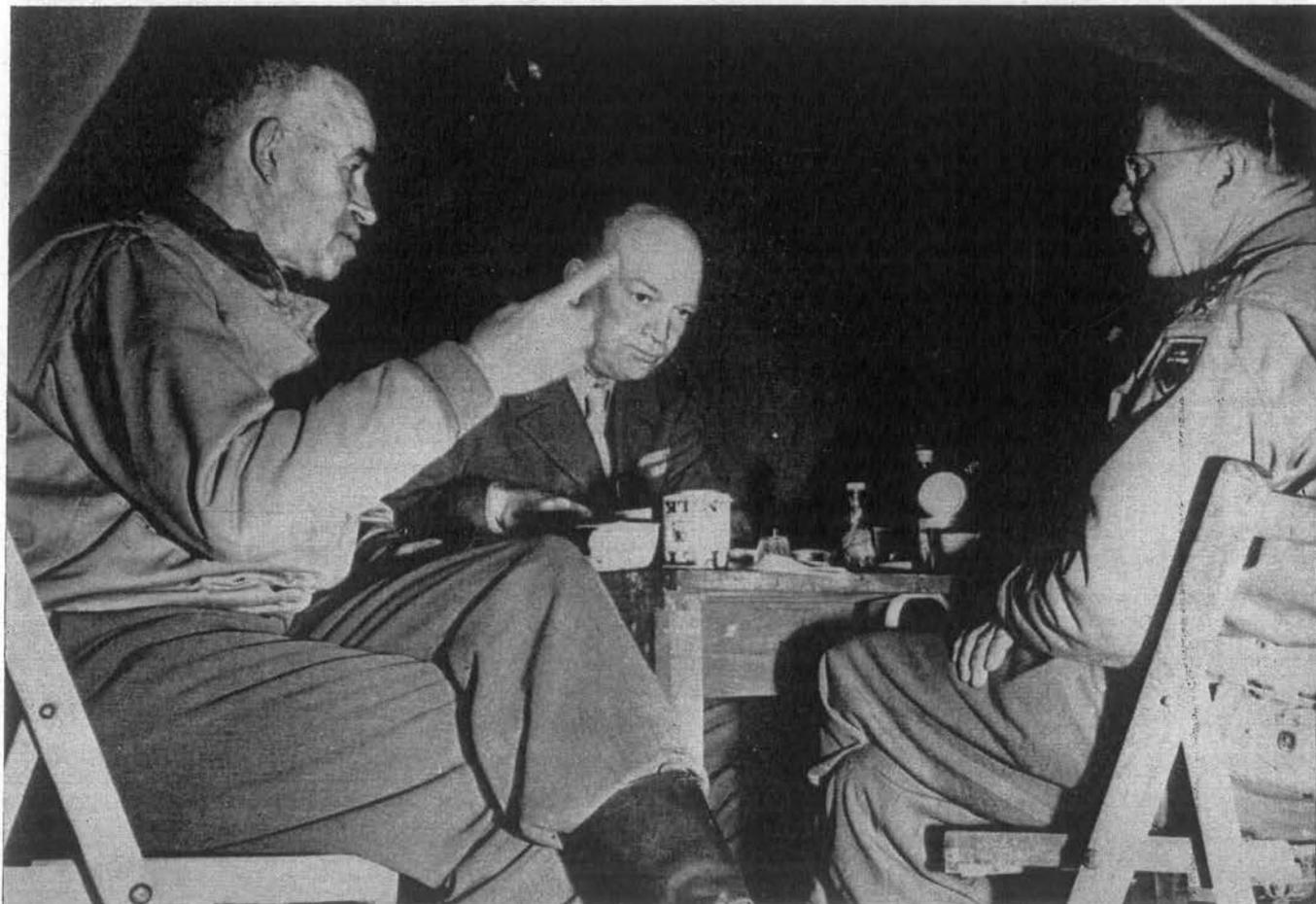
Sparked by artillery support, the regiments drove forward against the enemy's seemingly endless hedgerow defenses. The 314th Regiment, with the mission of taking Hill 121, planned for the First Battalion to lead the attack southward with the Third Battalion echeloned to its left rear. At a point southwest of the objective the Third Battalion was to swing around and attack the hill from this direction while the First Battalion stood fast and protected

its flank. The maneuver was successful and the Third Battalion executed its shift at 2030.

The 315th Regiment, making the main effort on the right, jumped off on time with the Third Battalion out in front, followed by the First Battalion, with the Second echeloned off to the right. The morning was cold and wet, and the going was bad. The Third Battalion, spearhead of the main punch, had a tank company attached which suffered the loss of several tanks in the day's bitter fighting. This team pushed ahead slowly against powerful German resistance. The Second Battalion had rough going, too, particularly in the Les Kerdes and Denneville area, and the 79th Reconnaissance Troop was moved in to help out. By 2200, the team had smashed its way into Denneville and the Second Battalion was ordered to pull out and move into the Third Battalion's sector in preparation for the next day's attack. In less than a day, the combat team had surged half way to the initial objective, in spite of many isolated German "suicide" units which had been bypassed in the advance.

Next day General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, and Lt. General Omar N. Bradley, Commanding General, First Army, visited the Division Command Post near Les Fosses and listened-in while Division Artillery joined the other First Army units in a Fourth of July serenade of German positions. Meanwhile, the 313th Regiment was ordered to move up to join in the attack set for July 5th. The 314th Regiment's Second Battalion crossed the river to assist its Third Battalion on Hill 121 by occupying the north and northeast slopes of the hill and, by 0830, the two Battalions reported all resistance on these slopes had been cleaned out. Upon the capture of this objective, the 314th Regiment was ordered to continue the attack in its sector. Meanwhile, the First Battalion had jumped off early in the morning and began a day of heavy

*Lieutenant General Bradley, General Eisenhower, and Major General Wyche have lunch in Normandy. July 4, 1944.*



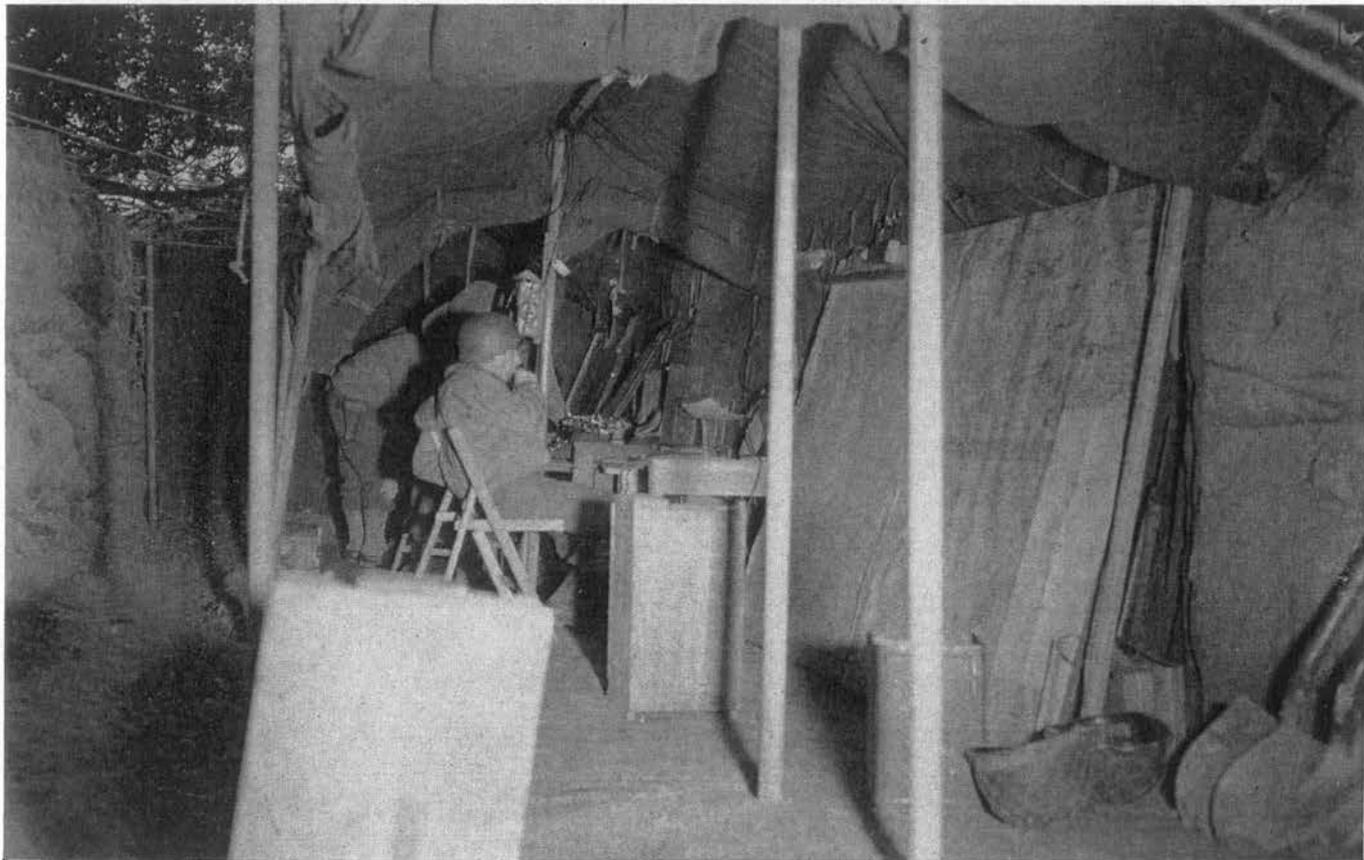
fighting, reaching Bolleville by evening, while the Second Battalion moved up on its right.

At 1810, Corps ordered the Division to ease the pressure on the 82d Airborne Division on the left by occupying the end of an enemy-held ridge west of Hill 95. This job was given to the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment and by 2100 the mission was completed.

At dawn that morning the 315th Regiment attacked in a column of battalions (First, Second, Third) and the Regiment pushed ahead until 1600 in the afternoon when elements of B and C Companies were out in front. That evening a strong enemy task force counterattacked and separated these leading companies, but this attack was soon broken up by Division Artillery. The Second Battalion moved up on the right flank of the First Battalion; the

task force ran into a fierce artillery concentration and the First Battalion was sent south to outflank the enemy at the bridges. The enemy stopped the First Battalion's attack north of the creek, and during the evening launched two counterattacks, both of which were repulsed. Meanwhile, the task force had reached a point north and northeast of the bridges, but the terrific artillery barrage forced the Regiment to withdraw to an assembly area for the night.

The 315th Regiment jumped off that morning with the Third Battalion on the left, the Second Battalion on the right and the First Battalion in reserve, advancing about 2,000 yards until it was forced to halt just west of Montgardon at 1030. After an artillery preparation furnished by Division Artillery, the 315th Regiment moved on again and the Third Battalion, supported by tanks, battered its way



*Combat CP at Hill 84*

Third Battalion was brought up to its left flank and the Regiment set up a defensive position. The First Battalion managed to pull back but at midnight many men from B and C Companies were still missing.

At 1000 on the morning of July 5th, new boundaries were assigned to the 313th and 314th Regiments, which were to pinch out the 315th Regiment after it reached its objective, Hill 84. At noon the 313th Regiment jumped off in a column of battalions (First, Second, Third) and pushed ahead against light resistance. The original plan called for the First Battalion to push on south to flank the enemy, but it had followed a task force of the 313th Regiment's Company K and the 749th Tank Battalion's Company A whose mission was to take and hold several nearby bridges to the east. As it moved out toward the bridges, the

into Montgardon, against the German's 353d Infantry Division.

The 314th Regiment's Second Battalion moved slowly forward in a southerly direction, under a powerful enemy artillery barrage, reaching the sunken road west of La Haye du Puits. At 0645, Company K was ordered to move out around the right flank of the Third Battalion and make a reconnaissance in force into La Haye du Puits. Despite stiff resistance it gained control of the railroad station on the northern outskirts of the town, but the Germans blasted away with everything they had and the company had to pull out.

Then Division Artillery unveiled what GI witnesses hailed as "the prettiest damned precision artillery in this man's war." Lieutenant Colonel James B. "Kannonball"

Kraft's 312th Field Artillery Battalion "paced" Lieutenant Colonel Olin E. "Tiger" Teague's First Battalion of the 314th Regiment to the very rim of the city's defense. A German artillery observation post in the city's cathedral lingered too long. A burst of artillery fire scored a direct hit on the church steeple and when the infantry entered the town hours later they found the German artillery observers sprawled in the public square.

Early on the morning of the 6th, the 313th Regiment moved east to attack in a new direction. The regiment moved up via St. Remy des Landes and jumped off in the late afternoon, running into more of the same fanatical resistance that characterized the bloody fighting, smashed against strong fortifications, dug-in and protected by wire as well as a hail of enemy small arms, mortar and artillery fire. Finally, the Regiment was drawn back to its original LD.

Meanwhile, the 315th Regiment's Second Battalion launched an attack on Hill 84 with the help of the 313th Regiment on its right. The attack, supported by tanks, began at 1700 that afternoon and, although elements of four German Regiments and one Infantry Battalion of the 243d and 353d Infantry Division defended the position, most of Hill 84 was taken by 2100 that evening. For the first time the vaunted SS troops were encountered by the Division when elements of the Second SS Division (Das Reich) were identified among the units defending "Bloody Hill."

The 314th Regiment jumped off in an attack that same morning and by 1400 the Second and Third Battalions had pushed their way through strongly manned defenses and sunken roads. That evening the Division ordered the bat-

Hill 84 by the 313th and 315th Regiments, were beaten back with the loss of three tanks and the "Bloody Hill" was held.

The 314th Regiment attacked that afternoon and meeting with the same type of last-ditch resistance registered only small gains before digging in for the night.

On the 8th, the Second Battalion of the 314th Regiment was relieved by the 8th Division's 28th Infantry Regiment, and an attack was planned for 0700. The 28th Infantry Regiment and the 314th Regiment's Second Battalion jumped off on schedule but neither unit made any headway. Meanwhile, the 314th Regiment's First Battalion, supported by the 749th Tank Battalion and the 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion began the final assault on La Haye du Puits. Enemy fire was heavy and accurate, enemy tanks were active, but La Haye du Puits was cleared house-by-house. As the task force closed in, the bulk of the enemy defenders withdrew to a strong point in the railroad yards to make a last-ditch stand, but the main part of the town was cleared five hours and 40 minutes after the assault began. No better tribute can be paid the men of the First Battalion than the text of the Presidential Unit Citation awarded them for their part in the taking of this strong point.

It was in the La Haye du Puits that Lieutenant Arch B. Hoge, Jr., of Tennessee, raised the same small Confederate flag which had been raised by his uncle over a village in France in World War I, and which had been raised by his grandfather over a town in the United States during the Civil War.

Mopping up "Bloody Hill," last high ground north of the Ay River, was the Division's final job in the La Haye

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#### CITATION

*The First Battalion, 314th Infantry Regiment is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action during the period 7-8 July 1944 in France. This Battalion was assigned the important mission of assaulting and capturing the strongly fortified city of La Haye du Puits. Located at the junction of two arterial highways, the city was a vital point in the breakout plans of Allied forces from Normandy to the south. Although the city was protected by a chain of well-built and carefully concealed machine-gun nests and other formidable defenses, the First Battalion advanced through a heavy concentration of artillery and mortar fire, and across dense mine fields to launch the attack. The Battalion suffered heavy losses, including many key leaders, but by nightfall, it successfully occupied strategic positions along the outskirts of the town. On 8 July 1944, the First Battalion renewed its vigorous attack while again subjected to shelling and withering machine-gun fire. Displaying an indomitable fighting spirit and tenacious aggressiveness, the Battalion drove into the city and forced the defenders to abandon their positions. Although greatly weakened by severe losses, the Battalion, undaunted and with undiminished courage pursued the retreating enemy relentlessly, engaged them in vicious hand-to-hand fighting, and drove them from the city. The grim determination and courageous actions of the personnel of this battalion in pressing the vigorous attack against a stubborn enemy, secured a vital communications center for the subsequent advance of the Allies, and in so doing reflect great credit upon themselves and the military service."*

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talions to pivot around on their left flank, bringing the Second Battalion up to the crest of Hill 84. The First Battalion on the left flank of the Regiment sent a strong force toward La Haye du Puits, but the force was withdrawn after progressing only 300 yards. Between the Third Battalion on the right and the 315th Regiment there was still a gap and through this some enemy infiltrated during the night, causing some trouble before the gap was closed.

On July 7th, after a 30-minute artillery preparation, the 313th Regiment passed through the 315th Regiment, launching an attack in conjunction with the 314th Regiment. The Second Battalion of the 313th Regiment had advanced only 400 yards when it was hit by heavy artillery fire and was forced to pull back. That afternoon the First Battalion renewed the attack, but met with no greater success, and withdrew to its original position. At 1700 that afternoon the Germans counterattacked with a battalion of infantry and several tanks, but through a joint defense of

du Puits sector. Plans called for the 315th Regiment on the right and the 314th Regiment on the left to attack the south slope of Hill 84, jumping off at noon, July 9th. The 315th Regiment crossed the LD at noon; its Second Battalion on the right, First Battalion in the center and the Third Battalion on the left. Each battalion met fanatical resistance but the First and Second Battalions reached their objectives about 1300. First to reach the goal were Companies B and G. That evening an enemy counterattack thrown against Company B was stopped cold by Division Artillery less than half an hour after it began. Hill 84 was completely cleared only after the Second and Third Battalions of the 314th Regiment wiped out remaining strong points and contact was made between the 314th and the 315th Regiments.

There, Major General I. T. Wyche, Division Commander, graphically displayed the caliber of leadership the 79th Division has enjoyed since activation. On one of his daily

villages in a desperate attempt to hold the line north of the Ay River.

Rain slowed the Allied advance, curtailed air operations and afforded the enemy valuable time. Three times a 313th Regimental task force stormed the tiny village of Le Bot before the enemy withdrew. The regimental objective—the Hiervill-Angoville area—fell only after our own aircraft mistakenly bombed the towns.

The 315th Regiment remained in Division Reserve on July 13th, while the 313th and 314th Regiments made further gains to the south. The 314th Regiment attacked in early morning and, advancing against blistering mortar fire, gained about 1,000-1,500 yards. At one point, tanks of the 749th Tank Battalion rumbled up to relieve pressure on the infantry but the advances bogged down that



*Engineers comb the streets of Lessay for mines.*



*MP's direct traffic along the route to Lessay.*

*edics administering blood plasma and oxygen to a wounded G.I.*



visits to the front, he found a platoon pinned to the slope. There was little or no cover and an understandable degree of disorganization prevailed. Repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire, General Wyche regrouped the men and led them a distance of two hedgerows to a position where they could knock out the strongpoint. At the peak of the action, in front of the battle line, he helped evacuate a wounded infantry scout.

The enemy conceded La Haye du Puits, but it was a grudging concession; as shown by the Division's casualty figures for this operation—2,930 casualties in 11 days of fighting! Highways south and east were infested with mines and last-ditch combat units covered crossroads and

evening short of the objective and a halt was called for the night. The 313th Regiment met similar resistance and it too halted its drive that night just short of its objective. Visits to the front, he found a platoon pinned to the slope. So many resistance pockets were encountered that the attached 749th Tank and 813th Tank Destroyer Battalions were constantly moved forward to support foot troops.

On the 14th of July the final Division objective was reached by the two attacking regiments, the 313th and 314th. But the enemy, which during the entire drive south from Cherbourg had comprised elements of the German 243d Division on the right of our advance, the 353d Division in the middle, and the 71st Division on the left, had already withdrawn south of the Ay River. This was the situation when the 79th Division received orders to defend the north bank of the Ay River while the remainder of the VIII Corps continued the attack against the river front.

South of the Ay River the enemy consolidated positions while his attackers moved gingerly through the liberally-sown minefields covering the far shore. While inclement weather grounded Allied air power, the enemy rushed up badly needed men and supplies to Lessay and St. Lo blew the Ay's bridges, and dug in 88's and mortars. He even launched a series of minor counterattacks to test American strength beyond the river.

Pfc. Frederick F. Richardson, Company F, 315th Regiment, and his BAR wrecked two such enemy counterattacks, resulting in 20 prisoners and 40 enemy killed and wounded. Richardson's company was holding a line along the narrow river near a dynamited bridge. He set up his BAR in the window of a stone house about 200 yards from the bridge site. While the house rocked under direct mortar hits, Richardson stuck to his post from later afternoon of one day until early evening of the next.

Time after time the enemy crossed the wrecked bridge to storm the house. Each time the sharp clatter of the BAR took its toll. There were two interruptions. On the second afternoon the enemy was granted a three-hour truce to evacuate dead and wounded from the BAR's field of fire. Shortly after, one German officer and 19 enlisted men—survivors of a force that tried to exterminate the one-man nuisance—broke out a white flag. Richardson left his window long enough to see his prisoners taken, then resumed his vigil. The end of the story is contained in the Battalion Commander's report:

*"After having his leg cut off completely by a mortar shell which burst just outside the window, Private First Class Richardson amazed the medical officers who cared for him by his coolness and good condition. Fully conscious, his only complaint was that he could not go back and kill more Germans."*

For this heroic action he received the Distinguished Service Cross.

For the next two weeks the Division sent patrols out across the river and marked time while the plans were drawn for "Operation Cobra," the great breakthrough which was to clear the Germans out of France. In this operation, the part played by VIII Corps, to which the 79th Division was attached, was a minor one at first. After repeated postponements, the 26th of July was announced as VIII Corps' D-Day for "Operation Cobra." The 79th Division's plan of attack was for the 314th Regiment to follow the 8th Infantry Division's 28th Regiment across the Ay River, after the 8th Division secured the high ground south of Lessay, while the 315th Regiment was to ford the river opposite the town.

## HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Office of the Commanding General

APO 79, U. S. Army  
25 July 1944

MEMORANDUM:

TO: All Members of the 79th Division.

(To be read by appropriate commanders.)

After several days of comparative inactivity, we are now about to start a new ball game. The winning of the pennant will depend a good deal on winning this coming game. Everybody must bat his highest. If so, we can make this a shutout.

I. T. WYCHE  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

At 0530 the 314th Regiment's cannon and mortars opened up in preparation for the 28th Regiment's attack but it was not until evening that the 314th Regiment's battalions began crossing the Ay River. Supported by tanks and advancing in spite of hidden death in the form of widespread minefields, the Division met little resistance in its envelopment of Lessay. Engineers from the 304th Engineer Battalion cleared the way for the infantry and tanks and despite heavy artillery fire the 315th Regiment was able to report Lessay taken by 2130 of the 26th.

On the 28th, the Division pushed on another 12-14 kilometers against light German resistance. Two regiments were in line, the 315th Regiment on the right and the 314th Regiment on the left, both crossing the LD at 0615. They moved up easily against almost no resistance.

The time had now come for phase III—the destruction of German military might in France. Infantry assault Divisions smashed through German defenses, armor rolled through like the cavalry of Civil War days, to punish the reeling enemy. Infantry divisions switched roles, now following up the armored spearheads and mopping up scattered enemy units unwise enough to continue the struggle. The curtain raised on the swift advance—Normandy to the Seine River. VIII Corps, now part of General Patton's Third Army, continued rolling ahead, and the 6th Armored Division rounded the bend at Avranches and headed west into the Brittany Peninsula.

Late in the evening of the 29th, VIII Corps ordered the 79th Division to prepare to follow the 6th Armored Division in its zone by shuttling, allowing the armor to exploit the breakthrough on the next day by passing through the hole the 79th Division had punched out.

On the 30th, the Division, now motorized, followed the 6th Armored's advance southward meeting no enemy opposition. Again the 304th Engineer Battalion came to the rescue when the Division's move was held up at the Sienne River by blown-out bridges.

On August 1st, the 79th Division prepared to follow the 6th Armored Division in the rapid advance up toward Brest. On the 2nd, units of the Division reached Pontorson, but during the afternoon the Army Group Commander, General Bradley, contacted General Greer to change the mission of the Division. On August 3rd, the new order placed the 79th Division in XV Corps, to protect the Third Army's left flank. The Division's immediate objective was Fougères and the Division motorized prepared to rescue

the highways leading into that city. The 79th Reconnaissance Troop reconnoitered the St. James-Fougeres highway and the 313th Regiment was ordered to advance at once on Fougeres with the 749th Tank Battalion, 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 79th Reconnaissance Troop attached. This movement began at 1800 on the 3rd, the task force following the route Pontorson-Pontaubault-St. James-Fougeres. The 314th Regiment followed up the 313th Regiment's drive and at midnight closed into an assembly area south of St. James.

Late in the evening of the 4th, the Division was warned that it would make a drive in the direction of Laval. The 106th Cavalry Squadron had already patrolled the Fougeres-Laval road as far as La Croixville where it was halted by a road block. The Reconnaissance Troop reported all side roads along the Fougeres-Lavigne due Desort route were clear of enemy troops.

On the 5th, XV Corps planned to attack with the 90th Division on the left, the 79th Division on the right and the 5th Armored Division in reserve. The 79th Division's mission was to seize the important bridges over the Mayenne River at Laval. Division orders called for an attack to be made by the motorized 313th Regiment along the main Fougeres-Laval road. The 313th Regiment again became a powerful task force with the 79th Reconnaissance Troop, the 310th and 312th Field Artillery Battalions, the 749th Tank Battalion, a company from both the 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 304th Engineer Battalion, a company from the 304th Medical Battalion as well as the Division Artillery Support Party attached for the operation. If the resistance in Laval proved to be extremely heavy, the 313th Regiment was not to be committed to such an extent that it could not launch a coordinated attack with the 314th Regiment.

The drive encountered little resistance, however, until the 79th Reconnaissance Troop reached La Croixville where the advance was delayed about two hours by anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns of various calibers. The enemy pocket was wiped out and 50 prisoners bagged before the push was resumed at 1230. The advance continued until La Lande was reached where the troops were stopped by a nest of German troops aided by heavy artillery and mortar fire. The First Battalion of the 313th Regiment drove east of the road and by midnight had reached a point three kilometers northwest of Laval.

The 314th Regiment's mission was to follow the 313th Regiment and assist it if necessary in capturing Laval. The foot troops passed the initial point at 0800 and the 314th Regiment moved up to a new assembly area preparatory to helping out in the attack if the need arose.

At about 1600 that afternoon the 315th Regiment moved out of its area north of Fougeres and marched south for 19 miles, closing in their new area near St. Miherve.

That night the 313th Regiment sent out patrols to find out if the bridges in Laval were still intact. Indications were that the main body of the enemy had pulled out, blowing out the bridges as they retreated. At 0700, the attack was resumed with the First Battalion on the left, the Second Battalion on the right and the Third Battalion echeloned to the right rear. Since most of the enemy had withdrawn from Laval, the Regiment met only slight resistance. At 1600 on August 6th, the leading battalions were reported at the Mayenne River, where they found the bridges blown. Luckily there was a dam about 500 yards below the main bridges. After the local French police had opened the sluice gates, the Second Battalion crossed via the dam at 1800. A footbridge was put in below the dam and the First and Third Battalions crossed the river on this. At 1830, Company B of the Engineers



*Dead Jerry and Lessay sign*

began work on a treadway bridge in the center of the city and after this was finished, four hours later, the 313th Regiment was able to get across all of its anti-tank elements and battalion vehicles.

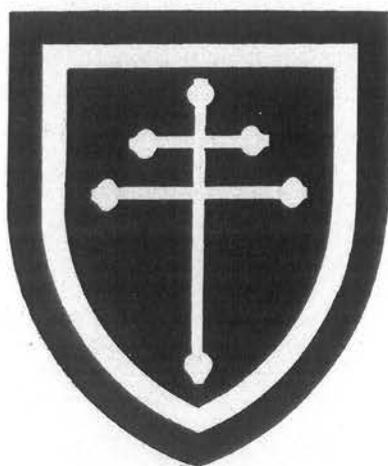
On the chance that the enemy might make a stand in the part of the city east of the Mayenne River, the 314th Regiment moved on Change, two miles north of the city. Infantry elements of the 314th Regiment met some resistance particularly on the edge of the town, but by late afternoon they were at the river bank and Change was reported clear. The First Battalion then started crossing the river using spare rafts and any boats that were handy. A bridgehead was established and the First Battalion remained in place until a bridge could be put in. The Engineers rushed up assault boats and the Second and Third Battalions were ferried across. Defensive positions were organized and the equipment for a floating Bailey Bridge arrived during the night. Next morning Company C of the Engineers began work and by noon the bridge was open for traffic.

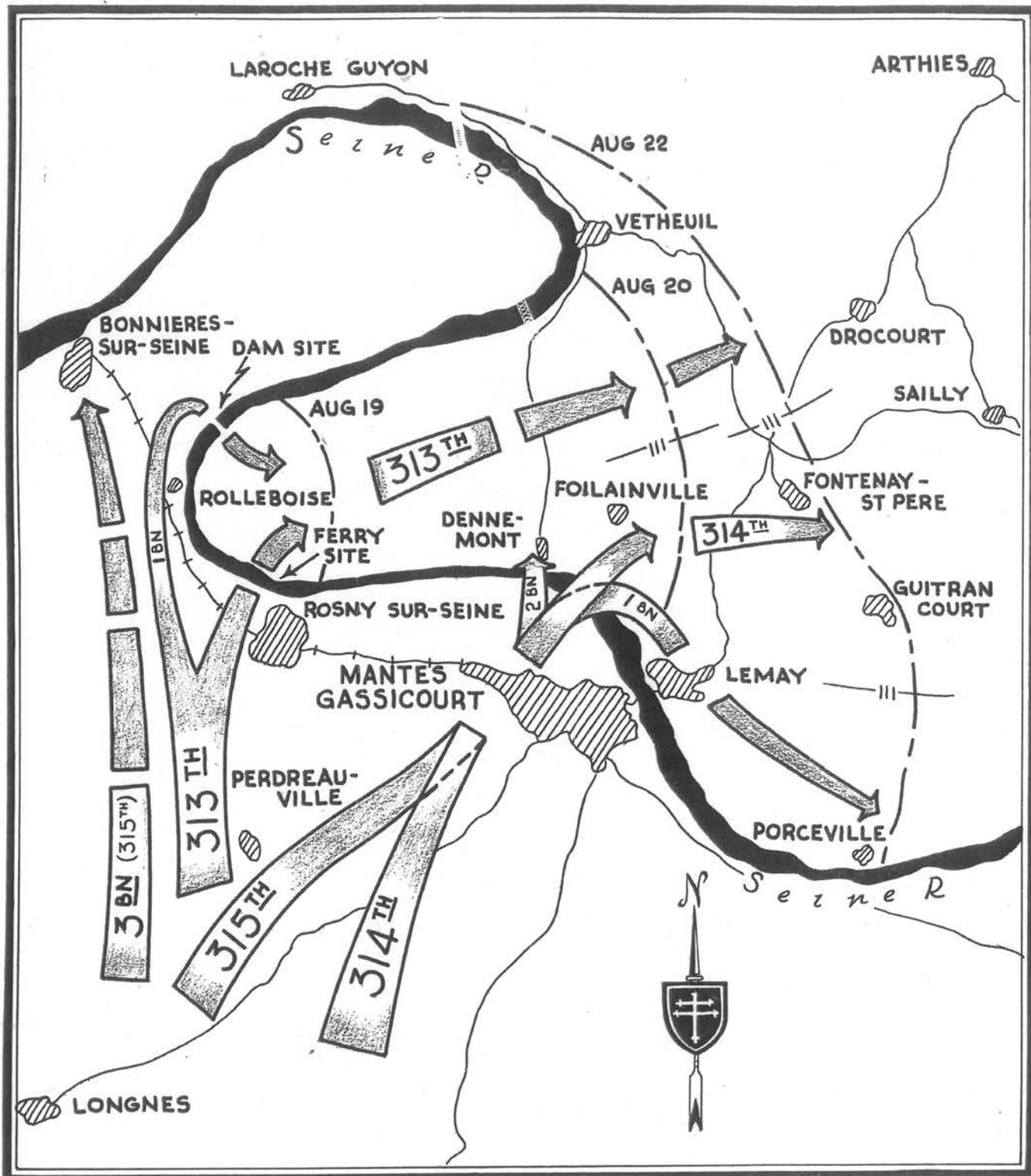
Late the next morning, the 315th Regiment was ordered to move from St. Miherve to La Tacconiere, and from there it sent out patrols to the south to clean out some pockets of resistance and at 1400 the Regiment drove three enemy companies out of their positions near St. Berthevin-sur-Vicoïn, three kilometers west of Laval. The First and Second Battalions reached the new assembly area in late afternoon and sent patrols southwards. Patrols reported Les Catries, Bas Bourg, and St. Berthevin-sur-Vicoïn clear and at 1915 on the 6th the patrols reported entering Laval, finding no resistance in that part of the city.



# TO THE SEINE BRIDGEHEAD

## CHAPTER III





XV Corps, whose instructions were to continue advancing east as rapidly as possible and to seize the important industrial city of Le Mans, planned for the 90th Infantry Division to continue moving forward on the left, with the 79th Division in the center and the 5th Armored Division on the right of the Corps front. The Division was to advance by shuttling on the road Laval-Force-Bazougers-Chermere le Roi-Cosse en Champagne-Brulon-Loue-Vallon sur Gee-Souligne sous Vallon-St. Georges du Bois. The

313th Regiment was to be motorized again and had attached to it the 749th Tank Battalion, 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion, two battalions of artillery and the 79th Reconnaissance Troop, as well as a company each from the Medical and Engineer Battalions. The 106th Cavalry Group preceded the Corps advance while the 79th Division's drive was spearheaded by the 79th Reconnaissance Troop.

The task force moved out on the morning of the 7th

behind the cavalry units, the 313th Regiment in a column of battalion (First, Second, Third). First resistance was encountered about half way to Le Mans at Avesse and the column was forced to halt for two hours while the enemy was cleaned out. At Loue the force met more resistance and the commander of the advance guard called for the infantry. The 313th Regiment detrucked and one company went forward to clear out the enemy.

Only one truckload of infantry and one officer were sent up, but despite desperate resistance on the part of the Germans, they managed to seize the important bridge at Loue before the enemy had a chance to destroy it. Soon the rest of the company arrived with a platoon of tanks and the advance continued, but heavy German resistance forced it to go into defensive positions.

Meanwhile, late that afternoon a report had been received that 800 enemy paratroopers were marching on Brulon from the south in an effort to cut off the column. The First Battalion promptly detrucked near Brulon and pushed

On the 8th of August the 315th Regiment, now motorized, was given the mission of passing through the 313th and 314 Regiments and seizing that part of Le Mans that lay in the Division's sector.

The 79th Reconnaissance Troop and the 749th Tank Battalion were attached to the 315th Regiment and the task force moved out following the route Loue-Vallon sur Gee-Boulogne sur Vallon-St. Georges du Bois into Le Mans. The 106th Cavalry Group and the 79th Reconnaissance Troop spearheaded the attack and, at 1100, reached the southwest outskirts of Le Mans where they manned road blocks while waiting for the infantry to arrive. The regiment met only sporadic resistance and, by 1500, that afternoon it detrucked outside Le Mans. By 1700, the First Battalion was across the Sarthe River and in the main square of the city; while the Second and Third Battalions went into assembly area for the night on the high ground outside the town. The Lorraine Division had liberated its third important French city—first Cherbourg, then Laval, and now Le Mans!



*Lieutenant General Patton, Major General Haislip, and Major General Wyche*

south of Avesse where they took up defensive positions. The report, however, proved to be false and the battalion was able to proceed. The Second Battalion detrucked between Mareil-en-Champagne and Loue and pushed on in the wake of the Third Battalion, which had moved on east reaching Vallon-sur-Gee, but at darkness the Third Battalion was ordered to return by way of St. Christopher-en-Champagne to a new bivouac area.

At this time the First Battalion moved back from Avesse to an area near Mareil-en-Champagne, since the presence of the 314th Regiment relieved the 313th Regiment of the necessity of protecting the route.

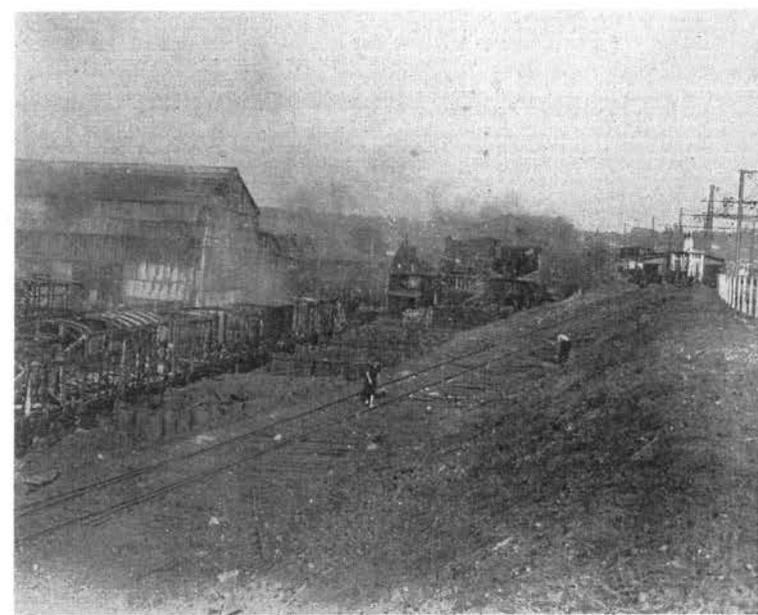
The Division's instructions provided for the 314th Regiment to move out from its bridgehead at Change to a new area where it could await the trucks released by the 313th Regiment. The trucks arrived during the evening and the 314th Regiment moved to an assembly area near Brulon.

That day the 315th Regiment moved about five miles and, crossing via the bridge at Laval, reached its new assembly area near Brulon.

During the night of the 8th, the 313th Regiment closed into a new assembly area around Les Tertres while the infantrymen of the 314th Regiment marched 21 miles to a new assembly area near Le Mans, which they reached at midnight.

On the 9th, Corps ordered the Division to finish occupying Le Mans and to prepare to defend the right (south) flank of the Corps there. Accordingly, the regiments were assigned sectors to patrol. In the afternoon new orders arrived from XV Corps.

The Corps was to drive north, the 2d French Armored Division on the left and the 5th Armored on the right. The 90th Infantry Division was to bring up the rear of the French while the 79th Division followed in the wake of the 5th Armored Division. The Corps objective was the Sees-Carrouges region, the capture of which would threaten the encirclement of the German Seventh Army to the west around Mortain. The Corps advance had brought it around to the rear of the enemy facing the British and Americans to the north, for at the same time the British



*Burning freight cars at Le Mans*



*German "88" left on the outskirts of Fougères*

and the Canadians were battering their way south toward Falaise. One regiment of the 79th Division was to be motorized and follow closely the advance of the 5th Armored Division.



*79th Division troops moving through the streets of Mamers*

The 314th Regiment was motorized and followed a route from Le Mans-Montfort le Rotrou-Sille le Philippe-Beaufay-Courcemont. The 5th Armored Division met only scattered resistance, but on the afternoon of the 10th it stopped to give the French 2d Armored Division time to bring up the Corps left flank. Accordingly, the 314th Regiment pulled up at Courcemont where it bivouaced for the night.

The 315th Regiment moved out later in the day and after a march of 19 miles the foot troops reached a new assembly area near Beaufay. The 313th Regiment followed the 315th Regiment and reached an assembly area near the later regiment that evening.

The 79th Division followed the 5th Armored Division north again during the 11th of August and the move was uneventful, since Corps had instructed the Armored units not to bypass any resistance. In accordance with Corps orders the regiments detached battalions to guard bridges over the Orne River while the Reconnaissance Troop, under Corps control, captured 89 prisoners in the course of the day's patrolling.

On the 12th, the Division moved up toward La Melesur-Sarthe, its new objective. Again there was no contact with the enemy, but the 313th and 314th Regiments were strafed during the afternoon and there were some casualties. The 314th Regiment drove up by way of Mamers-Contilly-

*FW 190 brought down near Nogent le Roi* **RESULTS** *463d AAA Battalion on the alert for Luftwaffe targets*





*Tanks passing through Nogent le Roi*



*German dispatch rider picked off by sharpshooters is rescued by an American patrol on the Seine River.*

Bleve and La Mele, closing in an assembly area just east of the latter town that evening. The 313th Regiment moved out in the morning and pushed north via Mamers-Pervencheres and La Mele to the north bank of the Sarthe River where it closed for the night.

On August 14th, Divisional units contacted some enemy units trying to escape east from the Falaise pocket. The fleeing Germans revealed their desperate position by attempting road movements during the day, always a bad mistake when the Allied Tactical Air Force was operating. The Air Force, Tank Destroyers, and Tank Battalions had a field day destroying many vehicles and strafing the routed Germans. Late in the evening of the 14th, the Division was alerted for a move east to Versailles and the dearest wish of all Allied troops, Paris. The Division was to be completely motorized and was to advance behind the 106th Cavalry Group.

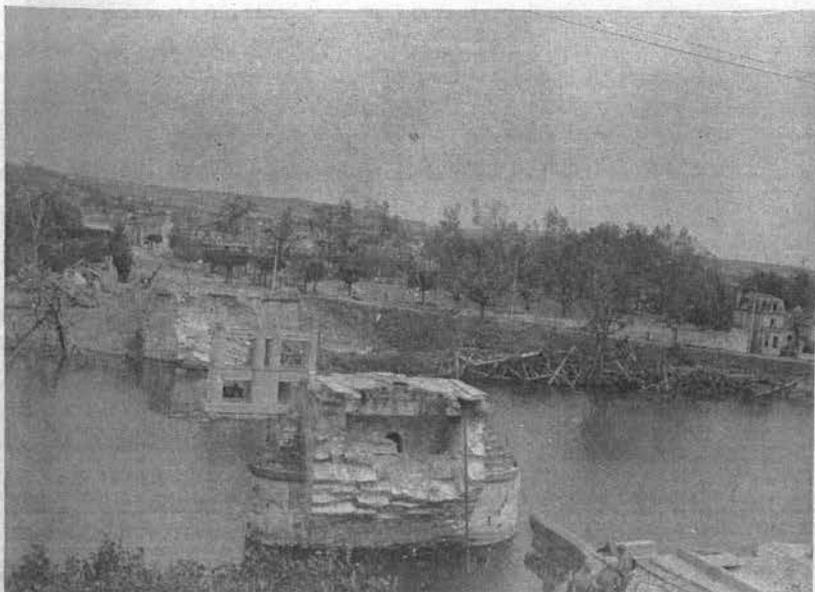
On the 15th, Combat Team 3, the 313th Regiment plus attached units, pushed ahead on the route Boece-Coulimar-Parfondeval-Courgeon-Bizou-Le Mage-Senonches and Nogent le Roi, closing in an assembly area around Nogent that evening. Combat Team 4, the 314th Regiment plus attached units, took the south route, St. Quentin de Blavon-Mannes-Le Buisson-La Loupe-Digny and Neron, closing in



*An ancient church stands alone amid the debris of Mantes.*

*German destroyed bridge across Seine near Mantes*

*Stringing communications wire to CP across Seine near Mantes*



an assembly area along the Neron-Chandres road. Combat Team 5, the 315th Regiment plus attached units, followed the north road closing near Chene-Chenu for the night.

The Division remained in the vicinity of Nogent le Roi, the only enemy contact being a visit from the Luftwaffe, with three of the black-crossed planes destroyed by the accurate fire of the 463d Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion.

As the 79th Infantry Division, on August 15, made plans to push on to Versailles and beyond Paris, the Cross of Lorraine's mission was changed. Its next objective—capture heights overlooking Mantes-Gassicourt.

This operation was designed to block the last important escape route to the East for the enemy caught in Normandy. The German supply situation was desperate and the Allies' next move—in the Seine Loop—was designed to bottle them up for keeps.

From the western heights commanding the Seine River Valley, Montes-Gassicourt looked like a dead city. This Nazi supply center had been thoroughly damaged by air and artillery fire. All that was left was the wreckage of enemy vehicles.

The 79th Reconnaissance Troop probed in and out of the city. Resistance to these advances had been spasmodic, and intelligence reports indicated that only light enemy forces were holding the Seine River line opposite the Division's positions at Mantes-Gassicourt.

Everything was in readiness and the men of the 79th

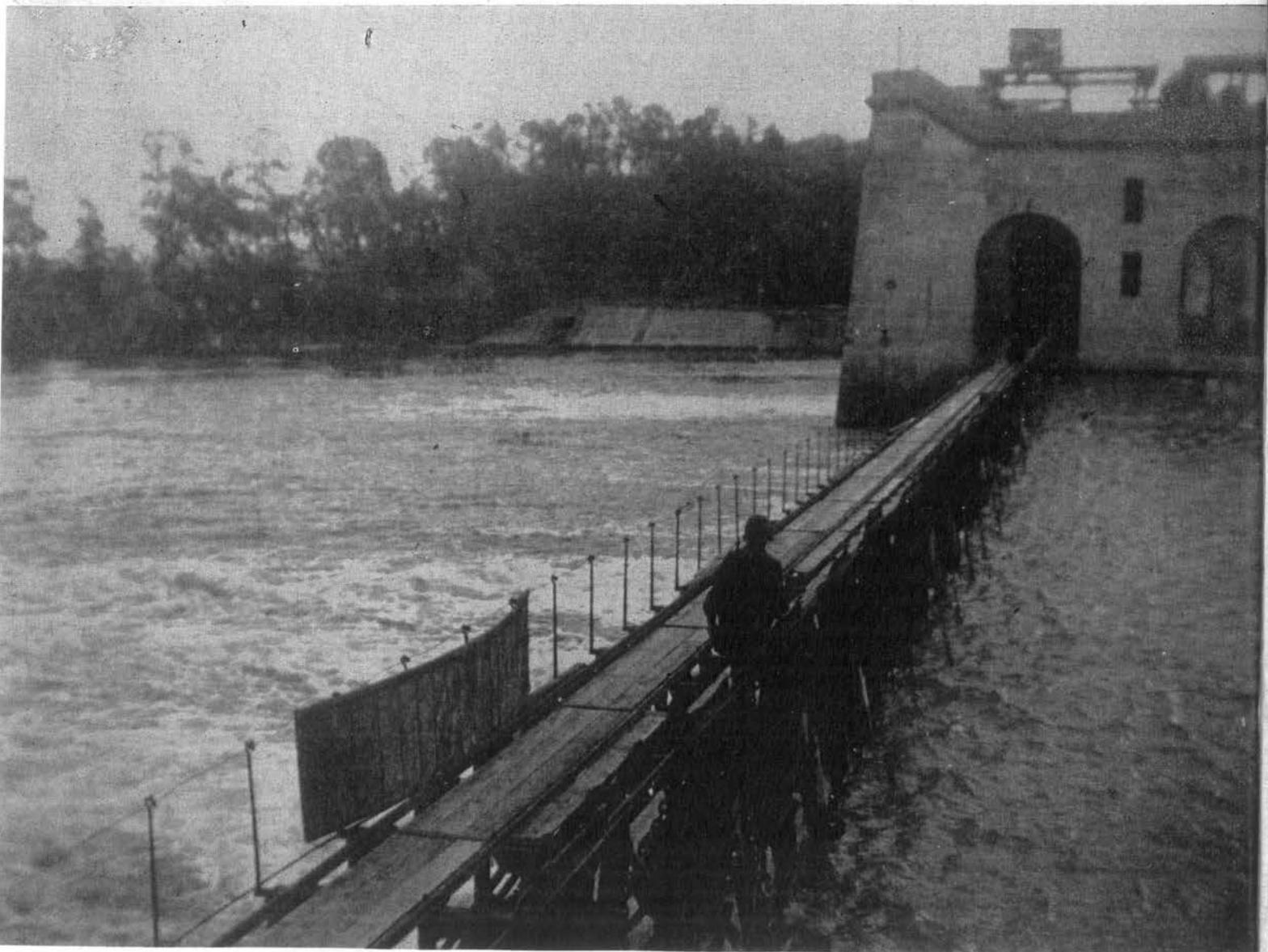
Division were set to take up positions from which they could establish fire on the Seine River and enemy routes on the other side.

The Division was motorized into two columns with the 313th Regiment on the left and the 314th Regiment on the right followed by the 315th Regiment. Subsequently these plans were changed so that the 315th Regiment was to stay at Nogent le Roi and guard the bridges there until relieved by the 5th Infantry Division. Later, however, there was still another change and the regiment was ordered to Houdan where it remained with a combat command of the 5th Armored Division under XV Corps control. The 315th Regiment was alerted to meet any German attack from the east or west.

The 313th Regiment moved on August 18th along the route Coulombs-Prouasis—Houdan-St. Lubin de la Haye-Tilly-Mereville. Only scattered enemy resistance was met and the combat team closed in at Perdreauville approximately seven hours later. The 314th Regiment followed the right route for a distance of 34 miles to the vicinity of Fontenay-Mauvoisin. The 79th Reconnaissance Troop, which was to establish liaison between the columns, performed its mission according to plan and during the day destroyed four enemy gasoline trucks.

At 1130, August 19th, following an hour-long artillery preparation laid down by battalions of Field Artillery, a 314th Regimental task force pushed into Mantes-Gassi-

*Catwalk over dam used to establish first Seine bridgehead*





*240-mm. howitzer crew in action near Mantes*

court. They reported the sector cleared. Meanwhile, the 313th Regiment mopped up wooded areas and prodded the vicinity of Rolleboise, to the north. The dams bridging the Seine had been blown out but a catwalk across one was still passable for foot troops.

Higher headquarters ordered what was left of the dam destroyed. Colonel Sterling Wood, commander of the 313th Regiment, who had sent an infantry platoon across the dam to the northern bank of the Seine, at the scene, reasoned that the platoon lacked sufficient explosives to carry out the demolition. Later that evening when Colonel Wood was going over plans for the crossing of the river by means of the catwalk he was directed by higher headquarters not to blow the dam but to move his regiment over the catwalk immediately.

It was almost midnight and raining hard. The troops had already bivouacked for the night but were awakened and began crossing in the midst of the rain and pitch darkness.

By morning the entire 313th Regiment was on the north-



*Tanks moving over ponton bridge across Seine near Mantes*



*Wine for the G.I.'s*

*Panzer outfit KO'd by TD's*

*Railroad yards at Mantes worked over by the air corps.*



ern side of the Seine River at a point where a wide loop formed a sort of inland peninsula. The Engineers built floats on which the Regiment's vehicles were ferried across the river. The 314th Regiment crossed without incident in the vicinity of Dennemont. The 79th Division, occupying the northern bridgehead, was supported by 14 batteries of artillery.

The Germans, already withdrawing from the Paris area, were taken by surprise. The 313th Regiment's CP was established in a house in the town of St. Martin, overlooking the river, and during the next few days the infantry fanned out, without meeting much opposition.

On the fifth day the CP was under enemy shell fire and Colonel Wood and his staff had to move out in a hurry.

In the meantime, the Regimental Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Edwin Van Bibber, leading a company of tanks and Rifle Company L of the 313th Regiment, had captured an elaborate enemy headquarters fitted up with underground caves and shelters abandoned by the retreating Germans.

They were told by civilians, who claimed to have talked with Field Marshal Rommel's chauffeur, that Rommel had been injured by an American Air Force bombing. The infantrymen captured several members of the other German headquarters' personnel.

Organized once again, and set up in the former German headquarters, the 313th Regiment's staff mapped its further action against the enemy. Their planning, however, was interrupted by the Germans' launching counterattack after counterattack. For five days, the enemy struck at the 79th Division's operations. Each attack resulted in staggering losses for the enemy. The nation's press and radio sang the praises of the 79th Division's rugged and courageous fighting. Lee McCardell, war correspondent on the scene, described the Division's position as a "stubby finger, sticking into enemy territory . . . it was sort of a Bunker Hill proposition, as the 79th soldiers described it afterwards. They had placed machine-guns behind the wall in which they had made embrasures. Sitting at their gun positions, calmly smoking as they watched the desperate Germans advance, they held their fire until they could almost see the whites of their eyes." A news commentator in the United States lauded the then unidentified 79th Division as the "burr under Germany's saddle." German press and radio referred to the Division's lightning advances as an "airborne landing." It appeared their high command was in no end of confusion.

The story of those days in which the enemy made day after day attempts to wipe out the Seine bridgehead is worth repeating. It is a story of the fighting American soldier at his best. It is a diary of how the Germans were thrown for a loss every time they attacked. Here is that day to day report:

August 19th—The Regiments remained in their position for most of the day and during the morning a task force from the 314th Regiment entered Mantes-Gassicourt and reported the city clear. Patrols were sent out by the 313th Regiment and they cleared the woods in their sector and went as far north on the river bank as Rolleboise. An officer and two enlisted men from Company A of the Engineers were the first Americans across the Seine, making an unopposed crossing over the dam. The 79th Division thus became the first division in the ETO to have elements cross the Seine River. Other crossings were made later in the day by the 313th Regiment at this dam and by the 314th Regiment at Mantes-Gassicourt. Some signs of enemy activity were observed and enemy aircraft were over the Division sector in considerable strength.

On the afternoon of 19 August General George Patton, Commanding General of the Third Army, visited the CP and told General Wyche that he would like to take a look at the Seine. General Wyche took him to an observation post overlooking the Seine in front of Mantes-Gassicourt. After a short while General Patton decided he must get back to his headquarters. Here they parted, since General Wyche had some business at the front. After about 15 minutes he went back to the CP, there to find General Patton, who had had car trouble. While waiting to have the car repaired, General Patton inquired as to the suitability of this area for crossing the Seine. General Wyche told him that he had only made a map reconnaissance, but would make a ground reconnaissance right away. The general plan contemplated the relief of the 79th Division by a division of the First Army which would make the crossing, and sending the 79th to the southeast of Paris. At that time the plan had not been changed and General Patton said that he was not ordering any reconnaissance for a crossing, but that it might be a good thing to do.

At 2130, General Wyche received an order from Corps alerting the Division for a move across the Seine River on the night of August 19th-20th. A little later further instructions directed the 5th Armored Division to get a treadway bridge to Longnes by 0300 and provided for the 315th Regiment to move from Houdan. At 2230 the 313th Regiment was notified that it was to get a battalion across the river before daylight. The rest of the Regiment was to follow the First Battalion and Companies A and C of the Engineers were to be in support and were to bring up assault boats and infantry support rafts. The 314th Regiment was held in preparation for crossing to be made after daylight in the vicinity of Mantes. Company B of the Engineers supported the Regiment in this operation.

August 20th—Company F, 313th Regiment, had secured a bridgehead at the dam so that when the order to cross was received by the 313th Regiment the rest of the Second Battalion was instructed to cross. This move was begun at 0120 and by 0845 the foot troops of all three battalions were across without incident. The Engineers began ferrying vehicles across at 0830 and at 1835 this operation was completed. The Regiment moved east and prepared to take up positions on the high ground near Vetheuil.

Patrols from the 314th Regiment had previously found the high ground clear, so the 314th Regiment's daylight crossing was also made without incident. At 0820, the regiment was told to go ahead by the Division and at 0824 the foot troops of the First Battalion began to ferry across. This crossing took place with engineer craft having been marshalled in the lagoon before crossing the river. By 1100, all of the foot troops had gotten across in assault boats and, at 2000, the last vehicle was taken over. The battalions took up positions with the First Battalion on the left, the Third Battalion on the right, and the Second Battalion in reserve west of Follainville. As the two leading battalions moved east towards the road running north from Limay, they came upon small groups of enemy and, from 1500 to 1930, some skirmishes took place. At 2130, the regiment moved into final positions along this road.

The 315th Regiment was alerted for a move from Houdan to join the rest of the Division. Later in the morning it moved out and to Roany-sur-Seine where it closed in at 2100. It was in this town at the

ferry site that Corps Engineers put up the 40-ton treadway bridge secured from the 5th Armored Division. This bridge, 565 feet long, enabled tanks and tank destroyers to cross and aid in the projected defense of the bridgehead. The 79th Reconnaissance Troop took over the bridge with the new mission of screening and patrolling the Division's front. It established the troop CP at Fontenay-St. Pere.

August 21st—During the day the bridgehead was expanded to the southeast and considerable Corps artillery was brought over to support the Division's fire. The enemy kept sending over many planes in efforts to knock out the bridge. The anti-aircraft artillery had a "field day" when it shot down 11 enemy fighter planes.

The instructions were issued providing for the extension of the bridgehead and taking over control of the river bank as far as Porchenville. In accordance with the new instructions, the First Battalion of the 315th Regiment moved up through Dennemont to Limay where it took over this sector of the line from the 314th Regiment. The Second Battalion went into reserve in the vicinity of Dennemont, while the Third Battalion remained in the vicinity of Bonnières-sur-Seine. Both the 314th Regiment and the 79th Reconnaissance Troop sent out patrols and some enemy reaction was observed, particularly at Guitrancourt where an infantry company of the enemy was encountered.

August 22nd—Reports from civilians indicated that the Germans were bringing up reinforcements. So the 313th Regiment sent out a task force in an effort to determine the enemy's intentions. This task force made a reconnaissance in force along the route Vetheuil-La Roche Guyon-Cherence-Le Mares-Villers en Arthiea and back to Vetheuil. Considerable opposition was met at La Roche Guyon and from prisoners taken both here and at Villers it was definitely learned that reinforcements were being brought up.

A German force was seen in the vicinity of Guitrancourt to the front of the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment and in Company K's sector. A platoon of tanks was sent out to dispose of it. The enemy force was completely wiped out, the town cleared and an outpost left there. At 2030 the enemy began the first of his series of attempts to liquidate the bridgehead, for the 36th GAF Regiment (18th GAF Division) attacked at that hour in an effort to drive the Division back from the Limay-Fontenay road. This attack was launched at about the boundary between the First and Second Battalions of the 314th Regiment. The Germans were able to gain some ground but the advance was stopped by heavy fighting and, by 0030, it was all over.

August 23rd—The enemy resumed his attacks again in the morning with troops of the 33d and 36th GAF Regiments whose attack was supported by four tanks. Company I of the 314th Regiment was driven from its positions but it was soon re-organized and with the support of Company B of the 749th Tank Battalion it was able to regain its position. Two of the enemy's tanks were knocked out and he suffered further losses in men. This attack also hit Company E of the 315th Regiment, which was outposting the Regiment's lines in this sector. But this attack had no serious results.

The Division's plan of defense called for extensive use of artillery and its attachments. More than 30 batteries could be called on and their fires did much to prevent any stronger German attacks than those made. A mobile task force had been organized with

the Engineer and Tank Battalions and it was planned to rush this force to any sector where the enemy's attacks were making dangerous progress. As it was, though, this force was never needed.

August 24th—The re-arrangement of army boundaries put XV Corps and the 79th Division into the First Army

The 35th GAF Regiment attacked in the sector of the 313th Regiment, particularly in the zone of the First Battalion. There was considerable, though sporadic, artillery and small arms fire, but the Division's lines held and, by 1600, what ground had been lost was recovered. The American artillery was again active and according to prisoners this caused many enemy casualties.

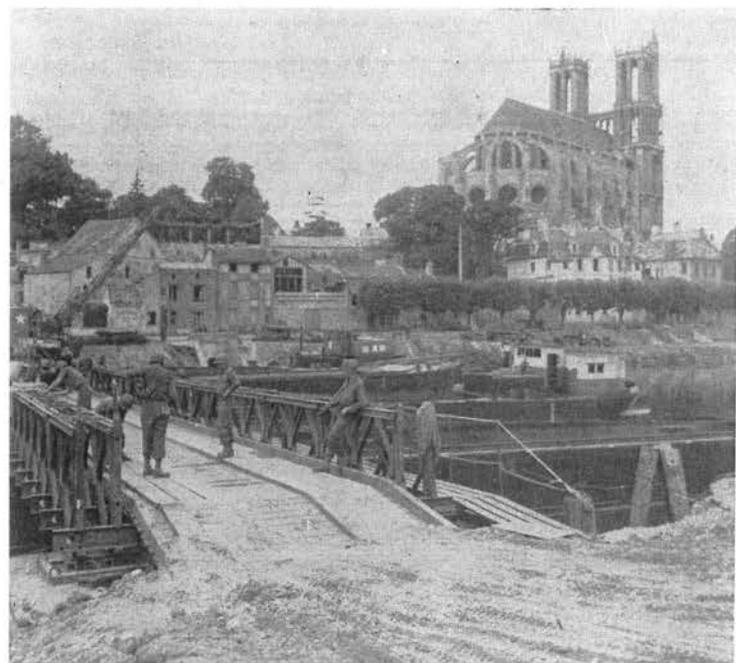
August 25th—There was much patrolling done by the regiments and the Reconnaissance Troop and numerous enemy positions were spotted. This information was put to excellent use by the artillery which during the night fired a big program of harassing and interdicting fires—4,600 rounds of 105-mm. ammunition and 1,048 rounds of 155-mm. ammunition were expended.

The Third Battalion of the 315th Regiment was released from XV Corps control and during the day it moved across the river and to an assembly area. The Division reserve was now composed of this battalion, the 304th Engineer Battalion and the 749th Tank Battalion. The 314th Regiment was instructed to move its Second Battalion to the rear of the First Battalion as a safeguard against further attacks on the 313th and 314th Regiments.

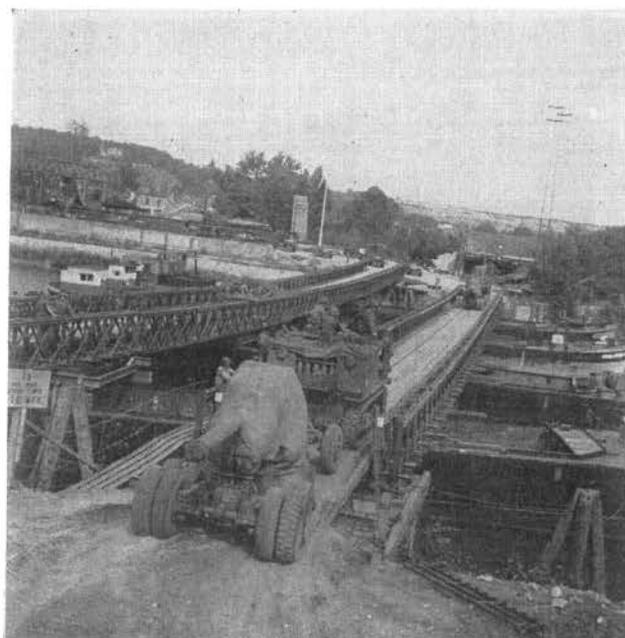
August 26th—In the afternoon and evening the enemy made two more attacks thereby continuing his expenditures of men and tanks by piecemeal methods. The first attack came at 1630 and was directed against the 314th Regiment, particularly its First Battalion. This battalion was subjected to heavy artillery fire, and some Nebelwerfer fire, the first of the latter since Cherbourg. About a battalion of the enemy's infantry, supported by 15 tanks, came up against the Third Battalion, but artillery fire broke up the attack and did the same thing whenever the enemy officers tried to regroup their men. The tanks moved in again towards the First Battalion, where their fire caused casualties, but they were driven back by the tank destroyers and the artillery. In this action several enemy tanks were destroyed or knocked out. The Second Battalion, 35th GAF Regiment, attempted to advance towards the 313th Regiment's positions, but again artillery fire broke this up. In neither of these attacks was the enemy able to come within 500 yards of the Division's MLR.

The Allied bridgehead was at this time in the process of being enlarged, for the British 43d Division had crossed the Seine River in the vicinity of Vernon. XV Corps planned to extend its bridgehead beginning with an attack at 1600 on the 27th with the 79th Division on the left and the 30th Infantry Division on the right, which was to relieve the right flank units of the 79th Division.

It was estimated that during the knotting of the Seine loop 79th Division men along with other XV Corps troops were responsible for inflicting more than 25,000 casualties upon the enemy! Approximately 12,000 Prisoners of War were taken and a conservative estimate of German equipment captured or destroyed during the operation included 200 tanks, 225 artillery pieces and 675 vehicles! The Luftwaffe also suffered heavy losses—50 planes downed by the ground forces.



**BRIDGING AND CROSSING  
ACTIVITIES  
AT THE SEINE BRIDGEHEAD  
NEAR MANTES**



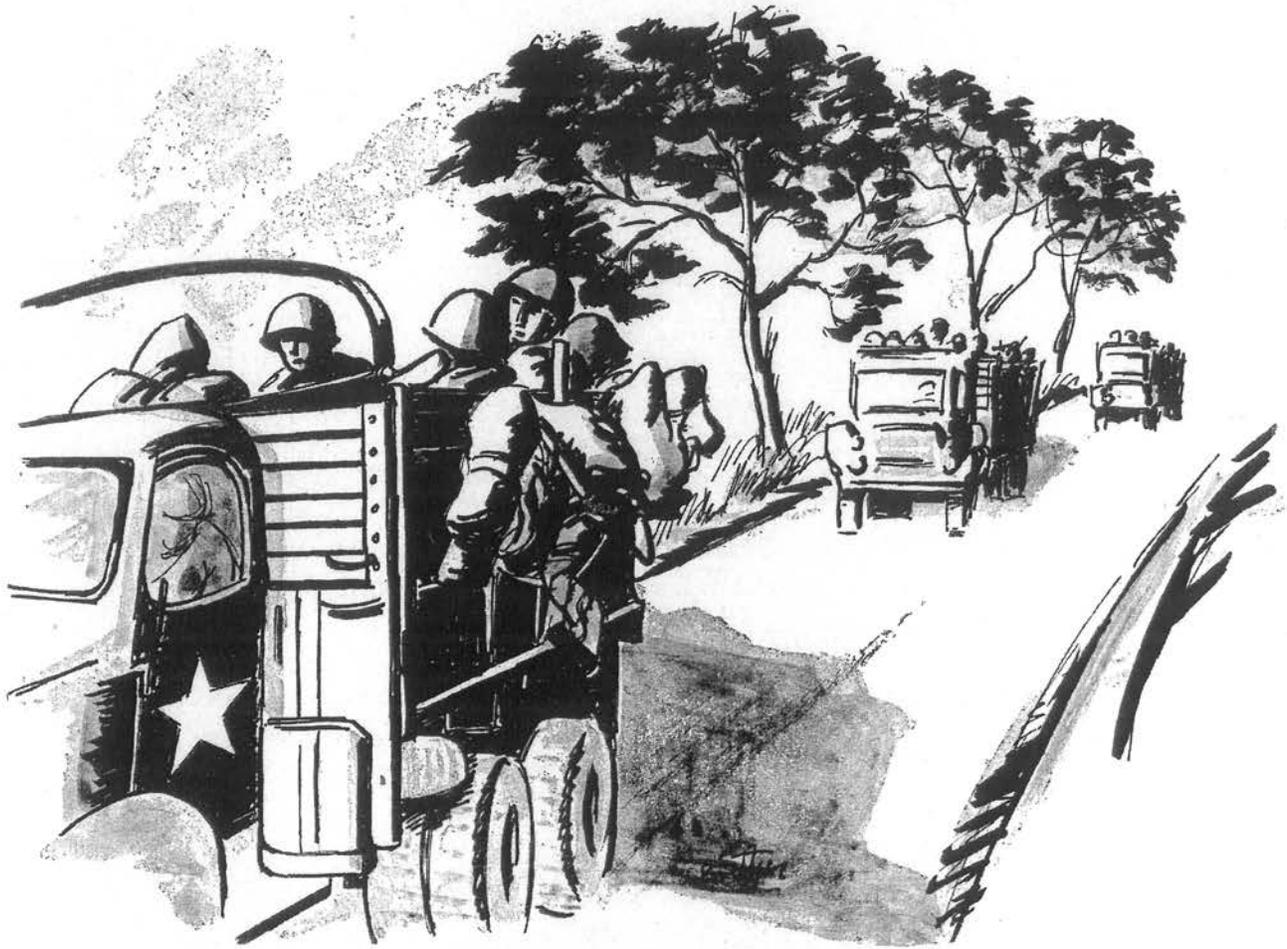
**SECTION II**

**TO BELGIUM AND BACK**

31 August 1944 — 25 October 1944

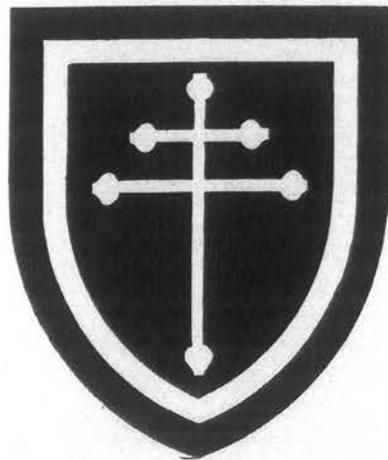
CHAPTER I—From Belgium to the Moselle

CHAPTER II—The Foret De Parroy



# FROM BELGIUM TO THE MOSELLE

## CHAPTER I



On August 30, 1944, the 79th Infantry Division launched a history-shattering operation. The Cross of Lorrainers were ordered to the Belgian border and General Wyche announced that the 79th Division would become a part of the First United States Army, under XIX Corps, in a new operation. This operation called for the 79th Division to make a rapid move to the Franco-Belgian border by midnight of September 2nd, in the vicinity of St. Amand.

It was necessary for Allied troops to be in position at the earliest possible moment. In 72 hours the 79th Division traveled 180 miles to arrive in the assembly area and was ready to contest any German threat!

The record-breaking dash to the Belgian border by the motorized 79th Division found our men traveling across battlefields of World War I, past places famed for the glorious fighting of the Allies in 1917-1918. The Division rolled up a second record by being one of the first American divisions in World War II to cross the Belgian border!

In the words of the XIX Corps Commander, Major General Charles H. Corlett, it was "one of the fastest opposed advances by an infantry unit in the history of warfare."

The change in the Allied time-table caught the Germans completely off guard. They had heard of the 79th Division's exploits at Cherbourg but did not expect to meet this battle-wise division in this sector. Our troops were aware, from intelligence reports, that the enemy was preparing for a last-ditch stand and was determined to contest every inch of the way.

On September 1st, the Cross of Lorrainers started on their new mission. They were preceded by the 113th Cavalry Squadron with the 2nd Armored Division on the left and the 30th Infantry Division. The 79th Reconnaissance Troop performed liaison missions with these adjacent units.

The 314th Combat Team, including Division Headquarters, Division Artillery, the 79th Signal Company, the 304th Engineer Battalion and the 311th Field Artillery Battalion, moved out. Their route led through Etony, St. Just-en-Chaussee, Tricot, Faverolles, Guerbigny, Rosieres-en-Santerre, Chaignes, Dompierre, and Fueilleres. The Somme River was reached after the retreating Germans had blown out all existing bridges. Company B of the 304th Engineer Battalion quickly put up a treadway bridge and within a short time foot troops crossed the river, with vehicles following after the span had been completely constructed.

The 304th Engineer Battalion's work in this operation was commendable in view of the Luftwaffe-infested days. Despite frequent attempts by the enemy to smash the bridgehead the Engineers constructed three bridges, one with largely on-the-spot material.

The bridgehead having been established, the 313th and 315th Regiments reached the river after an uneventful march through Clermont, Lieuvillers, the road junction just south of Tricot, Boulogne-la-Grasse, Marquivillers, Andeschy, Rouvroy-en-Santerre, Vermandovillers, Fay, Barleux, and Ommicourt-les-Clery. Once again the Engineers were on the spot to replace a bombed-out bridge—this time one of steel and logs was erected. The move from

Noailles to the Somme River covered a distance of about 60 miles and during it, Division troops met slight resistance.

The following day, September 2nd, regimental teams contacted the enemy. All objectives were reached, with the 313th Regiment's assembly area the only one in Belgium—just north of the frontier. Another 65 miles had been clicked off by Division Units and for three days they remained in their assembly areas, until September 5th, when the 79th Division was alerted for a move to the vicinity of Reims.

The Germans were now in full retreat but the High Command had reason to believe the dash backwards by the Nineteenth German Army was being planned in shrewd fashion. Our intelligence reports confirmed this contention and it was learned the enemy, anticipating a possible thrust from General Patton's Third United States Army, had taken up defensive positions near towns flanking the main

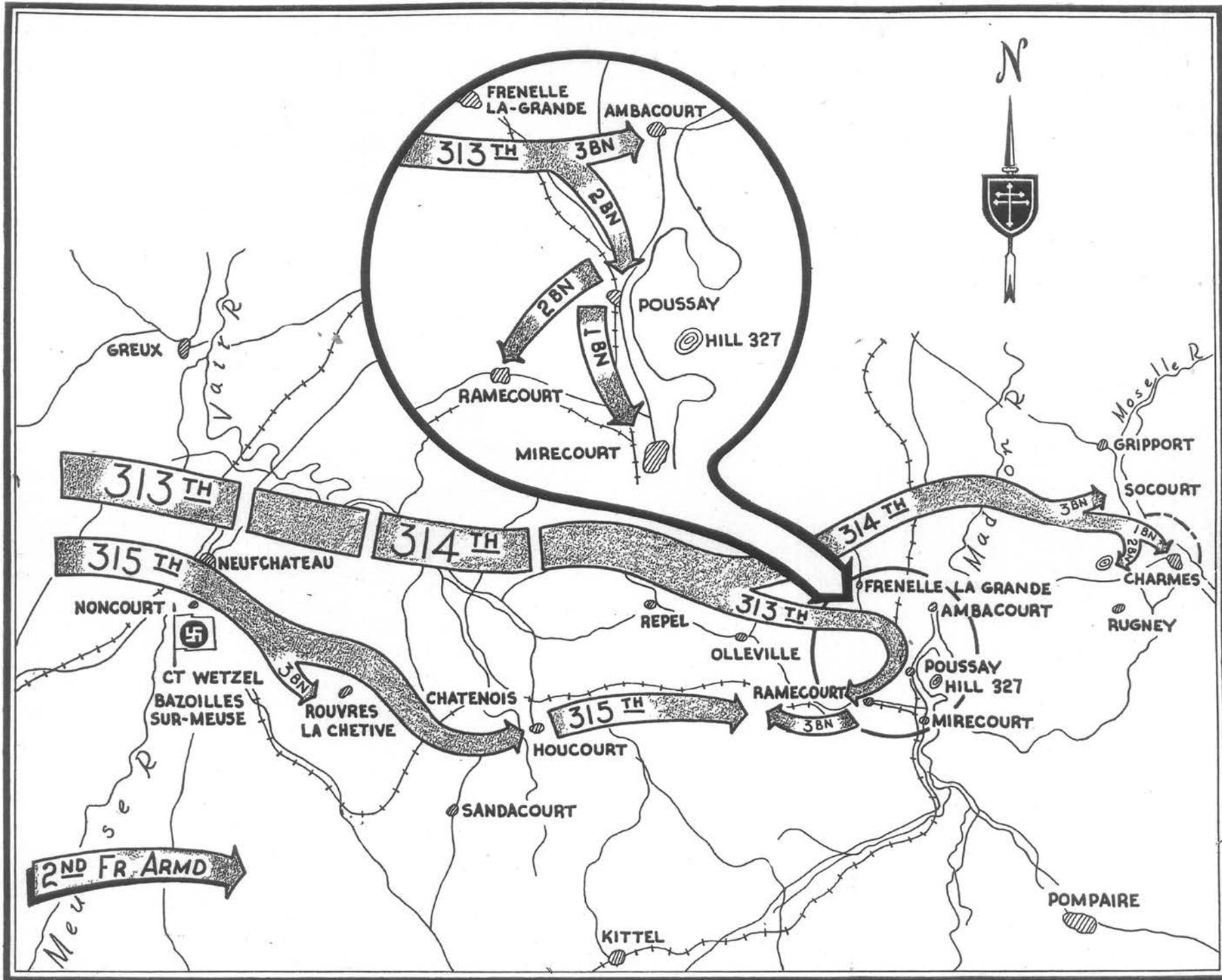


*Field Marshal Montgomery at Beauvais*

road from Chatillon-sur-Seine to Neufchateau, then east to Charmes and the river.

The move to Reims required split-second planning as shortages of gasoline and transportation made it necessary to shuttle units to the new area. By September 9th, the entire Division was represented in the Reims area where it was learned that they would join General Patton's Third United States Army and become part of the XV Corps again. All hands assembled without incident at Joinville after passing through Veres, Lovois, Mareue, and Brienne-le-Chateau.

The campaign to oust the Germans from their defensive line in and around the Moselle started to shape up on September 11th. The 314th Infantry Regiment attacked first at 0806, preceded by the 121st Cavalry Squadron. Its mission was to capture Charmes and establish a bridgehead on the East side of the Moselle River as quickly as possible—a total of 65 miles to the west. Following the north



route which passed through Coussey, Removille, Repel, Frenelle, and Poussay into Charmes, this task force was able to reach Frenelle without incident, but here it had to leave this route because the 121st Cavalry Squadron reported several towns to the south of the route, and the town of Poussay on the route, strongly held by the enemy. The 121st Cavalry Squadron dropped off a task force to contain the enemy while the 314th Regiment continued on its mission moving to the northeast and coming into the outskirts of Charmes from the northwest arriving at 1915 hours.

Later it was discovered that the 79th Infantry Division had performed an unusual feat for it had marched across the entire front of the German 16th Infantry Division! Enemy documents captured later revealed that this German Division was in position facing north and on a line from Neufchateau east to Charmes and was preparing for an attack to the north.

The 313th Infantry Regiment, mounted in organic transportation and on Division and Corps artillery vehicles, which was followed up by the 314th Regiment, was ordered to peel off in the vicinity of Frenelle and to go into an assembly area in preparation for an attack on Poussay and Ambacourt the next day, September 12th.

The 315th Infantry Regiment moved on foot a total of 22 miles to an assembly area west of Neufchateau and made preparations for an attack on that town the next day.

On the 12th of September, all three regiments attacked their respective objectives—the 314th Regiment at Charmes, the 313th Regiment at Poussay and Ambacourt, and the 315th Regiment at Neufchateau. The Division was now fighting on a 40-mile front!

All regiments met very stiff resistance. The 314th Regiment, however, after heavy street fighting was able to report Charmes in their hands at 1410 hours. Moving quickly to seize the bridge across the Moselle, the First Battalion arrived in time to have the Germans blow it up almost in their faces. Reconnoitering the river, the First Battalion found a spot about 300 yards north of the blown-out bridge where the river could be forded. Attempting to cross here they ran into extremely heavy enemy fire and were forced to discontinue the attack.

The 313th Regiment, 20 miles to the west, was meeting very stubborn resistance. Just south of Frenelle-la-Grande, the enemy was using heavy artillery and machine-gun fire and was also very well dug-in between the towns of Ambacourt and Poussay. By 2230 hours that night, the regiment was still short of its objective so plans were made for the Third Battalion to attack and seize Ambacourt from the west the following day. The rest of the regiment was to continue its attack on Poussay.

The 315th Regiment attacked Neufchateau at 1000 hours, sending the First Battalion in from the northwest. The Second Battalion took up positions south of the town blocking any enemy reinforcements which might come in from that direction. Bitter fighting took place, the enemy making full use of the buildings in town to mount his weapons. Anti-aircraft guns were depressed and brought to bear on the First Battalion, but in spite of all this stubborn resistance, the town was in our hands by 2400 hours.

The morning of the 13th of September, the First Battalion of the 314th Infantry Regiment again attacked across the Moselle River using the ford, which had been improved by Company B of the 304th Engineer Battalion to allow tank destroyers and heavy vehicles to cross. The attack was successful and, by 0925, a secure bridgehead had been established on the east side of the river.

The 313th Regiment resumed its attack on Ambacourt and Poussay, with the Third Battalion overrunning the former town by 1030 hours. Poussay continued to be a

hard nut to crack, frontal attacks were meeting considerable opposition; so the First Battalion was sent around to the southeast of the town with orders to attack from that direction, while the Second Battalion was ordered to attack from the west. Darkness halted the attack as the battalions reached the outskirts of the town.

The 315th Regiment, after clearing out die-hard snipers in Neufchateau, continued attacking east toward Chatenois, overcoming enemy strongpoints along the way. At this point, it was discovered that the 315th Infantry Regiment's move east from Neufchateau, and the Second French Armored Division's progress to the south, meant that a whole German combat team was off from the main body of the enemy and was ready to talk surrender terms.

A guard from the Anti-Tank Company of the 315th Infantry Regiment brought in a German officer to the regimental CP under a flag of truce. Members of the Interrogators of Prisoners of War Team talked with the German Lieutenant and were informed that Colonel Wetzel, of Combat Team "Wetzel," was prepared to discuss terms of surrender.

*"Lieutenant Colonel McAleer, Battalion Commander of the 315th Infantry Regiment, was recalled from the front lines to talk terms to the envoy. The German stipulated that our Commanding Officer should submit in writing that the Geneva convention would be adhered to and that the Germans would not be molested by the Free French to whom they referred as 'terrorists.' Colonel McAleer freely gave the written agreement requested, stipulating that some troops would be immediately evacuated to a rendezvous point and that no equipment would be destroyed. Lieutenants Kofler and Schwarz and a sergeant of the Interrogators of Prisoners of War Team were ordered to accompany the enemy emissary to the German CP, which was located in a chateau in Bazoilles, two miles from our friendly outposts. Colonel McAleer's stipulation was personally delivered to Colonel Wetzel. He expressed his satisfaction with it and discussion relating to evacuation was begun.*

*"Colonel Wetzel, who has been in the German Army for 30 years and has been decorated with one of the highest of German decorations (Ritterkraz), appeared satisfied and agreed to the terms of surrender. He suggested that he and his men appear at a designated rendezvous point the following day. This is where the difficulty began. Colonel McAleer had expressly instructed his representatives that the evacuation of enemy troops begin at once. When this point was brought out to Colonel Wetzel, he was extremely indignant that the word of a German officer should be doubted. When he was told, however, that our artillery objective for that night was the very CP in which he was so comfortably situated, he agreed to deliver one company at once!*

*"In the meantime, a convoy of GI trucks arrived at the rendezvous point. With a German officer as a guide, Lieutenant Fay of the Anti-Tank Company and Lieutenant Schwarz moved to the outskirts of Bazoilles for the preparation of the evacuation of German troops. It was then that the three American officers and the sergeant discussed the final details of the surrender in the German CP. During all this time, the Germans were armed to the teeth, and the position of the American personnel did not seem too secure.*

*"At this point, the German colonel, indicating that this was not one of the happiest moments of his life, brought out the cognac and negotiations became considerably easier. The final agreement was that Colonel Wetzel would surrender himself and his troops, to-*

gether with all vehicles, weapons and ammunition, to us by 1000 on September 14th. The American officers decided that the first company evacuated during the night should be the Heavy Weapons Company. This was accomplished at 0200.

"The remainder of the German troops were scattered over an area of approximately 16 square miles. Since our troops were deployed in the same vicinity, and because of the necessity for speed in the evacuation, it became evident that any movement of troops might result in contact leading to combat. After specific instructions to all American troops who could be contacted, we were fortunate enough to avoid any shooting. The German units began to close in the CP area by 0400, at which time final details for the evacuation had been completed. During the course of the evening, Colonel Wetzel, who had lost an eye in Russia and had received an off-color glass eye in exchange, stated that his best course would be to kill himself. He was quickly dissuaded by the suggestion that Germany would need him in the period of rehabilitation.

"At this point, the Americans felt out the Colonel on his feelings toward the Hitler regime. After placing his glass eye on the table and fixing the American officers with the good one, the Colonel made it apparent that he was not in sympathy with the Nazi regime. After some time, and sampling of wine and cognac, the Colonel instructed his adjutant to inform all officers and men available of his decision. The Germans were assembled and heard the Colonel's message like true Nazis. Upon the order of the adjutant, they snapped to attention, and the adjutant raised his right arm and shouted: 'Sieg!'; whereupon the stooges raised their arms and yelled: 'Heil!' This went on for at least two minutes. At 0700, the first units of the German motorized company reached the intermediate rendezvous and all weapons and arms were loaded on our two and one-half ton trucks. By 0950 the entire Regiment had completed its operation. At 1000 the complete motorized German Regiment, consisting of 84 vehicles in a two-mile long column, moved to the rendezvous and there Colonel Wetzel surrendered to General Greer, Assistant Division Commander."

Included in the weapons and motor vehicles captured in the surrender were two 88-mm. guns, a six-gun battery, 45 trucks, 29 personnel autos, five motorcycles, two half-tracks and three Red Cross trucks.

With the movement of this enemy column to our rear Prisoner of War enclosure, the problem arose for its protection against our own Air Corps. The solution for this was found by placing red identification panels on all vehicles. Another problem arose—this column now looked like an allied convoy and would be at the mercy of the Luftwaffe! To counteract this it was decided to let the Germans man their own anti-aircraft artillery guns. Finally, due to the shortage of manpower, only one Military Police vehicle was placed at the front of the column and one at the back, with the enemy's own MP's riding up and down the length of the convoy to keep it in line! The only moment of anxiety given the column was when two P-47's flew over, but the red panels kept them from attacking.

On September 14th, the 313th Regiment punched into Poussay from both sides and, by 1100, after a short engagement, the town was cleared. The First Battalion then pushed on to Mirecourt which they took during the afternoon, while the Second Battalion pushed west to engulf Ramecourt and to meet the 315th Regiment advancing from the west. The day's bag of Prisoners of War for the 313th

Regiment totaled 300, very few of whom gave up voluntarily.

After overcoming heavy resistance at Chatenois, the 315th Infantry Regiment continued on west through Houcourt, Gironcourt, and Dombasle, forming a pocket with the 313th Infantry Regiment which trapped some 500 Germans. Desperately, the enemy tried to break out through the 313th Regiment's lines in the vicinity of Ramecourt, but after a night of wild fighting, this force was destroyed to the last man.

For the five days which this operation took to complete, the Division captured a total of over 2,200 prisoners. This operation led to destruction of the famous German 16th Infantry Division. According to XV Corps, the 79th Division had "played a principal part" in the "annihilation of this Nazi unit."

At this time the Division had the pleasure of seeing its first overseas USO show, the star being Bing Crosby. Due to the wide sector held by the 79th Division, two performances were arranged. The afternoon show scheduled for men of the 313th Regiment was held in the vicinity of Ambacourt while the evening show was staged in the 314th Regiment's area at Charmes. Troops from the 313th Regiment constructed a platform in the center of a large field, placed anti-aircraft guns at various points to safeguard the USO troupe and men from interference from the Luftwaffe and guards at key positions in the event of a surprise attack.

The show started at 1400, September 18th, and for more than an hour the battle-weary doughboys had the opportunity to forget the war.

The evening performance had hardly been under way for more than 15 minutes when there was an interruption. Various combat teams were ordered via the loud speaker to leave the area and return immediately to their respective units. The show continued once again, but as entire battalions returned to the front, the USO group was forced to end its performance because of a lack of spectators. The Cross of Lorraine was on the attack again. This time the arrow pointed to the northeast in the direction of Luneville.

Moving behind the 106th Cavalry Squadron, the 79th Division traveled to their assembly areas, arriving midnight, September 18th, without incident. The 313th Regiment assembled in the vicinity of Landecourt, the 314th Regiment in the area of Moriviller and the 315th Regiment in reserve to the west of Moriviller.

With the three regiments in position, the 313th Regiment jumped off at 0730, September 19th, in the direction of Lamath, capturing the town without much opposition. The Regiment then received orders to attack Xermamenil across the Mortagne River. Troops from the Third Battalion took part in this action while the First Battalion continued to hold Lamath. The battalion crossed the stream south of the town held by the First Battalion and attacked north into Xermamenil. Here the advancing doughboys ran into 14 enemy tanks and infantry of the 21st Panzer Division. Following a sharp engagement in which supporting fire was received from 79th Division troops in Lamath, the Third Battalion crushed all resistance and moved into the village by 2000. During this fight, three tanks of the Panzer force were destroyed.

To the south, the 314th Regiment had moved up to the Mortagne River, just above Gerberville, against light opposition; and, locating a suitable spot, the Third Battalion immediately crossed and set-up a bridgehead. The Germans in this vicinity attacked the bridgehead, but were repulsed after losing two tanks. Company B of the 304th Engineer Battalion was rushed to the front with orders to prepare a suitable crossing for heavy vehicles. In the face of enemy fire from artillery and machine-gun emplacements,

the Engineers constructed a bridge in preparation for the attack on Gerberville which was scheduled for the next day.

At 0700 hours, the 314th Regiment attacked and within an hour cleared Gerberville of enemy activity. Attention at once was focused on Fraimbois to the northeast. This objective fell in the early afternoon, but the advance was halted while the surrounding forest was cleared. Shortly after this, a patrol was dispatched to test enemy strength along the Meurthe River.

The patrol, consisting of men from the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment, made contact with the enemy's river line northeast of Fraimbois, where a force larger than a battalion held the river proper. A force of the same size was also found in "active reserve" in a wooded strip just beyond the river valley.

Everyone sensed that the going was to be tougher for the enemy was against the ropes and would fight desperately to prevent being destroyed. The Germans could do only two things—retreat or delay—and for four days during this bloody battle they adopted delaying action against the 79th Division troops who were forming the Meurthe River bridgehead.

There were others who played a major part in the success of the Meurthe River crossing. This chapter in our history should not be closed without relating how one individual—Staff Sergeant Claude K. Ramsdail (then a Private) of Company L, 314th Infantry Regiment, obtained first-hand information about the enemy's strength and guns around the Meurthe River defensive line. He undertook the job after arranging hand signals with a tank destroyer crew.

With his M-1, Ramsdail started down the hill. He was spotted immediately, and German machine-gunners and snipers opened up. Ramsdail later said he "guessed he managed to walk between the bullets." Reaching the river's edge, snipers in a farmhouse took him under fire. He snapped two quick shots in their direction and began wading the stream, rifle over his head.

Then the mortars cut loose, and Ramsdail took cover behind a German tank destroyer stalled in mid-stream. Things quieted down and he pushed on, spotting a camouflaged tank and wigwagged the tank destroyer. The enemy tank was soon in flames.

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#### CITATION

*The Third Battalion, 314th Infantry Regiment, is cited for extraordinary gallantry, outstanding courage, determination and esprit de corps in the establishment of bridgehead over the Meurthe River in the vicinity of Fraimbois, France, from 20 September 1944 to 23 September 1944. The enemy had prepared a defensive position along the northeastern bank of the Meurthe River for a determined stand against advancing American forces. The terrain along the river was flat and barren of all cover, producing excellent fields of fire for the defending force. Bridges across the river had been destroyed and about 1,000 yards to the rear of the river was a dense wooded area affording excellent cover for hostile machine-guns, mortars, and tanks. The unusual terrain features and the determination of the enemy to fight to the finish made this defensive position extremely formidable. In the face of intense enemy fire, the crossing was effected by the undaunted courage and determination of the Third Battalion. Every move made by the Third Battalion, due to the flat nature of the terrain could be observed by the enemy. Despite this unusual terrain difficulty and heavy casualties, including many key leaders, the Third Battalion continued to advance against overwhelming odds. Hand-to-hand fighting resulted and prisoners had to be forcibly removed from their emplacements at the point of the bayonet. Forty-six prisoners were taken by the Third Battalion and an undetermined number killed and wounded. Losses to the Third Battalion totaled 31 killed and approximately 160 wounded. The indomitable fighting spirit and fortitude displayed by the infantrymen of the Third Battalion, reflect the finest traditions of the armed forces of the United States.*

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Every enemy defensive position was hotly contested. The terrain along the river was flat and barren of all cover, producing excellent fields of fire for the defending Germans. Bridges across the river had been destroyed and about 1,000 yards to the rear of the river was a dense wooded area affording excellent cover for hostile machine-guns, mortars, and tanks. The unusual terrain features and the determination of the enemy to fight to the finish made this defensive position extremely formidable. In the face of intense enemy fire, the crossing was effected by the undaunted courage and determination of the 314th Regiment's Third Battalion in the vicinity of Fraimbois.

Every move by the battalion, due to the flat nature of the terrain, could be observed by the enemy. Despite this unusual terrain difficulty the 79th Division advanced against overwhelming odds. Hand-to-hand fighting resulted and prisoners had to be forcibly removed from emplacements at the point of the bayonet. The battalion took 46 prisoners and an undetermined number of the enemy was killed and wounded. Losses to the battalion totaled 31 killed and approximately 160 wounded. For this action another honor came to the 79th Division—the award of a Presidential Citation to the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment.

Meanwhile, he discovered a machine-gun emplacement not 25 yards away. He "gave it a clip" and signalled his artillery observer. While reloading, another machine-gun on his right spurted .50-cal. slugs, hitting him in the upper right leg and the left arm at the shoulder. He fell and almost drowned before he could regain his feet. Machine-gun bullets followed him like bees. He had sense enough to stay under water as much as possible, and he was just about ready to call it quits when the artillery observer took the machine-gun under fire. Somehow, Ramsdail, bleeding profusely, dragged himself back to the ford and into cover.

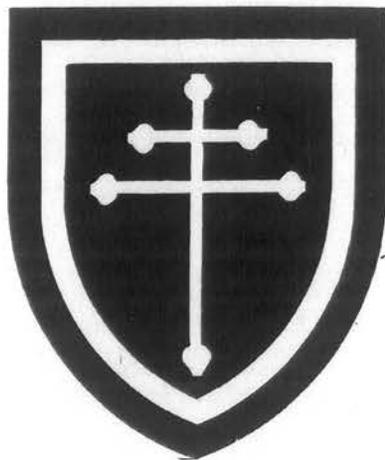
Even as he was evacuated, his battalion stormed the Meurthe River, whipped the Germans and successfully contested the wooded area beyond. In the machine-gun emplacement where Ramsdail "gave 'em a clip" were found three dead snipers. In the farmhouse, 43 prisoners were taken and two dead snipers found. The artillery observer said Ramsdail's signals accounted for at least 50 enemy casualties.

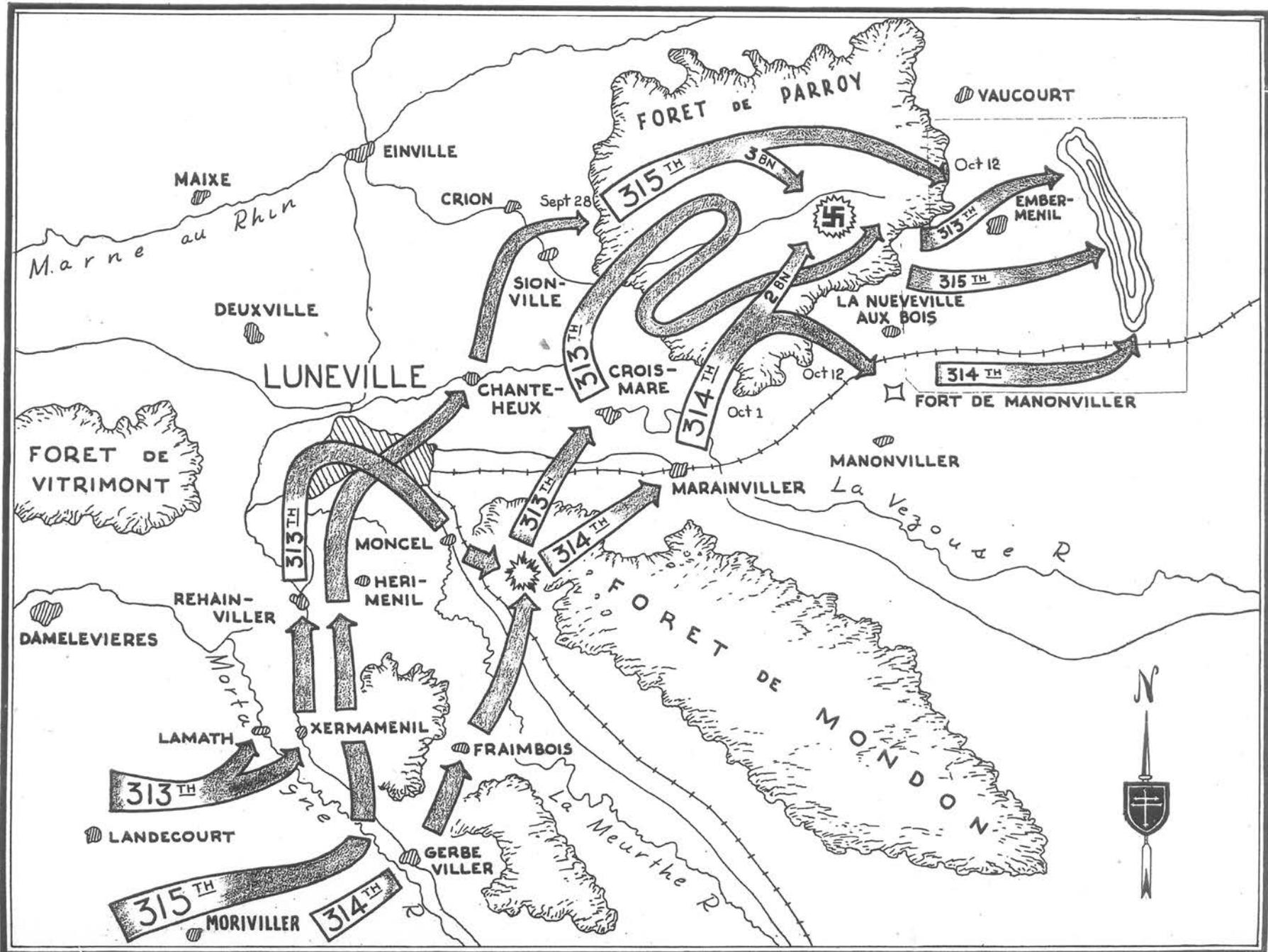
Sergeant Ramsdail recovered from his wounds to be presented with the Distinguished Service Cross by Major General I. T. Wyche, commander of the 79th Division, at impressive ceremonies attended by his entire company.



# THE FORET DE PARROY

## CHAPTER II





The Cross of Lorrainers' next objective was the city of Luneville, liberated on September 20, 1944. Although this was not a major operation to the 79th Division, the enemy fought hard at times to hold the sector. While the 313th Regiment cleared Luneville in stride, it wasn't for several days that the enemy was entirely knocked out in the vicinity. There was much small arms fire, with a fire fight thrown in at the Luneville Stadium, while in the opposite end of the city enemy artillery would strike from time to time. This fire, however, didn't last long for as our positions improved the enemy artillery positions were spotted and destroyed.

On the 21st of September the 315th Regiment moved out from its assembly area, the Third Battalion taking up positions at Gerberviller guarding the Division's right flank, while the rest of the Regiment moved to Luneville relieving the 313th Regiment, and taking up positions on the northeast and eastern outskirts of the city.

The 313th Regiment then received orders to attack in a southeasterly direction and link up with the 314th Regiment's bridgehead over the Meurthe River. Only scattered resistance was encountered to Moncel, but here a very determined enemy was met. It took six hours of very bitter fighting before the town was cleared, both sides suffering heavy casualties.

Continuing the attack, the 313th Regiment pushed on to the northwest edge of the Forêt de Mondon, where they were met by a vicious German counterattack. Reeling back from the initial impact the 313th Regiment came on again and at the end of 20 hours of wild fighting had the situation well in hand, with the Germans suffering heavy personnel casualties in addition to the loss of eight tanks. The following day, September 23rd, the 313th Regiment contacted the 314th Regiment at St. George's Farm in the Forêt de Mondon, ending one of the bitterest struggles encountered by the Division thus far in the war.

The enemy suffered heavily in the Luneville operation—

The first anniversary marking the liberation of Luneville was celebrated on September 19, 1945, with officers and enlisted men of the 79th Division returning to familiar battlegrounds where they paraded and heard Frenchmen sing their praises.

Generals Spragins, Haislip and Wyche at XV Corps headquarters, Luneville



in fact all through the Division's dash through France and Belgium the Germans' casualty list mounted with many weapons and vehicles being captured and destroyed.

The 79th Division's Order of Battle listed these enemy units contacted during the drive from Joinville to Luneville: 16th Infantry Division, 21st Panzer Division, 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, 111th Panzer Brigade, 112th Panzer Brigade, 354th March Battalion, 200th Army AA Battalion, and elements of the 35th Infantry Division.

As September closed the Division had captured 15,526 prisoners of war in 102 days of combat. Among captured and destroyed weapons and vehicles, Cross of Lorraine men had 36 enemy tanks to their credit, 13 105-mm. howitzers, two 81-mm. howitzers, 13 two-ton trucks, 600 rounds of 120-mm. ammunition, one towed 75-mm. gun and one 81-mm. gun, one ambulance, four panel trucks and hundreds of other minor pieces of equipment.

Following the capture of the city of Luneville and the crossing of the Meurthe River, orders were received for an attack on the Forêt de Parroy. This attack was set for the 25th of September and was to be preceded by a bombing mission by the XIX Tactical Air Command. On the 24th of September, the Regiments had moved up behind a reconnaissance screen to their respective jump-off positions; the 315th Regiment in the vicinity of Crion-Sionviller, the 313th Regiment on the right of the 315th Regiment, in the vicinity of Jolivet-Chanteheux and the 314th Regiment in reserve in the vicinity of Croismare and Marainviller.

The versatility of the doughboys was again about to be tried. They were coming up against a new type of warfare, forest fighting. Reconnaissance indicated that the enemy was holding the forest in strength. It was evident that the Germans considered the forest as one of the most critical sectors of the Western Front and had quickly formed new defensive positions along the Vezouse River and through the forest itself.

Intelligence reports from higher headquarters indicated that the Germans could be expected to fight desperately, and hand-to-hand and tree-to-tree fighting undoubtedly would be the order of the day. New troops from adjacent areas were brought into the sector and committed at once by the German Army commander. Prisoners of War, captured and interrogated at the Division's bulging PW cage, told stories of how they were thrown into the fight in what their commanders termed a last-ditch battle. The PW's reported they usually had pre-battle training before entering combat but on this occasion many of them had been tossed into the campaign without being seasoned to fighting conditions.

The men of the 79th Division faced one of their toughest assignments. The Germans had a commanding view of the terrain and were using extensive pre-war defensive fortifications. Although they had been retreating steadily, the favorable terrain situation enabled them to turn and indulge in a stubborn defense of their positions, using the thick cover of the woods to the best advantage. Tanks and assault guns, which were difficult to knock out in the woods, were brought up in large numbers and fired in direct support of the infantry.

To defend the forest, the German High Command had sent one of its crack units, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, supported by the 113th Panzer Brigade, to the sector. Both of these outfits were later to suffer heavy casualties at the hands of the 79th Division fighting machine.

The 79th Division's drive to clear the forest was stymied for several days as poor weather forced the postponement of intensive bombing of the sector. Continued patrolling, however, took place when the air bombardment was further postponed. An effort was made to link up the

121st Cavalry Squadron and advanced infantry elements of the 313th and 314th Regiments but the enemy remained strong enough to prevent this contact. All patrols sent forward to probe enemy defenses ran into strong resistance that occupied well dug-in positions on the edge of the forest. Several enemy tanks were wiped out by the 312th Field Artillery Battalion while more than 30 of the enemy's artillery positions were counter-battered by XV Corps Artillery.

Receipt of a Corps' field order necessitated a change in the positions of the Regiments. The 315th Regiment moved to an assembly area north of Luneville, the First Battalion of the 313th Regiment took over the Vezouse River line with a company garrisoning Chantcheux. The 314th Regiment was ordered to establish outposts along the river and garrisons in Croismare and Marainviller, with the 79th Reconnaissance Troop setting up OP's in Jolivet, Croismare and Marainviller.

The repeatedly postponed bombing of the Foret de Parroy by XIX Tactical Air Command finally took place on September 28th and lasted one and a half hours. According to Prisoners of War, the results were negligible. They explained that the psychological effects were not what they might have been due to the fact that most of the enemy in the forest were members of the veteran 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and had therefore undergone many bombings in the Sicilian and Italian campaigns.

On 29 September at 0001 the Division, as part of XV Corps, passed to 7th Army.

Following the bombing, the 313th and 315th Regiments jumped off, using the main west-to-east road through the forest as a boundary line. The 315th Regiment reached the edge of the woods without much opposition, but here they came under heavy machine-gun and artillery fire. Tanks and TD's were brought up to help clean out this resistance and, by 1630, the Regiment was able to enter the forest, not knowing that it would be 14 days of hell before they would emerge from the other side.

Meanwhile, the 313th Regimental Combat Team advanced from the Vezouse River fairly rapidly. Although the enemy launched a number of counterattacks, they were driven back. Heavy fighting marked these attacks; the Germans hurled back as the result of numerous bazooka teams rushed into play. Heavy casualties were suffered by the Third Battalion of the 313th Regiment during one of the counterattacks as enemy artillery cut down their advanced elements. The 79th Division Artillery went into action immediately; silencing the German artillery pieces and inflicting terrific casualties on the enemy.

By October 1st, the Division had advanced one-third of the way through the Foret de Parroy. The 314th Regiment was committed on this date with the mission of driving into the southwest corner of the forest and linking up with the 315th Regiment. This was accomplished on October 3rd, after overcoming very stubborn resistance.

In the forest, where doughboys and vehicles moved only on roads the Engineers constructed under fire; the Germans were uncomfortably close. One Engineer Company had to stop work to gather in 12 PW's who had marched into the Division area thinking they were in their own area.

A sergeant of another Engineer Company remembers the forest, before the roads were completed:

*"One rainy, miserable day we got a call to clear a minefield. The first 100 yards of a so-called road were clear. Then we came to a knocked-out jeep and two dead medics, victims of a Regal mine. Bouncing Bettys (S-mines) were all around. We started clearing this quagmire—and somebody stepped on a Betty. There were five casualties in the space of seconds. The rest of us gave them first aid and carried them out on makeshift litters. We were forced to work in the hock-*



Staff briefing in the Foret de Parroy

*deep mud. It was impossible to get a jeep in. Next day, three more men were lost in the same place."*

The forest-clearing process continued daily with PW's streaming into the 79th Division's lines yelling that they had enough. As our infantrymen, engineers, signalmen, medics, MP's and reconnaissance men went deeper into the forest the fighting became more vicious. The enemy threw fresh troops into the fight. These new men were identified as elements of the 56th Fortress Machine-Gun Battalion and the 553rd Infantry Division.

From a captured German officer, the reason was learned for the savage resistance put up by the enemy in the Foret de Parroy. A direct order had been received from Hitler that the forest was to be held at all cost since he, Hitler, had fought here in the last war and had attached a high sentimental value to this area.

By October 7th the German 11th Panzer Division was again identified by the Division's Order of Battle Team No. 17. This crack outfit had been given the task of holding the 79th Division in place—something that the enemy was unable to accomplish since Cross of Lorrainers captured Cherbourg! This was the fourth enemy Division to be identified on the Division's front in the past four days indicating that the enemy considered the sector one of the most critical on his Southern front.

The Division's advance CP was now located in Croismare on the Vezouse River. During this period the enemy withdrew the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and officially acknowledged the 11th Panzer Division as having been committed as a Division instead of piecemeal.

On October 8th, plans were made for a large-scale attack which, if successful, would clear the forest of the enemy. The First Battalion of the 313th Regiment was to create a diversion at Marainviller while the 315th Regiment and Second Battalion of the 314th Regiment attacked in the forest, and when a strongpoint at a crossroads three-quarters of the way through the forest was overcome, the Second and Third Battalions of the 313th Regiment would continue the attack through the Second Battalion of the 314th Regiment.

At 0630, on October 9, the First Battalion of the 313th Regiment began the diversion by firing into the woods, and generally creating a lot of noise. The enemy rose to the bait centering his attention here. Meanwhile the 315th Regiment and the Second Battalion of the 314th Regiment jumped off in the driving rain, advancing rapidly until the strongpoint was reached. Here the Second Battalion of the 314th Regiment and the Third Battalion of the 315th Regiment came under very heavy fire from dug-

in tanks and machine-guns. Time after time, our troops assaulted this strongpoint only to get pinned down. At last, around 1530, the doughboys, assisted by tanks and TD's, attacked from all sides, finally subduing this sore spot. With its fall, the whole defense system in the forest seemed to collapse. All units sent out patrols which were able to reach the east edge of the forest.

For the attack on October 9th, General George C. Marshall visited the advance Division CP in the Foret de Parroy.

With the taking of the forest, rumors circulated that at last the Division was to be relieved for a rest. This was not to be, as another mission had been ordered for the fighting 79th; the taking of the high ground east of Embermenil. It was only a matter of covering some two miles of ground, but what a price the doughboys were to pay!

For the forthcoming attack a re-shuffling of the units took place. The 313th Regiment would attack through Embermenil with the 315th Regiment on their right, and holding fast, the 314th Regiment attacking along the rail-

completed. The three regiments would attack abreast, having for artillery support the 693d, 961st, 242d, 183d and the 173d Battalion of XV Corps Artillery, besides five of the eight Battalions comprising the 44th Division Artillery, and the 79th Division Artillery. The 313th Regiment would be on the left, the 315th Regiment in the center and the 314th Regiment on the right.

It became known at this point, through excellent intelligence work, that the enemy tank support for the infantry-tank attacks during the operation was being supplied by the 29th Panzer Regiment of the 12th Panzer Division. This outfit had been last reported on the Russian front.

All units jumped off on October 19th, and progress was made throughout. During the first day of the attack enemy artillery answered the Allied artillery preparations. The Second Battalion of the 313th received the brunt of this attack, in addition to routing Germans out of well dug-in trenches during hard fighting that soon developed into a hand-to-hand engagement.

For their heroic action east of Embermenil, from the 20th



*General Marshall visits the CP*

road track from the direction of Fort de Manonviller. The Fort and Embermenil had been occupied on the 13th of October against moderate opposition.

The enemy attempted to break up the attack plans with heavy artillery concentrations in Embermenil itself, which the First Battalion of the 313th Regiment was defending. The railroad through the city was also heavily hit by enemy fire.

The 313th and 314th Regiments jumped off on October 14th, and at once a wild fight developed. For five days, the battle raged with the Germans throwing in counter-attack after counterattack. Artillery fire from both sides pounded night and day. Tanks would attack with the doughboys, only to bog down in the heavy going and become "sitting ducks" for the German anti-tank guns. Even with everything in the enemy's favor, the Division kept inching them back.

On October 17th, the welcome news that the 44th Infantry Division would be relieving the 79th Division after the high ground and the Division's objectives were reached, was received.

On the 18th of October plans for the final drive were

to the 24th, Companies A and F of the 315th Infantry Regiment were awarded Presidential Unit Citations.

On October 23rd, the enemy made several attempts to bring his tanks into action; some appeared in a gap between the 313th and 315th Infantry Regiments but were driven back with losses by the Division's tanks and tank destroyers, while others were kept back by artillery fire. Outposts reported tanks and vehicles near Remoncourt. G-2 immediately passed on the information through air channels and in a short time friendly planes attacked the column and two tanks and 16 vehicles were destroyed.

The Third Battalion of the 313th Regiment, meanwhile, had met stiffer resistance which centered around a strongpoint on the reverse slope of the Hill at the Bois Henry.

The Battalion came under considerable small arms and mortar fire but was at its objective at the planned time. The Second Battalion, which had been in Division reserve, was released to the 315th Regiment and the Third Battalion of the 71st Infantry Regiment of the 44th Infantry Division was ordered to move up into Division reserve.

Throughout the night of October 22nd, the enemy made numerous small thrusts at the Division's lines. These

thrusts, made by infantry with support of tanks were hurled back by the 79th Division's artillery who silenced the uprising in short order.

By daylight of October 23rd the enemy had not succeeded in penetrating the Division's lines. Early in the day all regiments resumed the attack; the gaps were closed and all combat teams reported reaching their objectives.

At noon of the same day, command of the sector passed to the 44th Infantry Division. The 315th Regiment was

into the battle. Among them were the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, 113th Panzer Brigade, 33d Panzer Grenadier Reserve Battalion, 11th Panzer Division, 51st Fortress Machine-Gun Battalion, 115th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, 553d Infantry Division, 19th Infantry Division and the 12th Panzer Division.

The campaign caused heavy casualties—for the 79th Division a total of 2,016 casualties resulted—for the enemy it was estimated that they suffered three times that amount,

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#### CITATION

*Company A, 315th Infantry Regiment, is cited for the extraordinary gallantry and heroism it displayed in moving against overwhelming superior enemy numbers and fire to seize and hold the high ground east of Embermenil, France, during the period 20 October 1944 to 22 October 1944. In the early evening of 20 October 1944, the 315th Infantry Regiment was ordered to attack enemy strongpoints constituting a formidable line on the high ground east of Embermenil, France. To Company A of this regiment, was given the mission of seizing and holding a portion of this sector on the left of the XV United States Corps' objective. Jumping off on the morning of 21 October 1944, Company A pressed forward over open terrain toward an enemy-occupied hill, a wooded crest affording excellent concealment for the thoroughly aroused defenders. As the attack progressed, the Second and Third Platoons were subjected to extensive machine-gun fire from the front and both flanks while the First Platoon, in reserve, was momentarily pinned down by flanking automatic weapons' fire. Although the Second Platoon commander and his platoon sergeant were both wounded, both the Second and Third Platoons ignored this distracting fire and with fixed bayonets, assaulted and seized their objectives on the wooded hill. Due in large part to Company A's swift and fearless advance, the entire regiment was soon on its objective. At 2400 hours the enemy counterattacked with three tanks supported by an estimated company of infantry. So determined was this effort that men at the Company CP, forced into foxholes, were literally run over by the tanks and subjected to 75-mm. fire at point-blank range. The company machine-gun section carried its share of the fighting to the enemy in an action so valiant that each member of the section was subsequently killed or wounded. Riflemen fixed bayonets and pressed the enemy in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. Until 0600 hours the following morning (22 October 1944), the enemy persisted in his all-out attempt to wrest the hill from Company A. Enemy casualties were approximately 30 killed and 175 wounded, plus 78 prisoners. Twenty enemy dead, clutching machine pistols, were found in and near foxholes within the Company area after the action. Company A's casualties totaled 57, ten of whom were killed in action. By its heroic action in storming, seizing and holding a strategic high point against overwhelming enemy superiority, Company A, 315th Infantry Regiment, contributed substantially to the success of the Regiment in this action.*

#### CITATION

*Company F, 315th Infantry Regiment, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 21 October 1944 to 24 October 1944. The Second Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment was committed to action on 21 October 1944, with the mission of closing a gap in friendly lines and seizing the high ground northeast of Embermenil, France. Company F, 315th Infantry Regiment, backed by accurate supporting fire from its weapons platoon spearheaded the attack, soon closing with the enemy. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued and rifle grenades were used freely. Despite the fierce fighting and the appreciable distance involved, Company F was quickly emplaced on its objective, having tied in with the unit of its left flank. Soon thereafter the enemy directed an attack against the unit on the right flank of Company F, forcing the adjacent troops to withdraw. The support platoon of Company F was then committed to occupy this position, holding it until relieved. Early the next morning an estimated battalion of enemy infantry supported by several tanks moved against the company's position. Company F's left flank was soon exposed permitting the enemy to infiltrate into friendly lines. The Third Platoon, although forced to turn and fire to its left and rear, held fast. Company mortars were displaced to the front line platoons and from this position placed such effective fire on the enemy that hostile forces were unable to mount machine-guns in the rear of Company F. Subsequent mortar and artillery fire was directed close to the company left flank and succeeded in driving the enemy from their positions. Once again the determined enemy attacked the right flank of Company F, but was quickly repelled by the gallant company. Until 1400 hours, 24 October 1944, the enemy persisted in an all-out attempt to wrest the hill from Company F. Enemy casualties were 19 prisoners, 19 wounded and an estimated 200 killed by the combined efforts of Company F and supporting mortar and artillery fire. Company F casualties totaled 27, of whom five were killed in action. By its heroic action in storming, seizing and holding a strategic high point against overwhelmingly enemy superiority, Company F, 315th Infantry Regiment contributed substantially to the success of the regiment in this action.*

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relieved by the 324th Regiment and moved its positions to the vicinity of Bayon. The 313th Regiment was likewise relieved and moved to an area near Rosieres aux Salines. Elements of the Division Artillery were the last to close out in the old area. When they were relieved the following day, the Division had then completed 127 consecutive days of combat.

During the campaign the 79th Division's combat teams met the best troops German Army commanders could throw

with heavy damage to both weapons and vehicles. From September 28th to October 22nd, the Division captured 1,249 prisoners.

For the next 16 days in rest camps, in and around Luneville, the men of the Division cleaned up, slept in beds, and adjusted personnel problems. An intensive training program was begun with particular attention paid to the new replacements the Division had received. The rest period ended as orders came through to begin the race to the Rhine.

**SECTION III**

**T O T H E R R I N E**

25 October 1944 — 14 February 1945

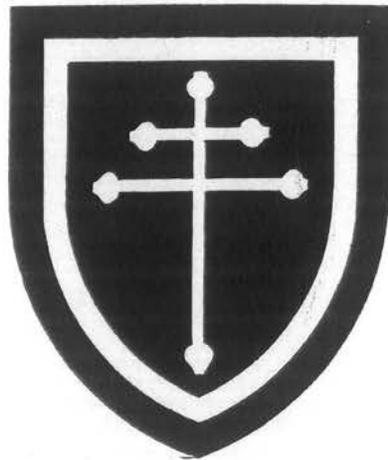
CHAPTER I—Through Alsace

CHAPTER II—On the Defensive



# THROUGH ALSACE

## CHAPTER I



After 16 days in rest areas around the city of Luneville, France, the 79th Infantry Division was assigned the task of forcing a passage through the Vosges Mountains and driving the enemy out of Alsace.

The Germans were established along the eastern foothills of the Vosges where they had constructed an elaborate defensive line, which in the XV Corps sector, ranged from Rechicourt le Chateau south to Blamont, then along a ridge to Harbouey and on to the vicinity of Baccarat. This line, which at times utilized World War I fortifications, consisted of anti-tank obstacles, pillboxes, fortified gun emplacements, weapons pits and strongpoints. A re-arranging of Army boundaries put this sector under Seventh Army control.

The Germans hoped to be able to hold along this line through the bitter Alsatian winter or, at least, along the Vosges Mountains themselves. Historically and militarily the Vosges Mountains had proved the efficacy of that favorite German adjective: "Impregnable."

The Seventh United States Army planned to attack and break through this line and the mountains and seize the key city of Strasbourg. XV Corps was assigned the twin tasks of capturing Sarrebourg and forcing the Saverne Gap, and was to be ready to exploit gains east of the mountains. Corps earmarked the 79th Division for a spearhead attack along the Ancerville-Nitting line. Its orders called for the capture of Sarrebourg with assistance of the 44th Infantry Division and it was to be instantly ready to continue the attack to the northeast.

On November 9th, plans for the attack, which were for 0700, November 13th, were made. It was decided that the 314th and 315th Infantry Regiments would seize the initial objective, the ridge just north of Harbouey. At the same time the Second French Armored Division was assigned the mission of exploiting the 79th Division's gains after the breakthrough.

In preparation for the attack, the Division moved to new assembly areas in the vicinity of Montigny, with the 313th Regiment placed in Division reserve in Brouville, and, by the early morning of the 13th, all was in readiness for the attack.

When all combat teams jumped off for the attack there was very little resistance, but, as the advance continued, the 314th Regiment's attack met stiff resistance with artillery fire holding them down in place. By darkness of the initial day of the attack, the regiment had occupied advanced positions and consolidated its rear for the night. On November 14th the Second Battalion moved near Migneville and, despite several hours of heavy small arms and artillery fire, the town was cleared.

The next day's plans called for the 315th Regiment to push on and occupy Halloville, after which a reconnaissance force of the Second French Armored Division was slated to move through towards Nonhigny and Paru. The 314th Regiment was to stand fast, limiting its activity to patrols, while the Third Battalion of the 313th Regiment would relieve the Third Battalion of the 315th Regiment. After Halloville had been taken, both the 314th and 315th Regiments were to be ready to move on an hour's notice up to the Division's objective, the ground north and southeast of Harbouey, respectively.

On the morning of the 15th, the First Battalion of the 315th Regiment attacked to clear the enemy from Halloville. The Battalion met heavy resistance, but, with excellent assistance from tanks and TD's, it soon had driven the enemy from the village. Five enemy tanks and several other vehicles were destroyed and 91 prisoners captured in this operation.

The enemy did not elect to make a stand in Harbouey but threw in heavy small arms fire as they retreated to pre-

pared positions. Gradually the 79th Division was encircling Blamont, one of their main objectives. The town of Barbas, south of Blamont, was the next to fall to the rapid advance of the Cross of Lorrainers. The Third Battalion of the 315th Regiment had cut off all roads leading into the town with 79th Division men entering the sector two hours later. It was estimated that 300 enemy infantry and four tanks fled the town toward Blamont as the Division approached. Following the capture of Barbas, patrols probed towards Blamont while the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment secured a crossing over the Vezouse River near Fremenville.

In the 314th Regiment's sector considerable difficulty was encountered because the bridge northeast of Barbas had been blown by the retreating Germans. To Company A of the 304th Engineer Battalion went the task of putting up a treadway bridge. The Engineers had to cease work several times when enemy artillery fire came too close for comfort, but on the next day, November 17th, friendly artillery laid down a protective barrage and the engineers completed the bridge.

At this point in the campaign, a task force of the French began operating in the Division's sector and captured Nonhigny, Montreux, Badonviller and Bremenil. Enemy resistance collapsed in Blamont, and the city was mopped up by the 315th Regiment on November 19th.

During this phase of the operation the Division again fought the German's 708th Infantry Division, which it had previously contacted near Le Mans. The week's heavy fighting had resulted in the Division driving into the enemy's lines a deep wedge which practically cut off the 728th Infantry Regiment from the rest of the 708th Infantry Division. This action cost the enemy heavy casualties, and 637 prisoners were taken. The past week's action was considered by high military leaders as most important for it caused the enemy to fall back each night in front of the 44th Infantry Division on the left, giving up easily defensible terrain. On the Division's right flank there was no adjacent unit, and after forcing of the Vezouse River, the enemy's withdrawal became a rout and the French were enabled to make their brilliant advance through the Vosges Mountains to Strasbourg.

With the French in their capture of Strasbourg on November 23rd, was the First Battalion of the 313th Regiment—the only American unit to feature in that historic action. Elements of this battalion can also claim that they were the first American unit to sight the Rhine in the current war!

The capture of Strasbourg was described in a report by Colonel de Langlade of the Second French Armored Division as a "victory made possible only by particularly bold planning in the maneuver which consisted in using, chiefly in the South and extreme North, routes which the regulations forbid an armored division to use."

The report also stressed the "perfect cooperation among the units of the Division in the application of the doctrine of the exploitation of success which could allow at once the splitting up of the Division into combat commands."

As First Battalion men of the 313th Regiment held Strasbourg with the 2d French Armored Division, the Germans dropped leaflet by planes, warning the citizens not to aid the enemy and assuring them they would return.

The text of one of the pamphlets stated:

### ALSATIANS!

"If General de Gaulle thinks he is now in possession of Strasbourg, he is mistaken. Even if his surprising attack for the benefit of his prestige was

successful, that does not mean that there will not be a sad awakening for him very soon. Not for a moment will the German Reich consider giving up German Alsace. Always Remember: The German Army will soon be here again!"

The Germans were still retreating at the time and were never able to regain that ground again.

On November 23rd, the 79th Division, which had followed closely behind the French into the Vosges Mountains, was alerted by XV Corps for a move to Brumath. From this point the Division was to attack north seizing the important German supply city of Hagenau. This mission also called for the 44th Infantry Division to follow behind the 79th, moving into an assembly area to the west of Brumath, and assist in the capture of Hagenau.

The next day, November 24th, the 313th and 314th Regimental Combat Teams were motorized and moved to Brumath. The 315th Regiment, which had started on foot through the Saverne Gap, was picked up later in the day by the trucks and taken to its assigned area.

At this point a call was received from the 44th Division, which had not started to move as yet, to the effect that a German attack had hit from the north and was headed in the direction of Sarrebourg. The attacking force was identified as the 130th Panzer Division.

This attack put the 79th Division in a very precarious position, because if the attack were successful and Sarrebourg and the Saverne Gap were seized, the 79th Division would be completely cut off, since a gap of 40 miles existed between it and the 44th Division. However, with the help of the Fourth Armored Division, the 44th Division successfully repulsed the attack short of the enemy's objective.

This attack altered the 79th Division's plans for the time being. Patrols and limited probing attacks were ordered instead of large scale attacks.

The 79th Reconnaissance Troops made an extensive reconnaissance northwest and reported numerous towns clear, although its patrols came under some heavy enemy fire. All through the Division's sector there was considerable harassing artillery fire by the enemy, one indication that the Germans were pulling themselves together for a retreat. Another sign of this was the persistent reports of preparations for a retreat. Another sign of this was the persistent reports of preparations for a withdrawal of enemy troops. A good deal of this information was compiled by attached Interrogation of Prisoner of War Teams and Order of Battle Teams. These intelligence specialist teams identified among numerous miscellaneous units, that the Division was being opposed by the 256th Volksgrenadier Division, and the 62d and 109th Infantry Replacement and Training Battalions.

From interrogation of Prisoners of War it was revealed that the 256th Volksgrenadier Division had been committed against the First Canadian Army in Holland and was shifted to the Division's sector around November 24th. Among elements of the units captured were 30 members of the Hitler Jugend, ranging in age from 14 to 16 years.

As the campaign in Alsace continued the 315th Regiment, on November 25th, captured Kreisheim against stiff opposition from an estimated two companies of infantry supported by infantry howitzers and anti-tank guns. The town of Gries fell the same day to the 313th Regiment.

On November 26th, enemy air activity hit a new peak as 52 sorties were made over the Division sector. The largest flight consisted of 18 FW-190's. One bomb was dropped, but caused no damage. The 463d AAA Bat-

alion destroyed seven aircraft. One pilot was captured after he bailed out.

As the 79th Reconnaissance Troop probed forward, the towns of Neideralldorf, Berstheim, Morschwiller and Grasdorf were cleared while the intelligence and reconnaissance platoons of the 314th and 315th Infantry Regiments routed the enemy from the towns of Batzdorf, Wintershausen and Uhlwiller.

At the beginning of December, 1944, the 79th Division was under the control of XV Corps which, together with VI Corps, formed the Seventh United States Army.

With the Moder River as the new objective, the 79th Division advanced with its left flank covered by the 45th Division, and the 94th and 117th Cavalry Squadrons protecting the right flank to the Rhine. The attack was launched by the 314th and 315th Regiments while the 313th Regiment occupied defensive positions at Gries. The Division's infantry units were being supported by elements of the 191st Tank Battalion.

At dusk some enemy patrols attempted to enter Gries, but they were quickly driven off by infantry-artillery teamwork.

The 314th Regiment continued its attack toward Hagenau from Batzdorf. The attack progressed with the Meyershoffen Farm being cleared of enemy. During the day of December 1st the regiment's rear areas received many concentrations of artillery fire, with Harthausen and Neiderschaeffolsheim, in particular, being heavily shelled.

The 315th Regiment, on December 2nd, attacking in a northeasterly direction, seized Schweighausen, on the Moder River, against moderate opposition. This put the regiment three kilometers west of Hagenau. Reconnoitering the Moder River, a patrol from the 315th Regiment found the river had overflowed its banks flooding the surrounding area, and making the roads impassable. Forcing a crossing of the river, this patrol received heavy small arms, mortar and artillery fire, indicating the enemy could be expected to oppose a crossing in force strongly.

On December 4th, enemy air activity took a sudden spurt and the Luftwaffe was again in evidence. Their mission was to halt the 79th Division's progress and delay a crossing of the Moder River. Six ME-109's appeared along the main road along the south side of the Foret de Hagenau, but were driven off by the 463d AA Battalion, which shot down four.

At this point in the campaign the Division passed from control of the XV Corps to that of the VI Corps.

At this time VI Corps was making plans for an offensive to the northwest which was to culminate in the breaching of the Siegfried Line. The Corps was to attack with the 79th Division on the right flank, the 103d Infantry Division in the center, and the 45th Infantry Division on the left flank. The 14th Armored Division was held ready to exploit the gains.

The 79th Division's mission was to attack on the axis Bischwiller-Seltz, destroy the Rhine bridges in its zone and protect the Corps' right flank. It was also to seize Hagenau and be ready to clear the Foret de Hagenau. The forest was known to be the scene of enemy supply depots and it was very likely that the enemy would make a determined stand there.

The 79th Division attacked at 0645, on December 9th, with the three regiments abreast; the 314th on the left (attacking north toward Hagenau), the 315th in the center, and the 313th on the right (attacking toward Bischwiller). One hour after it had jumped off, the 313th Regiment had its leading elements in Bischwiller. Opposition had not been too strong, and the bridge across the

Moder River, in town, was reached without too much difficulty.

There were many acts of heroism at Bischwiller—this is one about a battalion of hard slugging doughboys who fought without sleep through three nights, saved bridges in the path of the 79th Division, and made possible one of three penetrations into Germany at the time.

The heroism of Capt. William McKean of Braintree, Mass., a battalion executive officer, saved one heavily mined bridge while the sleepless battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Roy V. Porter, kept the Division on the move. Here is one newspaper account of the action:

*"Porter, as well as his men, voluntarily went without sleep, shooting their way through towns, seizing and holding bridges before the retreating Germans could blow them.*

*"Sometimes it was close.*

*"There was the time at Bischwiller, where 25 men led by Captain McKean braved 88-mm. artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire and prevented the suicidal attempt of five Germans to pull the fuse on a 500-pound bomb atop a heavily mined bridge.*

*"McKean and the others knew the bridge might explode in their faces, but they also knew that the 79th would be greatly delayed if the 150-foot span was wrecked.*

*"McKean ran out on the bridge and tried to cut the wire from the bomb to the dynamite underneath. The enemy fire was so intense he jumped out on the bank, dived under the bridge, and cut the wire there.*

*"I'm ignorant about explosives,' McKean confessed, 'so I didn't know whether handling the wire would set off the TNT. I felt pretty good when nothing happened.'"*

Captain McKean was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross for his gallantry in this action.

The attack by the 313th Regiment on Bischwiller took the Germans by surprise as it came without any artillery preparation. Meanwhile, to the west, the 314th and 315th Regiments were meeting much stiffer resistance. Entrenched

Germans laid down a murderous wall of fire, from well dug-in machine guns and mortars, and it was not until late evening that these two regiments were able to register any appreciable gain. The 315th Regiment reached the Moder River between Bischwiller and Hagenau, and the 314th Regiment reached the southwest outskirts of Hagenau.

Approximately 200 prisoners were taken by the Division as the opening day of the attack came to a close. Also, two tanks were knocked out, bringing the total enemy tanks destroyed by the Division to 84.

It was during this period that two captured enemy documents came to the attention of the 79th Division's G-2 Section. One dated October 25, 1944, and published by the G-2 of the 361st Volksgrenadier Division, was addressed to its subordinate units:

*"The 79th Division is known to have fought particularly well in Normandy, and is considered to be one of the best attack divisions in the United States Army."*

The other document, an Order of the Day by the commander of the 256th Volksgrenadier Division, stated in part . . . "it is better to fight and die an honest man than to lose your freedom and corrupt your soul, so take a closer grip on your rifle and hold our old border city of Hagenau for the Fuehrer." Apparently this plea fell on deaf ears because the following day, December 11th, the 314th Regiment stormed into Hagenau only to find a few snipers, the main body of the enemy having fled to the north.

With the fall of Hagenau and Bischwiller, and the crossing of the Moder River, the 79th Division continued its attack to the northeast. In a few days, against stubborn enemy delaying action, the 79th Division overran Soufflenheim, the undefended Maginot Line, Seltz, and Neiderroedern, moving up to Lauterbourg and Scheibhardt on the Lauter River on December 15th.

The Lauter River at this point was the boundary line between France and Germany.

A reconnaissance of the river showed that the enemy had blown out all the bridges in the Division's sector. The Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, however, was able to put a footbridge across the river in the early afternoon of December 15th to the west of Lauterbourg, and to them fell the honor of having the first 79th Division soldier to set foot on German soil in this war, S/Sgt. Dewey J. White.

On December 17th, the 79th Division, after preliminary reconnaissance, continued its attack into Germany. The 313th Regiment pushed northeast of Lauterbourg and the 314th Regiment attacked in the same direction, from Scheibhardt, while the 315th Regiment was held in reserve.

Initial gains were made by both attacking Regiments, but as the Siegfried Line was neared, a hail of fierce fire met the doughboys. Advance reports of its strength proved accurate. Pillboxes, approximately 40 yards apart, were tied in with minefields and wire defenses, in addition to a very formidable anti-tank ditch.

For a week the 313th and 314th Regiments pounded these defenses gaining quite a sizeable foothold, when orders came through to withdraw to the Lauter River. This was due to the widening of the Seventh Army boundary, releasing the Third Army to meet the enemy's Ardennes offensive to the north.

By Christmas the 79th Division had established outposts along the Lauter River, holding a line from Wissembourg east to the Rhine, a distance of 20 miles, in addition to 30 miles along the Rhine River.

The 79th Division was obliged to dig in—they were on the defensive for the first time. Just as they were hailed by the Germans as one of the best attack divisions, everyone was confident they would exhibit their mettle on the defensive.

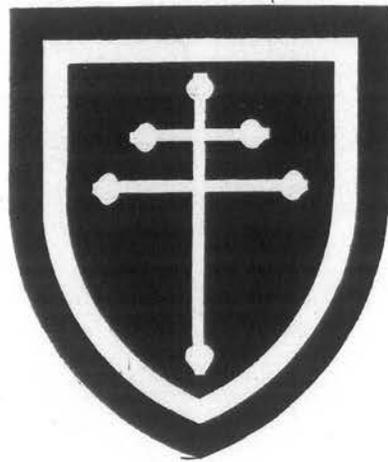
*Nazi flag taken in the capture of Hagenau*

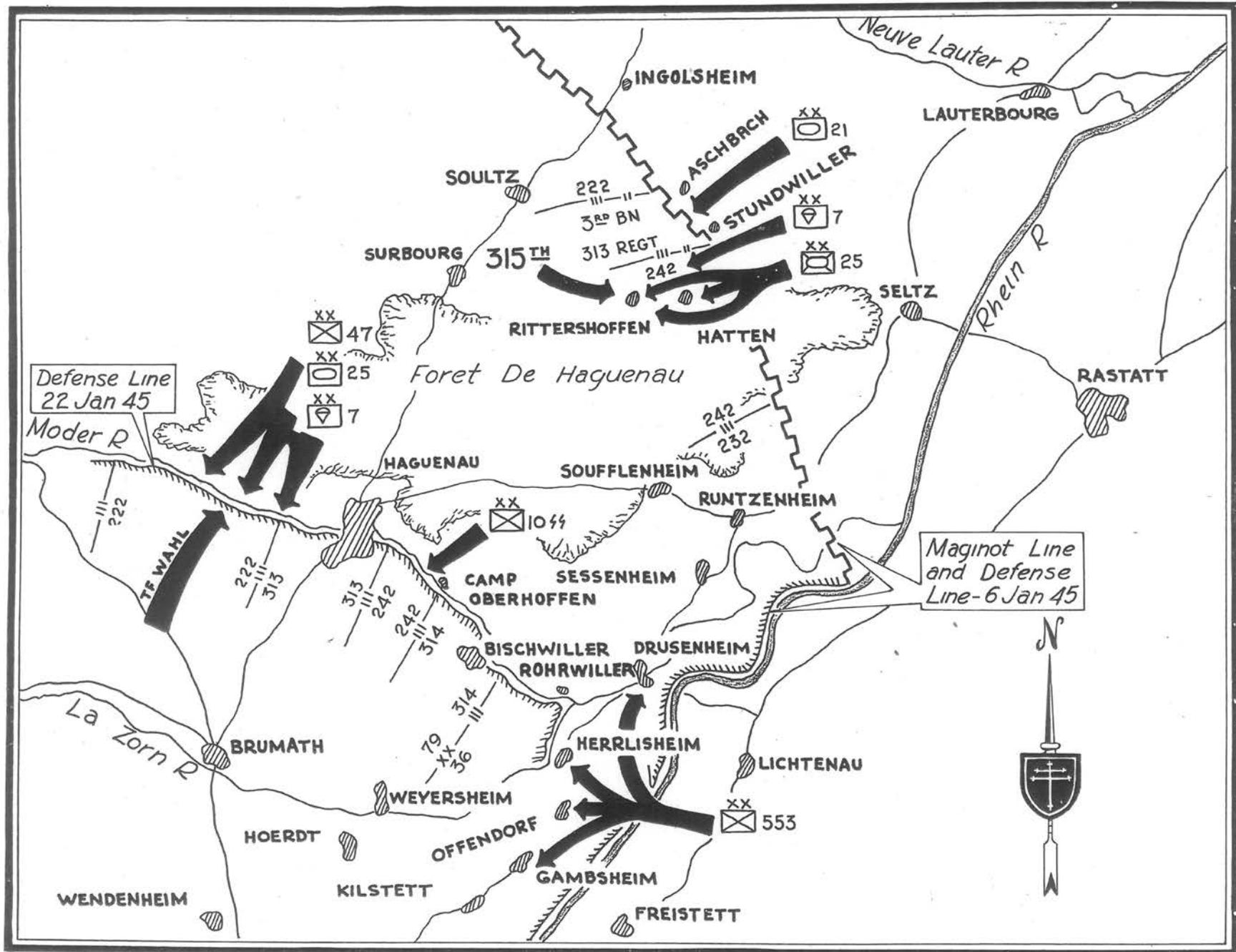




# ON THE DEFENSIVE

## CHAPTER II





As the new year, 1945, opened, the 79th Division continued its defense of the Lauter River. Action was limited to aggressive patrolling by both sides. Occasionally, the enemy sent in large concentrations of artillery fire, from the north, and from east of the Rhine River, which seemed to indicate a build-up for a coming attack. Anticipating this, Corps and Division Engineers modernized the French Maginot Line defenses, to the rear. This defense line, in the 79th Division's sector, extended roughly from Cleebourg on the left flank, southeast to below Ingelsheim and Aschbach, to a point a mile east of Hatten, and then through the eastern tip of the Foret de Hagenau, reaching a point on the Rhine River east of Sessenheim.

On January 1st, the 45th Infantry Division's sector, on the left flank of the 79th Division, came to life with a

up all types of defense obstacles and blowing bridges after the covering forces had withdrawn.

At this time, Task Force Herren was detached from the 79th Division, which then received Task Force Linden. This Task Force was comprised of the three unsupported infantry regiments of the 42d Infantry Division, the 222d, 232d, and 242d Regiments, and was under the command of Brigadier General Henning Linden, its Assistant Divisional Commander.

On January 4th, the Division, waiting for the inevitable enemy follow-up attack, had its forces deployed as follows: the 232d Regiment held the line along the Rhine River from north of Strasbourg to where the Maginot Line meets the Rhine River, then northwest along the Maginot Line to the Foret de Hagenau. The 242d Regiment, which



*Aerial view of the Rittershoffen-Hatten area*

strong enemy attack in the vicinity of Reipertswiller, south of Bitche. To meet this threat, VI Corps ordered the 79th Division to withdraw to the Maginot Line defenses, and to send four battalions of infantry to assist the 45th Division in blocking this attack. The battalions were the First and Second Battalions of the 313th Regiment, the First Battalion of the 314th Regiment, and the First Battalion of the 315th Regiment.

To augment the Division's depleted ranks, the 274th and 276th Regiments of Task Force Herren (70th Infantry Division) were attached. The 274th Regiment took over a sector of the Rhine River between Seltz and Gambenheim, while the 276th Regiment went into reserve near Hagenau.

The Division started its withdrawal to the Maginot Line defenses on January 2d. The 304th Engineer Battalion worked night and day laying extensive minefields, putting

had just relieved the 314th Regiment, held a line from the left flank of the 232d Regiment northwest to the high ground below Stundwiller. The Third Battalion, of the 313th Regiment, held the sector Stundwiller and Aschbach. The 222d Regiment relieved the 315th Regiment, and held a line from Aschbach to the Division's left flank boundary in the vicinity of Cleebourg.

Reports were received that the two battalions of the 313th Regiment, operating under the 45th Infantry Division at Reipertswiller, were covering themselves with glory. They had stopped numerous enemy attacks of superior strength, fought out of complete encirclement, and had taken well over 400 prisoners, most of them from the enemy's crack 361st Division (the 79th Division had captured 21,311 prisoners up to this period).

On January 5th, a sudden eruption of the Division's eastern front greatly modified existing plans. The 232d

Regiment reported that in the early morning enemy patrols had crossed the Rhine north of Gamsheim and were active along its front and by noon it was apparent that during the night a considerable enemy force had crossed. These enemy forces, later identified as the 553d Infantry Division, quickly seized Offendorf and Herrlisheim and at noon were entering Gamsheim. Air observers reported seeing many of the enemy crossing the Rhine. The 314th Regiment was on its way to an assembly area when the Division ordered it to move to Bischwiller and attack toward Rohrwiller.

A re-arrangement of army boundaries placed Kilstett in the sector of the First French Army and, pending the relief of elements of Task Force Linden by the French, the 3d Division d'Infanterie Algerienne was attached to the 79th Division.

The counterattack against the enemy bridgehead made slow progress. In the vicinity of Drusenheim considerable enemy pressure developed but elements of the First Battalion, 232d Regiment, repulsed the enemy's attack. At 1300, the Reconnaissance Troop reported Weyersheim clear but contacted an estimated enemy platoon to the east of town. To the north other elements of the Troop, near Rohrwiller, came under mortar fire. They estimated one company of the enemy to be in the village. In the vicinity of Gamsheim, the elements under the 232d Regiment met stiff opposition in the afternoon and little progress was reported. In the evening, the French began to relieve elements of Task Force Linden south of Kilstett. In this area there was no contact with the enemy.

On January 6th, considerable patrolling was carried out by both sides, on the northern front. From captured enemy prisoners it was learned that the 21st Panzer Division was operating on this front. Our patrols found that large numbers of the enemy held the towns bordering the Maginot Line defenses.

During the night the enemy was active in the area of his bridgehead at Gamsheim. An enemy patrol probed

by the swiftness of its attack. The surrounded troops of Company B were relieved and 60 prisoners were taken. At the end of the day the 232d Regiment re-established its lines in this sector. At 0900, the Second Battalion, of the 314th Regiment, attacked from Bischwiller and, at 1025, it had cleared Rohrwiller against light small arms fire. It continued the attack northeast toward Drusenheim. By dark, Companies F and G occupied the southern part of the village where they dug in for the night. The Third Battalion moved from Bischwiller to Rohrwiller in the afternoon and in the evening established a bridgehead over the Moder River. Corps engineers thereupon began work on a bridge at this site. The 242d Regiment, with Troop D of the 94th Cavalry, in the morning, launched an attack toward Gamsheim from the northwest. They progressed as far as the woods, a mile north of the town where, at noon, the enemy counterattacked with armor support. The two battalions fell back to the canal where they dug in to defend their line. On their right, the Second and Third Battalions, of the 232d Regiment, met heavy resistance in their attack north from Kilstett toward Gamsheim. Little progress was made in this sector during the day. The elements of the 232d Regiment at Hoerdt and La Wantzenau were relieved during the day by elements of the Third Division d'Infanterie Algerienne which was thereupon released from attachment to the 79th Division.

The Division, anticipating an enemy attack, placed the northern part of its front under Task Force Wahl, which consisted of the Third Battalion, of the 313th Regiment, the 315th Regiment, the 222d Regiment, Combat Command A of the 14th Armored Division and the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Combat Command A closed into assembly areas in the vicinity of Soultz. The Division was soon to be fighting furiously on two separate fronts.

Following a night during which enemy vehicular activity had been heard, elements of the 21st Panzer Division, in the morning of the 7th, attacked the 313th Regiment's

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#### CITATION

*The Third Battalion, 313th Infantry Regiment, is cited for the extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty exhibited during the period from 31 December 1944 to 21 January 1945 in the vicinity of Obberroedern, Alsace, France. This unusual fighting battalion, which had for days held a sector of regimental frontage, was faced again and again by determined enemy troops and armored vehicles but utterly refused to yield ground, holding against almost overwhelming odds with a tenacity possessed only by the most courageous. Although depleted heavily in effective strength, the intrepid infantrymen of the Third Battalion met the onslaught of the enemy and repelled each assault with heavy losses to the attackers. When the main effort of the German attack was launched against the sector defended by the Third Battalion, the Battalion not only held the onslaught but by sheer determination and dominant fighting spirit virtually destroyed the infantry element of the 21st Panzer Division. Headquarters personnel, cooks and other men normally found in the rear areas, worked feverishly and without rest to improve the defensive positions, laying additional concertina wire entanglements and hasty minefields. Finally, the enemy, discouraged by the losses sustained in the Third Battalion area, shifted his main effort and succeeded in penetrating the positions of an adjacent unit. Despite an increased frontage, repeated enemy attempts to widen the shoulder of the salient were smashed by the Third Battalion without allowing the slightest penetration. By holding its positions, the battalion limited the enemy's penetration in the adjacent sector to a narrow corridor and denied the enemy the terrain necessary for maneuver in order successfully to exploit the penetration, thereby preventing a major breakthrough. Had the enemy succeeded in effecting the breakthrough, repeatedly attempted in spite of prohibitive losses, it is almost a certainty that a major withdrawal would have been necessitated. The courage and fighting determination of the officers and men of the Third Battalion, 313th Infantry Regiment, reflect the finest traditions of the Army of the United States.*

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Stattmatten, east of Sessenheim. At 0500, it was reported that elements of Company B, 232d Regiment, were surrounded there. Elements of the Reconnaissance Troop, with a light tank platoon of the 781st Tank Battalion attached, attacked and cleared Sessenheim and recaptured Stattmatten by noon. Though outnumbered by the enemy, the reconnaissance force quickly overwhelmed the resistance

outposts in Aschbach and Stundwiller with infantry, supported by ten tanks. The outposts were driven from the villages following street fighting and were forced to withdraw to the MLR. Approximately one platoon was cut off in Aschbach but it managed to reach the MLR with only light casualties. During the day, the enemy made five attacks against the Third Battalion, 313th. Fifteen tanks sup-

ported the enemy's infantry and of these tanks, five were knocked out—two by mines and the other three by anti-tank and artillery fire. The enemy had little artillery support and the few rounds received were inaccurate. In the afternoon, the Division's artillery and mortar fire kept the enemy at a distance.

The following day, the 21st Panzer Division attacked from the vicinity of Stundwiller but was driven back by small arms and artillery fire. They attacked again with the support of tanks. This second attack continued until about noon when the enemy again withdrew, after having suffered heavy casualties and the loss of three tanks. Shortly thereafter, the enemy was reported to be reforming in Stundwiller with 20 tanks and a battalion of infantry. After 12 P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers thoroughly worked over the village, the sector quieted down with only light harassing artillery and mortar fire.

For this heroic defense against superior enemy forces, the Third Battalion, of the 313th Regiment, was awarded a Presidential Citation.

The enemy continued to build up his forces in the Gambsheim bridgehead, reinforcing those already there with tanks and self-propelled and anti-tank guns. The enemy's new strength was apparent shortly after the Second Battalion, of the 314th Regiment, attacked to clear the enemy from Drusenheim. Almost at once the enemy counterattacked with about a battalion of infantry and eight to ten tanks. The Second Battalion was forced back into the northern part of the village, losing five of its supporting tanks. Other enemy attacks southeast of Rohrwiller against the Third Battalion, of the 314th Regiment, were not as successful. The first was broken up by tank and artillery fire. The enemy then reformed and attacked again, but was driven off a second time by tank and artillery fire. In both these actions against the 314th Regiment, the enemy lost five tanks with two others listed as probables. To meet the growing enemy threat, Combat Command B of the 12th Armored Division was attached to the 79th Division during the day. At 2310, it closed into assembly areas in the vicinity of Weyersheim and Bischwiller.

At 1000, January 8th, the Third Battalion, of the 314th Regiment, attacked southeast from the vicinity of Rohrwiller. Heavy small arms, mortar and artillery fire was met and only slow progress was made. The bridge on the La Zorn River, east of Rohrwiller, was out and this hampered the attack considerably. Several counterattacks were repulsed and at dark the battalion had gained one kilometer. Elements of Combat Command B of the 12th Armored Division attacked south from Rohrwiller toward Herrlisheim. They also met heavy enemy fire but succeeded in a point one kilometer north of their objective.

At about 0500 on the 9th of January, the Third Battalion, of the 313th Regiment, and the First Battalion, of the 242d Regiment, received an enemy probing attack that was broken up by artillery fire. Shortly thereafter, the enemy, elements of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, again attacked; this time with two battalions of infantry supported by seven tanks. The attack was made toward Hatten and at one point it penetrated the MLR. Two pillboxes were lost and some enemy reached the edge of Hatten before the attack was thrown back. The enemy was repulsed with heavy casualties and the loss of two tanks, and, at 1145, the MLR was restored.

Following an artillery preparation, the enemy at 1300 again attacked the positions of the 242d Regiment. This attack was made in great strength, with the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division using 20 tanks, eight halftracks and nine personnel carriers. This force encircled Hatten and reached the eastern edge of Rittershoffen when it was counterattacked by tank destroyer elements and elements of the 48th Tank Battalion. Eleven to 14 enemy tanks were

knocked out and the enemy driven back. The Second Battalion, of the 242d Regiment, was committed and, supported by tanks, re-entered Hatten. Stiff opposition was met but by midnight about two-thirds of the village had been retaken. The Second Battalion, of the 315th Regiment, was moved and prepared to assist the 242d Regiment. Enemy activity elsewhere on the front of Task Force Wahl was negligible.

The bridgehead over the Moder River was the target for heavy fire that hampered the Corps engineers in their bridging operations. At 0915, an enemy attack drove the bridgehead back across the river, but the 714th Tank Battalion counterattacked and drove off the enemy's supporting self-propelled guns. The Third Battalion, of the 314th Regiment, re-established the bridgehead and, at 1800, repelled a second enemy attack. This time the enemy threw in tanks from the north and infantry from the south, but the 314th Regiment's line held. Meanwhile, elements of the 57th Armored Infantry Battalion and the 714th Tank Battalion had progressed south in their attack on Herrlisheim. Considerable resistance was met but these troops occupied the northern part of the village by dark and took many prisoners.

Fighting continued in Hatten during the night, and, at dawn of the 10th, the Second Battalion of the 315th Regiment, and the Second Battalion, of the 242d Regiment, launched an attack. Some progress was made despite stiff resistance from the enemy who, at 1030, counterattacked from the northeast with tanks and infantry. Some of this force attempted to infiltrate north of Hatten in order to swing down and cut the Hatten-Rittershoffen road. The Third Battalion, of the 315th Regiment, assembled in Rittershoffen and was partially committed north of the village to block the gap between Hatten and the Third Battalion, of the 313th Regiment, on the left. In the morning, a strong enemy combat patrol probed the 313th Regiment's lines from the south, but was repulsed. At 1500, the Second Battalion, of the 242d Regiment, was ordered to move back from Hatten to Rittershoffen to reorganize. Although most of the battalion was able to withdraw, some elements remained in Hatten, fighting alongside of the 315th Regiment. There, one enemy tank was knocked out by bazooka fire and another by the 48th Tank Battalion. Fighting in the village died down at dusk, although two enemy tanks remained, one in front of the church which was being developed by the enemy into a strongpoint.

These were the steps leading up to the "Battles of Hatten and Rittershoffen," an 11-day bloody affair that saw the Second and Third Battalion of the 315th Regiment hold the main weight of Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt's offensive against these two small Maginot Line villages, and routing two and one-half elite German divisions in the process.

At 0130, the bridgehead of the Third Battalion, of the 314th Regiment, was the target for an attack by enemy infantry, supported by two self-propelled guns. This attack was repulsed and by 0440 the sector was quiet except for light harassing artillery fire. During the night the elements of Combat Command B, 12th Armored Division, in Herrlisheim were engaged in hard fighting and, at 0330, they were reported surrounded. At 0620, tanks of the 714th Tank Battalion moved from Rohrwiller down to the village which they reached after cutting through the enemy ring. Heavy enemy pressure continued and preparations were made to withdraw these troops. Although enemy tanks and infantry were observed to the 314th Regiment's front during the day, this sector remained quiet. However, the Second Battalion continued to receive heavy concentrations of artillery and mortar fire in Drusenheim.

During the night the Second Battalion, of the 315th Regiment, heard considerable tank activity at the eastern

end of Hatten. Soon after dawn, enemy pressure on the battalion was resumed. At the same time ten tanks moved from the eastern edge of the village around to the northern edge, firing into the positions of the Second Battalion. Under this covering fire and aided by a ground haze, enemy tanks and infantry moved west to attack Rittershoffen. At this time, the enemy began encircling Hatten again and contact was lost with the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, for the next two days. The 827th TD Battalion knocked out four tanks of the attacking force together with one scout car and one armored car.

Frantic radio messages from the isolated troops in Hatten were received for medical supplies and ammunition, and every effort was made to get the much-needed supplies to them. The Air Corps tried dropping bundles of supplies, but due to intense enemy anti-aircraft artillery fire most of the bundles missed their mark. The 312th Field Artillery Battalion tried placing shells filled with medical supplies into the towns, but this proved unsatisfactory, too.

Attempts were made to carry by hand some of the most critical items. An eight-man party struck off towards the railroad tracks to the south hoping to follow the tracks into Hatten. Near the Rittershoffen railroad station they ran into an enemy outpost. The platoon leader was wounded, and when the rest of the men attempted to retrace their steps a German self-propelled 88 shot into the group from the high ground northeast of Rittershoffen killing another member of the patrol. No further attempt was made to get supplies through that day.

Then, on the 15th of January, an attempt was made that was successful. A staff sergeant volunteered to try a route he thought would enable him to get supplies through to the besieged forces. With considerable reluctance, his company commander gave him permission, and the sergeant, using a half track, made the roundtrip without incident, and in so doing revealed something quite gratifying. The route he took had been screened over the entire distance from enemy artillery as well as small arms fire. From then on the sergeant's "Supply Trail" was used for sending up supplies, reinforcements and bringing out the wounded.

In the morning of January 11th, the enemy was contacted by the Third Battalion, 315th Regiment, at the northeast corner of Rittershoffen where the enemy was halted until he brought up more tanks. During the day the Third Battalion was slowly forced back by an estimated 15 tanks and two battalions of infantry. Two tanks were knocked out in the village but by midnight the enemy had occupied about two-thirds of Rittershoffen. At 1615 elements of Combat Command A were committed: Company B, 68th Armored Infantry Battalion, with a platoon of tanks, attacked from southwest of Rittershoffen, while Companies A and C of the 68th Armored Infantry Battalion and Company C of the 48th Tank Battalion attacked from the northwest. The latter force was able to advance to the Rittershoffen-Leiterswiller road, but here it was met by such heavy fire that it had to withdraw. The former force met less opposition. Throughout the day the enemy placed heavy fire on Hatten and Rittershoffen with his artillery and mortars. The sector of the Third Battalion, 313th Regiment, received some heavy artillery concentrations during the day but the enemy displayed no aggressiveness here.

In the northern sector of the enemy's Rhine bridgehead the 79th Reconnaissance Troop patrolled to the front of the 232d Regiment. It reported Auenheim, Huntzenheim, Stattmatten and Roeschwoog clear after killing three and wounding three members of a six-man enemy patrol in the last town. A road block of carts and felled trees was located and of an estimated platoon defending this block six were killed before the Troop withdrew. The 314th Regiment was not active during the day and the enemy did not resume his attacks on the regiment's positions at Drusenheim

and the bridgehead. During the day sporadic artillery fire was received in this sector. As planned the previous day, the elements of Combat Command B of the 12th Armored Division in Herrlisheim withdrew during the night and set up positions along the western bank of the Zorn River. Their right flank was tied in with the positions of the Second Battalion, 232d Regiment, at Weyersheim. For the next six days this front was relatively quiet with activity limited to patrolling and an occasional artillery barrage.

For the past week enemy aircraft had been very active over the Division sector; bombing and strafing small towns and main roads immediately back of the Division's front lines. A large number of these sorties were made by the new German jet-propelled ME-262 plane. These swift, silent planes presented an exceptionally difficult target for our gunners. Their tremendous speed made it almost impossible to track them in the guns' sights. However, on January 13th, the 463rd Anti-Aircraft Battalion had the distinction of being the first anti-aircraft battalion in the European Theater of Operations to officially down a jet-propelled plane.

It was learned later that enemy tanks and infantry had resumed their attacks on the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, in Hatten. Heavy house to house fighting went on with the enemy pressure being made by tanks on the north and infantry on the east sides of the village. The battalion was forced into the southwestern corner of Hatten where the enemy was held from making further gains. Meanwhile, at 0800, January 12th, the Third Battalion, 315th Regiment, and Combat Command A of the 14th Armored had attacked to clear the enemy from Rittershoffen. Determined resistance and well-directed fire forced the armored unit to withdraw. At 1130, Combat Command B attacked, reaching points north and south of Rittershoffen from where they placed accurate fire on enemy positions within the village. As at Hatten, the enemy had formed a strong-point at the eastern end of the village, using the church and near-by cemetery. However, Combat Command B came under heavy fire itself and at darkness it withdrew to the west, leaving the Third Battalion holding the western end of the village. Enemy fire in the two villages continued to be very heavy and in the sector of the Third Battalion, 313th Regiment, to the north, some heavy artillery concentrations were received.

At 0800, January 13th, the 14th Armored Division was given command of the sector between the 222d and 242d Regiments. The Third Battalion, 313th Regiment, and the Second and Third Battalions, 315th Regiment, were attached to the 14th Armored Division at this time. In the morning the 14th Armored Division resumed its attack to the east. Some progress was made by the Third Battalion and Combat Command A in Rittershoffen where heavy fighting took place throughout the day. Two tanks were reported destroyed and two captured in Rittershoffen by the armored units. Combat Command B attacked south of Rittershoffen in the direction of Hatten and late in the afternoon elements of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion reached the village and contacted the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, after the latter had been isolated for two days. Artillery, mortar, small arms and tank fire in both villages were intense, especially near the church areas in each village. In the evening much enemy traffic was heard moving into Hatten, but it was at Rittershoffen where the enemy's night attack developed. At 2200, the enemy attacked with infantry and flame-throwing tanks and heavy fighting raged for an hour. The enemy was thrown back with three to five tanks destroyed, and, by 2330, the enemy's threat was over.

The following day, heavy fighting continued in Hatten and Rittershoffen. The units in Hatten made some progress as they attempted to clear the enemy from the northwest

corner of the village. However, at 2210, the enemy launched a counterattack which likewise made some progress before it was stopped. The enemy's force consisted of an unestimated number of infantry with four tanks in support. The enemy also counterattacked in Rittershoffen during the day, but this attack was repulsed without appreciable loss of ground.

At 0320, the 313th Regiment was relieved from attachment to the 45th Infantry Division and, during the morning, returned to the 79th Division's sector. It moved into the areas in the vicinity of Hoffen and Hermerswiller, at 1300, and was attached to Task Force Wahl.

At 0500, January 15th, the enemy resumed his attack on Hatten with infantry and flame-throwing tanks. During the next two hours, five attempts to advance were made but each was thrown back. By 0645, the battle had subsided. At 1450, the enemy attacked again with an estimated battalion of infantry supported by tanks. Coming in from the east, the enemy at first made some gains. Elements of the 47th Tank Battalion were committed, entering Hatten from the south and, after contacting the 315th Regiment to the west, the armor advanced east. Much of the ground to the enemy's attack was then regained.

The enemy at Rittershoffen was much less active though

the fighting there continued through the day. At 1930, the enemy fired a heavy barrage of mortar and artillery fire but no attack followed.

During the day elements of another first-class division were identified when prisoners were taken from the 7th Parachute Division. Its commitment underscored the importance of this battle to the enemy and also emphasized the losses incurred by the 21st Panzer Division and the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division.

For the next three days and nights, savage fighting continued in Hatten and Rittershoffen. A steady enemy barrage of artillery, mortar and tank fire came down on the doughboy-held section of both towns. In this period more than ten enemy attacks were stopped before any sizable penetration could be made. It was fighting that increased with intensity hourly. Finally, on January 19th the enemy threw his largest and most concentrated attack at Hatten. Following a 90-minute artillery barrage of 3,000 rounds, the Germans in great strength attacked from the north, east and southeast. For two hours the battle raged, with the doughboys holding the enemy without any loss of ground. It was bitter defensive fighting like this that earned Presidential Citations for three battalions of the 79th Division.

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#### CITATION

*The Second Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment is cited for the extraordinary gallantry, indomitable courage, tenacity of purpose and high esprit de corps displayed in the accomplishment of an unusually difficult operation during the period 9 January 1945 to 20 January 1945, in the vicinity of Hatten, Alsace, France. When enemy forces had effected a penetration, and a breakthrough appeared imminent, the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, was committed to halt the enemy onslaught. Despite enemy encirclement for a considerable portion of the period, and resultant shortages of food, medical supplies and certain types of ammunition and equipment, this inspired battalion repulsed repeated fanatical enemy tank-infantry attacks, inflicting almost prohibitive losses on the numerically superior attackers. The sheer courage, fortitude, and indomitable will displayed by the Second Battalion, 315th Regiment, is in keeping with the highest traditions of American infantry, and reflects great credit on the armed forces of the United States.*

#### CITATION

*The Third Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment, is cited for the extraordinary gallantry, indomitable courage, tenacity of purpose and high esprit de corps displayed in the accomplishment of an unusually difficult combat operation against the enemy during the period of 9 January 1945 to 20 January 1945 in the vicinity of Rittershoffen, Alsace, France. When enemy forces had effected a penetration through friendly lines and a breakthrough appeared imminent, the Third Battalion, 315th Infantry, was committed to halt the enemy onslaught. Although confronted by the elite of the enemy's forces, this inspired battalion repulsed repeated fanatical tank-infantry attacks, inflicting severe losses on numerically superior attackers, despite the handicap of shortages in certain types of ammunition and equipment. The sheer courage and invincible will displayed by the Third Battalion, 315th Infantry, is in keeping with the highest traditions of the American infantry and reflects a great credit on the armed forces of the United States.*

#### CITATION

*The 310th Field Artillery Battalion is cited for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the defense of Rittershoffen and Hatten, Alsace, France, during the period from 7 January 1945 to 20 January 1945. Repulsing almost continuous enemy attacks by a thunderous volume of fire, this inspired battalion rendered unusually effective support to friendly infantry for a period of 12 successive days; interdicted and harassed enemy supply routes, communication centers, assembly areas and greatly aided in the dispersal of attempts by enemy armored and infantry units to overrun the sector and to effect a decisive breakthrough. Despite adverse weather conditions, the mission of supporting four widely dispersed infantry battalions and the coordination of the fires of eight additional field artillery battalions, all duties were performed unhesitatingly to accomplish each successive fire mission scheduled or called for. During this period, the battalion was subjected to intense enemy counterbattery fire and attacks by enemy jet-propelled planes, but continued to inflict almost prohibitive losses among enemy troops and materiel. The performance of all members of the battalion, the number of missions fired and the effectiveness of all support fires over an extended period of time, were such as to distinguish this battalion above all other artillery battalions who participated in the same action. The gallantry, professional skill, and initiative exhibited by the 310th Field Artillery Battalion contributed directly to the repulsing of repeated fanatical enemy attacks and will remain forever in the annals of history of warfare.*

A United Press dispatch quoted on the *New York Times*, reported the above action as follows:

**"U. S. Regiment beat two enemy divisions. 315th of 79th Infantry Division held off Germans for 11 days in Battle of Hatten."**

*"With American Seventh Army in France, Jan. 22—(UP)—For eleven days a magnificent American infantry regiment parried and held the full weight of Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt's offensive against the little Maginot Line villages of Hatten and Rittershoffen, sending two and one-half elite German divisions reeling back, broken and mauled.*

*"The regiment was the 315th Infantry of the 79th Infantry Division, supported by small units of the Negro 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion and tankmen and armored infantry of the 14th Armored Division. Altogether, this group of men was barely equivalent to the full strength of a regiment, but they fought like wildcats and they whipped the German best.*

*"Nearly half of the men in this regiment are casualties, but they battled the crack German 21st Panzer Division, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, and an entire regiment of the 7th Parachute Division, and for every American casualty there were five or ten wounded Germans.*

*"The two German divisions attacked on Jan. 8 and overran one American regiment in Hatten. The next day the 315th, commanded by Col. Andrew J. Schriener, Jr., of Mount Holly Springs, Pa., rushed up to restore the situation."*

The day of January 20th was the last day of the 315th Infantry Regiment's heroic stand in Hatten and Rittershoffen. On this day an order came for the 79th Division to withdraw to a new defensive line south of Hagenau, on the Moder River. This step was deemed necessary by planning authorities who felt the need for the strengthening of the Seventh Army defenses in what was known as "the Rhine River bridgehead area," where the enemy was making a serious effort to penetrate far enough to encircle the American troops fighting farther to the north in the Hatten and Rittershoffen sector. Had it not been for this threat in the south there is little question but that the towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen could have been cleared of the enemy within the next two days, the enemy having lost his power in his last attack on January 19th.

Following the end of the war, the 79th Division assumed

control of Prisoner of War Camp in Sudetenland. One of the prisoners, a former Wehrmacht battalion commander, and veteran of 30 major engagements on two fronts, said that elements of the 79th Infantry Division which he had fought against during the Hatten and Rittershoffen campaign was the toughest opposition he ever faced in combat.

Major Kurz was in contact with Cross of Lorraine soldiers when the Germans were attempting to regain a foothold in Alsace.

*"I never thought much of Americans as soldiers until I fought them at Rittershoffen," he declared, "but there we found an antagonist who defended bitterly and with more determination than we had previously seen Americans demonstrate."*

Major Kurz was quoted as saying his forces thought the Division was regrouping for a counterattack when we completed "a masterful withdrawal" on January 20th.

His version of the incident as reported in the press stated:

*"On January 20, Kurz said, he was informed of a large American traffic movement to the west. This he interpreted as a regrouping move for an American counterattack. He was engaged in preparations for this expected attack when he learned on January 21 at 1100 hours, that we were gone. He attributed his tardiness of discovery to lack of patrols, which had been cut to a minimum because of the heavy losses they invariably sustained when they attempted to probe the Division's cellar defenses in Rittershoffen. Lack of activity in our sector on January 21st prompted him to send out scouts, and it was not until then that the truth was learned. Kurz recalled his puzzlement over the move. He'd assumed throughout the engagement that American forces were numerically comparable with his, in both tanks and men. He finally decided—thereby making his version of the situation completely erroneous—that the southern prong of the German pincer had made such gains that we were withdrawing to avoid encirclement.*

*"On the same day the withdrawal was discovered, his battalion and supporting units were relieved by a Volksgrenadier Division whose mission was to follow up and resume the attack."*

Commendations poured into General Wyche's CP praising the accomplishments of Cross of Lorraine soldiers in the defensive action. They speak for themselves:

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From: Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers,  
Commanding 6th U. S. Army Group  
20 January 1945

*Holding an important sector, the troops of the 79th Infantry Division received the main attack of the present German offensive on 8 January. The Germans, forced to abandon efforts to pierce our lines to the West, launched a powerful coordinated attack against your positions. The splendid defensive action of your division has been most outstanding. Continued attempts of the powerful 21st Panzer Division were completely blocked and dispersed. In spite of the commitment of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division two days later, the entire enemy attack was contained. These accomplishments were made despite the necessity to extend your flank a considerable distance. I wish to commend each and every man in the 79th Infantry Division for his determined resistance and steadfast achievement in the face of superior enemy numbers.*

From: Lt. Gen. A. M. Patch,  
Commanding, Seventh U. S. Army

*To the foregoing commendation of the Army Group Commander, the Commanding General, Seventh Army, adds his sincere congratulations for your stubborn defensive fighting.*

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Meanwhile, the enemy at the Rhine River bridgehead area seemed content to hold their present gains without any further offensive action, although they reacted very strongly to any attacks made by elements of the 79th Division. Combat Command B of the 12th Armored Division had made a number of attacks to retake Herrlisheim, each one being stopped by the enemy. In the north end of the bridgehead, probing attacks by the 232d Infantry Regiment in and around Sessenheim found the enemy in great strength. Identification showed some of these troops had been shifted from the enemy divisions fighting in the Hatten-Rittershoffen sector. However, on January 17th, the enemy increased his pressure all along the bridgehead front, especially in the Sessenheim and Drusenheim sector, culminating in a large scale attack on January 18th. Elements of the 232d Regiment which were holding in the vicinity of Sessenheim were forced to withdraw, leaving the left flank of the Second Battalion, 314th Regiment, exposed. Quickly, the Division sent in a force composed of elements of the First Battalion, 314th Regiment, recently returned from the 45th Infantry Division's sector, and a battalion of the 410th Infantry Regiment of the 103d Infantry Division. This force did not get very far, running into heavy German resistance. At this time, the troops making the attack were identified as belonging to the 10th SS Panzer Division, the fourth first-class enemy division to be committed in the 79th Division's sector in two weeks.

Following their success in the Sessenheim area, the enemy, on the 19th of January, made an all-out attack on the Second Battalion, 314th Regiment, in Drusenheim, coming in from the northeast, south and southwest, using two battalions of infantry and large numbers of tanks. For three hours the doughboys held off this superior force, but as darkness fell word was received that the battalion was completely surrounded. An attempt was made to break out, but it was unsuccessful, with only 100 men reaching friendly territory. The battalion's stand evidently dislocated the enemy's plans for he did not follow up his gains in strength.

At dark, January 20th, the Division began its withdrawal to a new defense line based on the Moder River. Contact was broken with the enemy, and the withdrawal was made without interference. The regiments then moved into positions on the south bank of the Moder River, with the 222d Regiment holding the Division's left flank from Schweighausen to the west; the 313th Regiment holding from Schweighausen to the eastern end of Hagenau; the 242d Regiment holding the sector between Hagenau and Bischwiller; and the 314th Regiment holding the line from Bischwiller to the southeast where it tied in with the left flank of the 36th Infantry Division. The 315th Regiment was in Division reserve, and the 232d Regiment was placed in Corps reserve.

For the next four days patrols and raiding parties had top priority. It was imperative that the Division find out in what strength the enemy had followed up its withdrawal, and also what enemy units had made the follow up. As one report put it:

*"The raiders would hit, grab a few prisoners, and run. The prisoners would be interrogated as to enemy strength, dispositions, and intentions, and higher headquarters would know the score across the Moder. It didn't always work out that way, but occasionally there were heavy dividends.*

*"Like the moonless December night when elements of the Second Battalion, 313th Infantry, Lt. Col. C. E. Gooding, of Clarksville, Texas, commanding, slipped across the river, deep into enemy territory, and literally caught the krauts napping.*

*"Several kraut patrols and observation posts were by-passed successfully, and the raiders soon found themselves smack in the middle of a jerry billeting area. Most of the community seemed abed, but at one house voices could be heard inside, hot in the middle of what seemed to be the kraut equivalent of a GI bull session. The unit deployed, and a German-speaking doughboy yelled a surrender ultimatum. It was answered with a burst of automatic weapons fire, and the lid was off.*

*"We fired the house with incendiaries,' said Major Maynard C. Miller, of Lincoln, Neb., the battalion executive, 'and soon had a nice blaze going. The krauts poured out of doors and windows, shooting as they came, and we mowed them down as they were silhouetted against the flames. Several of them, undoubtedly, were trapped inside.'*

*"Attracted by the blaze and racket, the enemy launched immediate counterattacks—in platoon strength from one flank, in more than company strength from the other.*

*"We were ready to go, anyhow,' Miller recalls. 'Those birds were just making sure we didn't change our minds.'*

*'Safely back across the river, the raiders took stock. Their own casualties were fantastically light: five walking wounded, all with minor injuries, and one man missing in action. There was no accurate count of the enemy's casualties, but it can be placed as many times more.'*

On January 25th, after a heavy artillery barrage, the enemy once again went over to the attack forcing a crossing of the Moder River in the 222d Regiment's sector, to the west of Schweighausen. The attack was made by elements of the 7th Parachute Division, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 47th Volksgrenadier Division, and succeeded in penetrating our lines at several places. The enemy seized the western part of Schweighausen and occupied two thirds of the Bois d'Ohlungen. Task Force Wahl was organized again immediately after this attack and was composed of the 222d Regiment, the 314th Regiment, which had been relieved by the 315th Regiment, and the 232d Regiment, as well as Combat Command B of the 14th Armored Division, the 79th Reconnaissance Troop and elements of the 781st Tank Battalion. During the day the enemy was pushed back and by nightfall, Division troops had regained most of the ground the Germans had taken earlier.

Task Force Wahl continued the counterattack the following day, January 26th, and made good progress, recapturing Schweighausen and clearing the enemy from south of the Moder in this sector. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy, approximately 200 prisoners had been captured, and it was estimated that 500 enemy had been killed.

The enemy attempted another crossing of the Moder River southeast of Hagenau. This crossing was made in assault boats by elements of the 10th Panzer Division. The enemy was forced back across the river when the 242d Infantry Regiment attacked. At the crossing site the enemy

held out in a strongpoint, but was routed by infantry and supporting tanks. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy in this action; about 100 prisoners were taken and an estimated equal number were killed.

Evidently deciding the bridgehead was proving too costly, the enemy withdrew north of the Moder River during darkness, leaving behind approximately 300 dead.

The 79th Division remained in positions on the Moder River Line until relieved on February 7th by the 36th and 101st Airborne Divisions. The Division then assembled at Pont-a-Mousson for a rest, after 87 days of continuous combat since the jump-off for the race to the Rhine.

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## COMBAT DIARY—BATTLES OF HATTEN AND RITTERSHOFFEN

Here is the combat diary of the accomplishments of the 315th Infantry Regiment in the Battles for Hatten and Rittershoffen, from January 9th when Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt launched the famous but costly offensive in Alsace:

Jan. 9—The Second Battalion sent F and G Companies into Hatten. Lt. Morris W. Goodwin, of Jacksonville, Fla., of F Company, said: "We got a foothold on the town and sent out patrols where friendly troops were supposed to be, and found Germans everywhere. But we found scattered and disorganized groups from that original battalion and put them in our platoons and managed to get a patrol to the center of the town, where the battalion CP was still holding out, with one company fighting like hell to protect it."

Jan. 10—"Next morning, when we started to try to clean up the town, E Company and four tank destroyers came in. Several of those colored boys really were wonderful, standing right there swapping punch for punch with Tiger tanks. Their platoon leader, 2d Lt. Robert F. Jones, of Casper, Wyo., deserves the Silver Star. They found an abandoned M-10 tank destroyer there in good condition and decided to use it instead of one of their own. At our forward positions the main street bent so that they could not see German tanks coming—particularly at night. Jones took a machine-gun for signaling and laid it on the steps of the forward house, with a tank destroyer farther back and zeroed on the bend."

"Jones was supposed to trip the machine-gun trigger with a string, but when the first Tiger poked its snout around the bend at night he just didn't have any sense. He got right out on the steps and held the trigger down, spraying the Tiger. The tank opened fire and blew the steps right out from under Jones, but he wasn't hurt. His gunner, S/Sgt. Harry Johnson, of Philadelphia, opened fire and drove the Tiger back."

At dusk on the tenth, remnants of the battalion originally overrun at Hatten were ordered to withdraw, but, according to Goodwin, about 20 refused to leave and another score stayed at Rittershoffen, where they fought determinedly with a third battalion of the 315th Regiment. They stated flatly, "We've run as far as we're going to run."

Jan. 11-12—For the next 48 hours three companies were isolated in Hatten. The Germans attacked incessantly with tanks, flamethrowers and bazookas, literally blasting the Americans from the houses. But the Americans mowed down the Germans by the scores, and when the enemy paused to reorganize the Americans counterattacked and reoccupied the rubble of the houses they had lost.

Jan. 13-14-15—For three days of incessant attack the two battalions in Hatten and Rittershoffen clung to the slim wedges in each town, neither larger than a baseball park. They fired mortars at "impossible" ranges of 75 to 150 yards. They fired bazookas over housetops, lobbing them like mortars. They fired bazookas at the blistering rate of 40 rounds every five minutes, with loaders stoking each "stovepipe" and diving to the ground to escape the blast. They even pulled pins from mortar shells and fired them at the Germans a la Commando Kelly.

Jan. 16-17-18—When tanks and armored infantry reached them, ending their isolation, this group of Yanks went over to attack, enlarging their holds on each town each day. But the tanks were ordered to leave by dusk each night, and huge German tanks then left the ruins of the houses in which they were hiding and prowled the streets, driving the Americans back with the support of fanatical German infantry.

Jan. 19—The Germans made a final try the morning of the 19th, preceding a full regimental assault with a half-hour barrage of 3,000 shells into the tiny holdings of the 315th in Hatten. Then the Americans rose from their burrows, and when the Germans came in too close for mortars and machine-guns and bazookas, the Yanks used pistols, carbines, grenades and bayonets. In two hours they stopped the attack. The enemy finally gave up the two towns.

Jan. 20—The Americans who had been ordered to withdraw the next night, marched out victors.

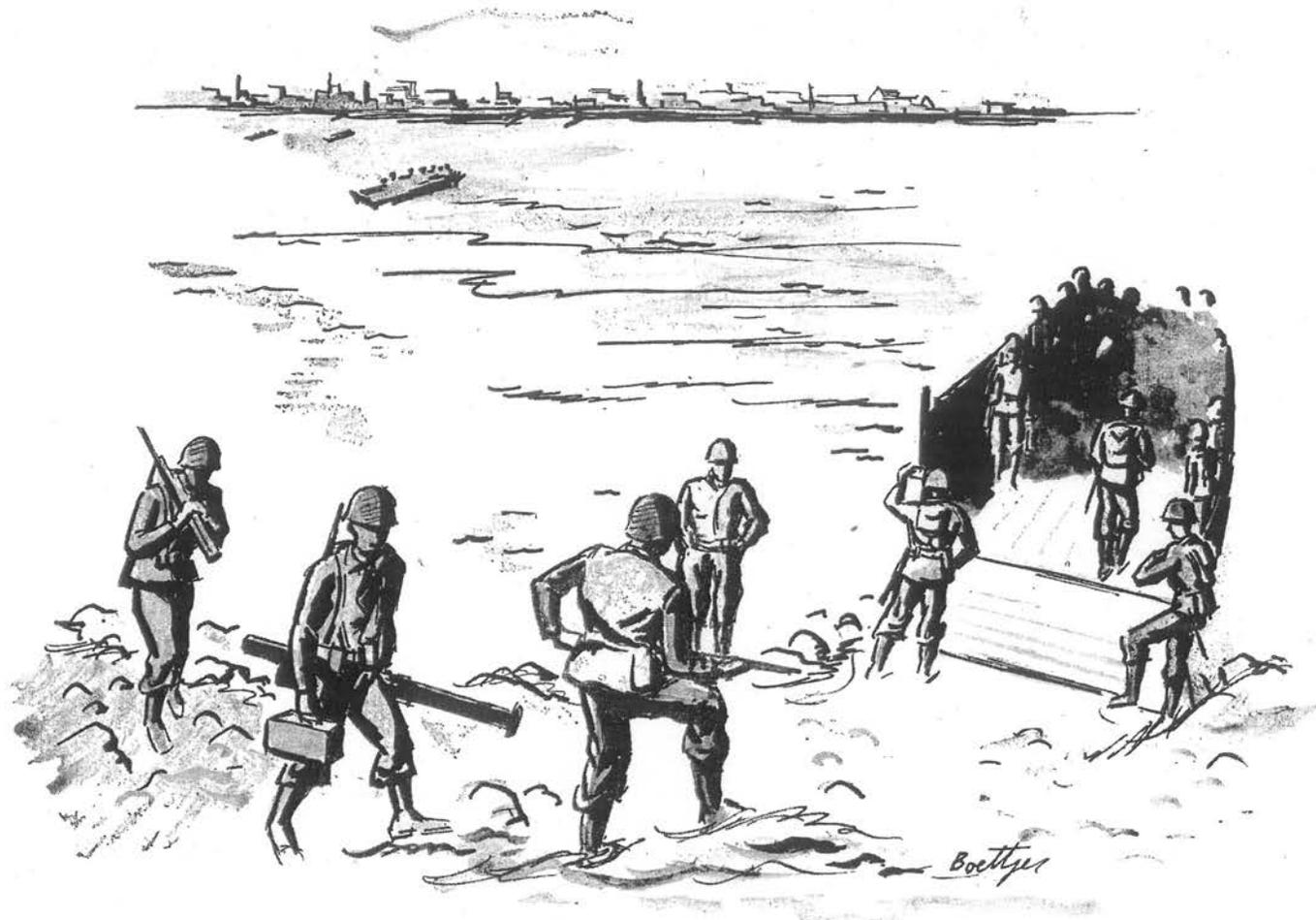
**SECTION IV**

**O V E R T H E R H I N E**

17 February 1945 — 9 May 1945

CHAPTER I—To the Ruhr

CHAPTER II—The Governing Phase—Journey's End



# T O T H E R U H R

## CHAPTER I





*General Wyche and Staff at sand table planning the Rhine crossing*

February 17th found the 79th Division on the move to an assembly area north of Tongres, Belgium, where troops were to resume training, and equipment was to be put in order for future operations. The 79th Division was now serving under its fourth army, the Ninth United States Army, and its sixth corps, the XVI Corps, since arriving in France.

On February 23, Allied armies opposite Cologne began their offensive to cross the Roer River and clear the west bank of the Rhine River. However, the 314th Regiment and the Division artillery were the only element of the 79th Division to be committed in the fight. The remainder of the 79th Division stayed in Corps reserve and moved to a new assembly area east of Maastricht, Holland, with its CP at Simpelveld.

The 314th Regiment relieved elements of the 35th Division, who swung its units to the right, while the 8th Armored Division placed its men on the left flank.

After an artillery bombardment had blasted enemy positions, the regiment attacked with the Third Battalion on the left, the Second Battalion in the center and the First Battalion on the right.

During the day of February 23rd, the Second Battalion was held up by stiff resistance in the heavily mined village

of Kempen. Enemy action, however, was overcome later in the day and 36 prisoners were captured. The Third Battalion also met stubborn resistance, and before the advance could be continued, tanks were thrown into the battle. With their assistance the enemy was pushed back into new defenses.

The advance continued the next morning and the regiment reached its objectives without strong opposition. Later in the day, the 314th Regiment adjusted its lines and established outposts near the bank of the Roer River. Two days later the 314th Regiment was ordered to assist the 35th Infantry Division in crossing the Roer River. The regiment's mission was to feint a crossing by using smoke pots, small arms, and artillery fire, while the 35th Division, on the right, made the main attack.

The regiment's demonstration served its purpose. The 35th Division moved across the Roer River swinging to the north, and forcing the Germans to pull out from in front of the 314th Regiment, thus ending its mission.

Orders to assemble the regiment were received from Division headquarters on February 28th. During this entire period the balance of the 79th Division had continued its training program.

During the Ninth Army offensive, which began February 23d, the 79th Division was represented only by the above mentioned elements. Working under orders from XVI Corps, the 314th Regiment took a limited part in the offensive but assisted in clearing a sector to the Roer, east of Heinsberg.

Now operating under orders from XIII Corps the Division, on March 2nd, began moving from Simpelveld and Heinsberg to the area around Muenchen-Gladbach. Plans went into force for the 313th Regiment to clear and police the area behind the 5th Armored and 84th and 102nd Division with elements attached, but these orders were changed on the same day, March 4th, when new plans were received from Ninth Army.

On March 5th the Cross of Lorraine moved to the vicinity of Hoensbroek, Holland, where units were to begin extensive training in river-crossing. This move proved to be the prelude for the biggest water operation since the landing on Normandy—the crossing of the Rhine!

The Division reverted to XVI Corps on March 7th and received initial verbal instructions for "Operation Flashpoint." These were followed on March 9th by the plan for the operation. Briefly, XVI Corps was to cross the Rhine between Wesel and Orsoy, to protect the right flank of the British 21st Army Group, and provide a crossing point for the Ninth United States Army. In the XVI Corps zone the 79th and 30th Divisions would attack through the 75th Division on D-Day at H-Hour and cross the river. The 79th Division, attacking on the right in addition to securing a bridgehead, was to protect the right flank of XVI Corps. The 35th Infantry and 8th Armored Divisions, in Corps reserve, were to assist in expanding the initial bridgehead.

The Cross of Lorraine plan called for an assault crossing with two regiments abreast, each attacking in column of

battalions. The 313th Regiment, on the right, was to take the towns of Walsum, Vier Linden and Overbruck and protect the right flank of the Division along the line of the canal just south of Walsum. The 315th Regiment, on the left, was to take Wohnungs, Wald and Dinslaken, continue the attack to the east to the high ground east of Letkampshof and protect the left flank of the Division along the canal north of Wohnungs Wald until uncovered by the advance of the 30th Division. The 314th Regiment, in Division reserve, would cross the river prepared to pass through the 315th Regiment to capture Dinslaken, to pass through the 313th and 315th Regiments to secure the high ground east of Hiesfeld Dorf or to assist either regiment in reducing close-in defenses.

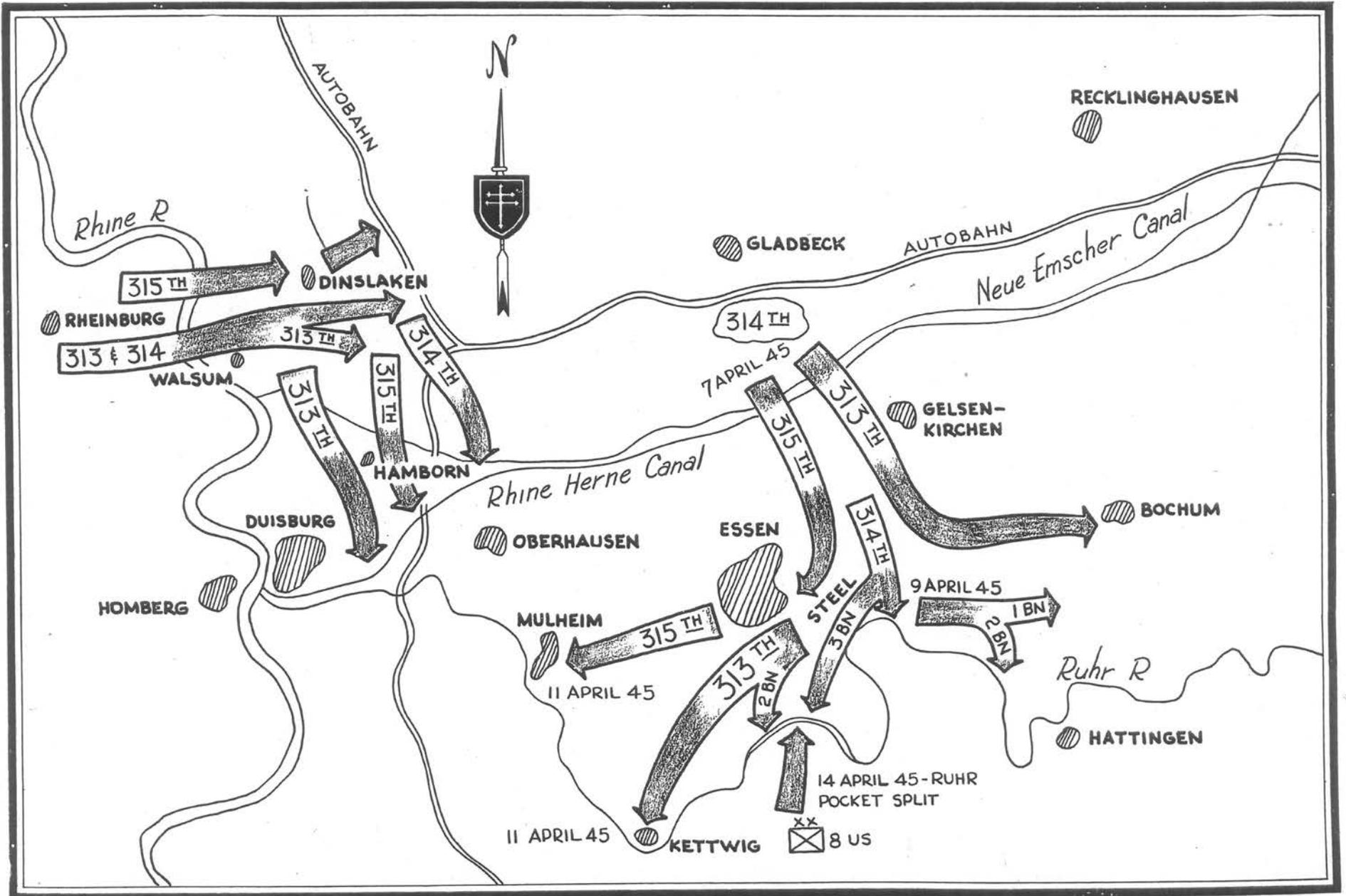
In its attack the 79th Division was to be supported by the 1148th Engineer Group which also took part in the preliminary training along the Maas River. Other units attached were the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion, the 74th Chemical Smoke Generator Company, the 809th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 8th Armored Division Artillery and the 215th, 280th and 695th Field Artillery Battalions.

Sites along the Maas River near Maesyck were selected and from March 5th to March 19th, intensive training for the coming operations was conducted. The objective of this training was to school the assault battalions of each regiment thoroughly—first during daylight and then during darkness. The other battalions were to familiarize themselves and practice with the engineer equipment to be employed. Detailed plans were to be made as to how each piece of equipment was to be crossed and loads tested in craft to be used. Prior to the actual operation a dress rehearsal was conducted during darkness.

In addition to the river crossing training, the 74th Smoke Generating Company demonstrated the capabilities

*Field Marshal Montgomery, General Wyche, and Prime Minister Churchill crossing the Rhine after the bridgehead was established.*





and limitations of its equipment in order that plans could be formulated to use it to the best advantage.

Every effort was made to determine the enemy dispositions, the amount and character of the organization of the ground and conditions of routes, bridges and trafficability of soil on the far bank. In addition to this, careful reconnaissance of routes and the area within our lines was commenced without delay to secure the data necessary for intelligent planning. The 75th Division cooperated by establishing a comprehensive system of observation posts and by patrolling across the river. In turn this information was turned over to a 79th Division G-2 officer who forwarded the data to Division Headquarters. The 79th Division Artillery sent forward observers to the 75th Division Artillery and manned OP's to observe enemy activities and study the sector.

Artillery liaison planes of XVI Corps and the 75th Division were utilized not only to observe for intelligence purposes but also to permit all key commanders to study their zones of action and objectives. The Division Photo Interpretation Team, using the latest available photos, determined the enemy defenses, the topographical changes since publication of the maps to be used, and details of dykes, railroad embankments, water courses and other obstacles. Special efforts were made to secure objectives for the artillery.

The 313th Regiment chose its Second Battalion to make the initial assault with the 187th Engineers in support. The Second Battalion of the 315th Regiment was to be the other assault team with support from the 149th Engineers. Both engineer battalions provided a variety of engineer and naval craft and personnel for the operation. D-Day and H-Hour were set for 0300, March 24th.

On March 18th, the Division began movement to assembly areas south of Lintfort, Germany. By the 22nd all troops had assembled. The movement was made at night with vehicle markings and all divisional insignia removed. During daylight, troops were kept under cover and circulation reduced to a minimum to avoid attracting enemy attention to the area. The division artillery and attached units occupied battle positions on March 21st near Budberg; except for registration, no fire was permitted until orders for the assault were received. On the night of March 23-24, the 313th and 315th Regiments moved to forward assembly areas within marching distance of the Rhine, the 313th Regiment moving to the vicinity of Pelden and the 315th Regiment to Budberg Eversael. The attack was ready and only the word had to be given for the crossing.

On March 24th the 79th Division was honored by a visit from General Eisenhower, Lieutenant General Simpson, the Ninth Army Commander, and Major General Anderson, the XVI Corps Commander, who talked over last-minute plans with commanders at the Division CP.

Training for the crossing of the Rhine River can best be told by a written account in the Division newspaper, the *Lorraine Cross*, by one of its reporters who called it "The Big Sweat." This interesting story gives a vivid picture of the tension felt by the men of the 79th Division.

*"Like soldiers throughout the ETO, men of the Division are primarily concerned these days with point numbers and related factors dealing with home. But occasionally they revert to another popular topic of conversation: Past Campaigns. And after Hatten, Rittershoffen, Foret de Parroy and Bloody Hill have been reviewed shot by shot, there is fairly unanimous agreement that there will never be another campaign as militarily orthodox as the Rhine River Bridgehead. The men never seem weary of rehashing the fact that this operation was the reverse of all its predecessors.*

*"Every other operation had revealed that the tension of the doughboys rose and fell with the bitterness or mildness of the action. But on the Rhine tension was at its highest before the actual crossing, and in the first moment of actual hostilities the men were back to normal for the first time in many days.*

*"Perhaps the painstaking preparation had something to do with it. Men who had been constantly in combat for almost ten months were rehearsed with the same fidelity so many times that some of the men officially tagged the rehearsal as "The Big Sweat."*

*"Their leaders told them frankly that, even with all this preparation, there would still be last-minute questions that only the enemy defending the far shore could answer, and that the planned show 'could be entirely changed by circumstances.'*

*"One doughboy in the 315th Regiment made this statement about the proposed operation: 'Practice, move, wait. Practice something else, move the other way, then wait some more. Then repeat the process.'*

*"Talk constantly ran to one topic. What defenses do the Germans have? Does the enemy have mines laid every few feet? Will the Germans fight to the last man?*

*"Others were sure the landing would be smooth while some thought the operation would be a 'Snafu' with the 79th Division finding its heels in the Rhine and fighting between the devil and the drink. The tension mounted hour by hour as D-Day and H-Hour rapidly approached.*

*"Finally the long awaited order arrived. The word passed from unit to unit: 'Tonight is the night.' The Cross of Lorraine would share in making the crossing that Hitler had predicted would never be made by an enemy as long as a German soldier had sword in hand. Throughout the day of March 23rd there was the usual feverish drive to complete preparations. Equipment was checked and re-checked. At last night came, and a full moon rose over the sector, the time was near."*

Prior to the actual crossing of the Rhine River the way was paved by an intense artillery preparation that shook the earth for a period of one hour. During this time the Artillery fired 300,000 rounds of ammunition into the German lines from 1,250 guns of all sizes. This was to become the greatest bombardment of all times and added

to the success of the assault by 79th Division soldiers. As one report, in regard to the part played by Division Artillery, who blasted the enemy lines with every weapon they had, put it:

*"The men of the 79th Division's artillery were tired. For more than an hour they had been pumping shells into their 105's, adding to the destructive fire-power of the most concentrated barrage ever laid down on the Western Front. The booming of 1,250 guns of all sizes was deafening. 300,000 rounds were fired in a space of one hour to shatter the enemy lines and to leave him in a dazed condition and off balance for a stand and die fighting.*

*"Veterans from both sides of the river said later that it was the best, or worst as the case may be, they had ever seen. To the men of the 310th, 311th, 312th and 904th Field Artillery Battalions the 'serenade' was memorable for several reasons, probably the last of which was the record-breaking rounds of ammunition hurled at the enemy.*

*"Charlie Battery of the 311th Field Artillery Battalion poured the significant round into Germany's Ruhr, but not before Sergeant William L. McBride, No. 1 gun chief, scribbled '300,000' on the shell."*

Even before the artillery barrage had ceased the crossing of the troops got underway. The Second Battalion of the 313th Regiment slid their boats into the swift water of the Rhine and the roar of still motors burst into life for the leap across the river. Twenty-nine minutes later the battalion had all its elements across and in charge of its objectives! In this operation only light enemy fire was encountered which consisted mainly of artillery, mortar and small arms fire which fell on both sides of the river.

The Second Battalion pressed its attack to the east and at 0700 in the morning it had a company in Overbruch, with lines tied to the right flank of the First Battalion. The First Battalion had followed the Second Battalion in the crossing shortly after the latter had reached the far shore and by early morning all of its units had taken up positions with two companies in Walsum. After taking Overbruch the Second Battalion swung to the southeast and at 0830 it occupied Vier Linden. During this period the Third Battalion had started its crossing and moved to the left flank of the other two regiments where it took up positions.

One minute after the Second Battalion, 313th Regiment, had started its crossing the Second Battalion of the 315th Regiment was waterborne and the first two waves had reached the other shore and it was in command of its area. This unit swiftly moved out to the northeast, reaching an important railroad head which fell into its hands by early morning. During the remainder of the day the Second Battalion made slow progress into Dinslaken. Stubborn opposition from the enemy was met in its sector which held up its advance, but with assistance from units of the First Battalion, which crossed at 0415, it reached its objective and helped in clearing the town of enemy action. This important point was cleared by 1900 and the battalion con-

solidated its positions for the night and settled down to plan the next days' activities.

Actual crossing of the Rhine, so tough on paper, was easy. Casualties during the crossing were set at less than 30, and these included several men who were treated for exposure after their boats tipped over in the swift current. One man sustained a broken wrist when he slipped and fell from the top of a dike on the far shore. Most men commented, with pardonable pride, on the almost complete lack of nervousness and excitement during the operation.

One spot of humor in the operation marked an instance when Capt. John E. Potts, S-3 of the 315th Regiment found that someone had made a mistake in loading his boat. Twenty men were squeezed into accommodations for 12. The tiny craft shipped water faster than the crew could bail out, and the most herculean efforts of its outboard motor could give the gallant bark no greater speed than one tenth of a knot. The inevitable happened. A speeding sister ship came too close, and the over-loaded boat capsized. There was little danger of drowning, as each man wore an inflated life belt. But this was definitely no time for a swim in the Rhine!

Capt. Potts drifted around until he was hailed by a passing boat. "It's Potts!" someone yelled, grabbing an outstretched hand. "Well, I'll be damned," said the voice of Lt. Col. Holton, battalion commanding officer, "What's my S-3 doing swimming out here when we have work to do?" Other members of his crew were picked up in due time and returned to the side that they had just left and made ready for another try.

But this side of the story is mentioned only to show the rather ludicrous effect of the capsizing on a tense situation that was rapidly becoming relaxed. The majority of the assault craft reached the far shore safely without casualties.

Immediately after all assault teams of the 79th Division had reached the dyke on the other side of the Rhine, Navy LCIs (Landing Craft Infantry) were in control and rushed needed supplies and equipment to the infantry. Engineers worked on the first of several bridges. RAF-loaned balloons and scores of ack-ack guns were in position and ready to send streams of bullets against enemy air attacks.

Clinton B. Conger, United Press Staff Correspondent, who made the crossing with the 79th Division, made the following report which was carried on many front pages of daily newspapers in the United States: This story was filed on March 24th.

*"The American Ninth Army stormed the Rhine into the Ruhr en route to Berlin in the darkness early Saturday and achieved their initial objectives against surprisingly light opposition.*

*"I came across the Rhine with our infantry and after two hours on the west bank of the great river not a single casualty had been reported by the group which I accompanied.*

*"Opposition was so light that hopes were running high among the American men and officers that they were engaged in the war's last campaign in Europe.*

"Battalion after battalion of our forces are pouring across the broad Rhine which is slow-flowing at this crossing-point. Our assault boats are chugging back and forth across the river, spilling troops on the "Berlin bank" as fast as they can be shuttled across.

"The main German forces on the west bank of the river have not yet engaged us. They are known to include the remnants of the crack German First Paratroop Army. Possibly they are being held back while the Nazi command tries to figure out where the main weight of our attack will fall.

"My crossing of the river was almost an anticlimax after the days and hours of tense waiting. In the hours before the kickoff, possibly the world's greatest artillery barrage had crashed down on the Nazi positions across the river, flattening their strongpoints around the defenders' heads.

"But as we crossed the Rhine it was deathly still. Only the quiet lap of the water against the sides of our boat could be heard. Later there was a burst of small arms fire all around but none seemed to be coming our way.

"I accompanied an infantry battalion headquarters across the river. We rode in an assault boat. When I paused to write this dispatch two hours later, the battalion had not suffered a single casualty. It had flushed half a dozen German prisoners from their holes and was advancing against what could hardly even be dignified by the term "scattered resistance."

"We rushed up to what we had expected to be the first German line of resistance. All that happened was the capturing of some stunned prisoners. From a railway embankment beyond us and from both our flanks, there came the occasional chatter of machine-guns. And snipers were still active in the darkness behind us.

"But the famed German artillery and even the bristling Ruhr Valley flak guns were opening up with only occasional fire in the sector where I am writing this dispatch. Our divisions are pouring across the river with ferryboat precision.

"The outfit I jumped off with crossed the stream an hour later than the neighboring Ninth Army unit just to the north of us. That gave us the benefit of an extra hour of earthquake bombardment of the Nazi positions. But we had also figured that the Germans facing us would have an extra hour to get ready for our attack. Whatever they did with that hour they didn't use it to brace themselves. Perhaps they used it to withdraw to the east. When daylight broke it was obvious that the main Nazi forces had not gone into action.

"Possibly the desperate German manpower crisis had forced them to pull back everything but outposts along the river and to hold their main forces further back for a possible counterattack when the pattern of our offensive becomes clear. But there are guarantees that the Germans won't be able to mount a counter-attack as fast as we build up our bridgehead.

"First of these is the great width of our assault. Second is our overwhelming air and artillery effort which has isolated the assault area. And third is the speed with which our troops are pouring across the Rhine and plunging ahead into the interior.

"The Ninth Army isn't waiting for Navy craft, ferries, barges, bridges, rafts, infantry support weapons—or anything. It is storming across as fast as the racing storm boats and assault craft with outboard motors can shuttle between the two Rhine banks. The assault went like this:

"For the past two days or so we have been billeted in hiding in hamlets and villages half a dozen miles back of the river, waiting with our vehicles and weapons for D-Day and H-Hour. About 10:00 p.m., after the men had finished late supper, checked and rechecked their equipment, they began strapping it on. Trucks are rolling up to the battalion headquarters.

"Headquarters personnel took the last deep drags on their cigarettes, crunched them out under their heels, and climbed into the trucks, and the first small column was rolling toward the Rhine in the dense blackout. Everything had been timed to the split second. As the lead car passed the company areas, the woods, thickets and barns erupted with more trucks and jeeps, joining the procession until the whole battalion was in line.

"It took only a few minutes to drive to a point four miles from the Rhine where the battalion dismounted from the trucks and began the last march-in. In a column of two's the men swung down the dirt road while the jeeps and trucks turned back to the assembly point to await their priority turn for rafts and bridges."

One highlight which is told by men of the 79th Division is a story which concerns Division G-2 following the lightning assault across the Rhine.

It seems that after the crossing was underway, the telephone rang at G-2 and the voice at the other end said: "This is Baker Beach Traffic Control. We've got two Germans underfoot down here and we're not even in high gear yet. What'll we do with them?"

"Put them on the phone," was the reply. And that's how two enemy PFCs, dazed and shaken by the then record-breaking artillery barrage that preceded the assault crossing, found themselves undergoing telephonic interrogation by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Lt. Col. A. C. Dohrmann. Their ready answers to a dozen-odd questions concerning enemy numbers and dispositions in the 79th Division's assault area were collected on the spot and relayed immediately to the beach. A subsequent assault wave used the information to excellent advantage. Then the two PWs, first of more than 700 captured in the first day's fighting, were hustled off to the Division Prison Cage.

One of the prisoners asked an interrogator at the cage if questioning via telephone by high ranking German-speaking officers was SOP. He was assured that it was not. The older of the two, however, was less naive and decidedly more philosophical. When Colonel Dohrmann asked him if he thought the 79th Division would be successful in its

thrust across the Rhine, he replied moodily: "Why not? You crossed the Atlantic, didn't you?"

One Associated Press dispatch had this to say about the 79th Division in relation to its part in crossing the Rhine. Filed in the United States on March 25th, Associated Press gave its readers a bird's-eye view of the assault as follows:

*"The veteran 79th was one of the units which spear-headed the Ninth Army's burst across the Rhine. The unit commanded by Maj. Gen. I. T. Wyche was holding the right flank of the Ninth's attack. Its 315th Regiment took Dinslaken, and its 314th Regiment quickly pushed three miles beyond the Rhine.*

*"Wyche's standing order to his aggressive outfit is 'close with the enemy and exterminate him.'*

*"Two regiments—the 315th under Col. Andrew Schriber of Mt. Holly, Pa., and the 313th under Col. Edwin M. Van Bibber, Bel Air, Md.—moved abreast across the Rhine in Saturday's attack, fanning out and taking high ground.*

*"By noon Wyche had committed the 314th Regiment, commanded by Col. Warran A. Robinson, of Los Angeles, Calif., and the whole division moved out to stabilize the 21st Army Group's vital right flank in case the Germans tried to counterattack.*

*"The 79th was the first outfit to enter Cherbourg. Then followed battles across France. The 79th, when it was part of the United States Seventh Army, was reported to be the first U. S. Division to reach the Rhine in December.*

*"A captured German report said the 79th was 'considered one of the best attack divisions in the United States Army.'"*

On the morning of March 24th, units from the 314th Regiment assembled with the First Battalion at the 315th Regiment's flank and the other two battalions tied to the 313th Regiment. Later in the day they started their crossing and by 1500 the regiment had assembled. Plans were laid for its forces to be thrown into the battle and one hour later it moved into formation with the 313th Regiment. The 314th Regiment attacked Overbruch and won its objectives consisting of the town and railroad head.

Most of the prisoners taken during the first day's advance were members of the 588th Infantry Regiment, which ceased to exist following the capture of practically all its personnel.

Harassing fire was experienced at the benches by enemy artillery and planes who flew over the area on bombing and strafing missions. However, anti-aircraft batteries kept the fighters high in the air and those who braved the accurate fire were destroyed before they could cause damage to supplies and equipment which was pouring onto the beachhead.

Forward units of the 79th Division met light artillery fire on March 25th, but at 0700 all three regiments attacked. The 313th Regiment was held from taking its objective because of strong enemy opposition and could not continue its advance in its sector, but did commit the Third Battalion in an attack on a factory. Three tanks in this area created a delaying action by throwing a heavy concentration of fire upon the Third Battalion's advance. Tanks were called upon for support and the building fell into the 79th Division's hands. The Third Battalion then swung into line with the First Battalion which was established to the right.

The 314th Regiment was charged with taking the autobahn and succeeded in its mission and consolidated its lines.

The Second Battalion met heavy resistance, but gained two kilometers during the day.

The 315th Regiment jumped off to the attack at 0700 the same day and continued to advance although it met light resistance. The Second and Third Battalions experienced some fire northeast of Dinslaken, but overcame this and moved forward. Progress was hampered upon reaching high ground near the autobahn by heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire, but by late evening all resistance was cleared.

While the three regiments were moving to the attack, other Division units were being ferried across the Rhine by engineers. Included in the groups were four Field Artillery Battalions, Chemical Mortar, and Engineer companies, and the Military Police. Artillery fire slowed construction of a bridge that was being built by the engineers, but work continued.

In the Corps sector, the 35th Infantry Division started to cross the Rhine. Plans called for this unit to be thrown between the 79th Division and the 30th Division. Under the arrangement, the 134th Infantry (Task Force Miltonberger, now chief National Guard Bureau) would relieve the 315th Regiment, which could move into a new position between the 313th and 314th Regiments. This decreased the sector to be utilized and increased the striking power of the Division. The 134th Regiment moved to the right pivoting in a southeasterly direction.

March 26th found Task Force M temporarily attached to the 79th Division. The force moved into position behind the 315th Regiment and early the next morning it passed through Division lines and moved to the attack. After advancing more than three kilometers during the day it reverted back to the command of the 35th Division. Light resistance was met by the 314th Regiment during its advance from isolated units which more or less created a nuisance value to the oncoming troops. Members of the 314th Regiment ran into heavy small arms fire and direct fire from anti-tank guns which provided a screen for a counter-attack of approximately 100 enemy infantrymen. Observers quickly called for artillery which broke up the attack before it could reach our positions.

The 315th Regiment assembled in the vicinity of Dinslaken, upon losing Task Force M, and passed into the lines between the 313th and 314th Regiments. During a shifting of two companies, the enemy threw in a heavy concentration of artillery fire which slowed down the transfer. During this period small arms fire and mortar salvos were observed from the north edge of Wehofen. Front-line troops were also bombarded by fire from a railroad gun believed to be of 240-mm. caliber, but was counterbattered by the 79th Division artillery and a direct hit was soon reported by observers.

During the night of March 27th, enemy planes flew several sorties over our lines on a bombing and strafing mission. Military Police directing military traffic suffered light casualties, but fire from the 463d Anti-Aircraft Battalion brought down two of the attacking force and broke up the formation. Early on the morning of March 28th, orders were received by the three regiments to attack abreast, the 313th on the right, the 314th on the left, and the 315th in the center. The attack was to be in a southerly direction with the mission of reaching the Rhine-Herne Canal.

The 313th and 315th Regiments made good progress against light opposition. They crossed the Neue Emscher Canal and, continuing south, overran Hamborn. Meanwhile the 314th Regiment, to the east, was meeting much stiffer opposition, being held up at the Autobahn.

For the next three days the attack continued with the bulk of the enemy's resistance being thrown against the 314th Regiment. However, by the end of March all regiments had reached the Rhine-Herne Canal.

On April 1st, Maj. Gen. John B. Anderson, commanding XVI Corps, commended the Cross of Lorraine upon the successful completion of its mission, in an open letter.

*"Upon completion of your mission in the Flashpoint Operation, I desire to commend all the officers and enlisted men of your splendid division for the outstanding manner in which they have accomplished their assigned missions.*

*"After a period of thorough training and planning, the 79th Infantry Division rapidly and successfully crossed the Rhine River in their assigned zone of action and quickly overran the enemy defenses on the east bank. Proceeding rapidly and aggressively, they quickly overcame enemy resistance and secured all of their assigned objectives.*

*"Knowing the outstanding record of achievement of the 79th Infantry Division, I knew that I was fortunate in having it attached to this Corps for this operation. I knew that it would successfully accomplish any assigned mission and I unhesitatingly selected it as one of the assault divisions for the initial crossing of the Rhine River. By its outstanding performance in this operation, it has added additional laurels to its previous enviable record. It has again demonstrated the outstanding qualities of aggressiveness, initiative and superior fighting qualities that it has heretofore shown in the many battles in which it has participated from Normandy to the Rhine."*

The Ruhr Pocket, on April 1st, was created by the junction of the Ninth and First United States Armies in the vicinity of Lippstadt. The Ruhr River, running east and west through the pocket, then became the boundary line between the two Armies, with the responsibility of reducing the northern part going to the Ninth Army, and the southern part going to the First Army.

In the 79th Division's drive to the Rhine-Herne Canal, the large industrial city of Duisburg had been by-passed. During the afternoon of April 2nd, the S-2 of the First Battalion, 313th Regiment, unsuccessfully tried to negotiate the surrender of the enemy in this city. Accompanied by the Mayor of Hamborn, and an interpreter, contact was made with the Germans in this area for the surrender. Lower elements of the enemy units were in favor of calling their part in the war to a halt, but higher headquarters turned the offer down. With the enemy's refusal to surrender, plans were made to attack the city, but before these plans could be carried out, XVI Corps changed the Division's mission, leaving the city's reduction to the relieving unit.

At the opening of the campaign to destroy several hundred thousands of enemy troops and equipment, *Stars and Stripes*, soldier newspaper in Germany, made this report to its readers: "The brunt of the task of mopping up the Ruhr Pocket fell on the shoulders of the Infantry." In short, the clean-up was an infantry show. However, without the help of several armored divisions who participated in reducing the pocket, the fight would have been more difficult.

As the First Army had made considerable progress in the Ruhr, Corps was ordered by the Ninth Army to clear the industrial district south to the Ruhr River, setting the jump-off for April 6th. The attack was to be led by the 79th Division in the area west of Gelsenkirchen, with the 17th Airborne Division to relieve the local troops on the line at Horst and Karnap. The attack did not materialize until the following day because of the lack of time for plans.

Current plans released by the Division called for the

313th Regiment to be placed on the left, the 315th Regiment on the right, and the 314th Regiment held in reserve. The two regiments were to attack immediately after a 15-minute artillery barrage. The Division's objective was high ground commanding the Ruhr River.

Before daylight the 313th Regiment jumped off with its battalions crossing the Rhine-Herne Canal with the aid of assault boats and a footbridge which had been constructed previously. The enemy opposed the regiment with small arms, mortar and artillery fire, but the infantry teams moved over and continued the attack. Several strongpoints by-passed by the operation were cleared of enemy activity by several companies of men as they moved in the rear of the advancing troops. Keeping pace with the 313th Regiment, the 315th Regiment met considerable enemy artillery fire during its push across the canal, which constituted the major portion of its opposition during the day. However, artillery attached to the 79th Division returned fire and sent over ten shells for every one the enemy dropped on our lines.

April 8th saw the 25,000th prisoner captured by the Cross of Lorraine. This was called, by many, a red-letter day. Schmidt, a harried, greyish corporal of the 2d German Parachute Division, who had been in the Army since 1941, was at a loss to understand why his leaders continued to wage a hopeless war against the Allied military machine. He was interviewed by the Division Commander and during the interview a photograph was taken. He was later interviewed and Schmidt said that this was one of the big days of his life because never before had he had his picture taken with a General. Many of his type were captured during the day and entered the prison cage operated by Lt. Richard H. Paepcke, T/3 Lothar L. Weinberg, and T/5 Eric H. Bondy. It was their job to interview each prisoner and obtain vital information of interest to G-2.

By April 8th the 79th Division had established a strong bridgehead on the southern side of the Rhine-Herne Canal and the next stage in the game was at hand. The break-out was ready. However, the day's move consisted of bringing up the flanks for an all-out attack to clear the Ruhr Pocket once and for all.

On April 9th, the 314th Regiment, which had moved up from its reserve area, attacked south between the 313th and 315th Regiments. Overcoming scattered resistance it was able to seize the city of Steele on the Ruhr River, thereby cutting the north part of the Ruhr pocket in two.

With the village of Steele in the hands of the oncoming infantry, Kary, another important objective fell to the 313th Regiment following heavy resistance on the part of the Germans who used every means at their disposal in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the onslaught of the 79th Division. Shortly after a fire-fight, the enemy withdrew and the Division continued its advance.

Now that the objective was secure, XVI Corps handed down new orders. Under the assigned orders the boundaries of the 17th Airborne Division would enable the 315th Regiment to extend its sector further to the east and relieve the Third Battalion of the 314th Regiment. Troops of the Third Battalion of the 313th Regiment also were relieved of their current mission and moved to the rear for a short time. According to the new plan, the 313th and 314th Regiments were to attack east toward Dortmund while the 315th Regiment would remain in position just east of Essen. The right flank of the Division then would be protected along the Ruhr River by members of the 79th Reconnaissance Troop.

On April 10th, the 313th and 314th Regiments attacked to the east, meeting only scattered small arms fire, and an occasional strongpoint which held the advance up momentarily. By early afternoon the 313th Regiment captured Bochum and was preparing to continue the advance east,

when new orders were received from XVI Corps. A rearranging of Division boundaries now put Bochum in the 35th Division's sector, releasing the 313th and 314th Regiments from further commitment in that area.

Plans called for the 79th Division to attack in a westerly and southwesterly direction, clearing the enemy out of the area north of the Ruhr River, between Mulheim and Steele.

While the 314th Regiment guarded the Ruhr River on both sides of Steele, the 313th and 315th Regiments jumped off to the attack.

With troops of the Reconnaissance unit, members of the 315th Regiment pushed through the southern part of Essen and continued on to Mulheim, which was reached later in the day.

The advance at increased speed moved on to Ruttenscheid and Bredeney which soon fell to the 313th Regiment. Honor of capturing the most important prisoner of the war by the 79th Division was bestowed on the Second Battalion of the 313th Regiment who took Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, the head of the enemy's largest munitions industry. This famous prisoner was taken in custody at the home of the Krupps, Villa Hugel, and meekly submitted to arrest. Meanwhile, the First and Third Battalions continued the attack to the south, reaching the city of Kettwig. Finding the bridge over the Ruhr River, in this city, intact, the First Battalion established a bridgehead on the south bank, but intense enemy artillery fire prevented any expansion of this bridgehead.

By April 12th the 79th Division had mopped up its sector except for an occasional sniper. On April 14th the 8th Infantry Division, of the First Army, driving up from the south made contact with the Third Battalion, 313th Regiment, between Kettwig and Steele, and two days later uncovered the whole 79th Division's front. This ended the Division's physical contact with the enemy after 302 days of combat.

With Essen and its famous Krupp armament works in the hands of the Allies, many military observers believed that the German Army could not continue to wage war. The loss of the city also meant that the Westphalian coal fields could not supply the enemy with its precious black gold that was needed to turn the wheels of industry. If this were true the end of the war was in sight. American infantrymen who had fought from the beaches of Normandy to the heart of the Rhineland were putting the finishing touches to the last chapter of World War II!

*With the 79th Division in the Ruhr Pocket—(June 10th)—Holbrook Bradley, Sun papers War Correspondent.*

*"During the last days of action, when other outfits were meeting little or no resistance from the crumbling Wehrmacht, the doughboys of the 79th Division were following the usual course of action of the Cross of Lorraine Division to engage in some of the toughest combat work of the war.*

*"On April 11th, after the stiff fight to take Essen, the First Battalion of the 313th Regiment was on orders to move south toward Kettwig, a small but important town held by the enemy on the Ruhr Canal.*

*"Company A led the late-afternoon attack, on orders from Regimental Commander, Colonel Edwin M. Van Bibber. Captain Orville T. Parker of Red Bluff, Calif., one of the battalion's most aggressive officers, was in charge.*

*"Entering Kettwig from the north, Parker's men found little enemy resistance but considerable confusion due to the large number of Russian slave laborers being sent back across the one remaining bridge.*

*"Sizing up the situation in a hurry, Captain Parker*

*ordered the troops across and 35 men and an officer managed to push over under cover of the Russian confusion before the Germans knew that the Americans were in the vicinity.*

*"In order to reach a position where he could better command his troops, Parker crossed to a stone pier half way across the canal and made the spot just as the enemy opened up with an intense artillery barrage at the piers still standing.*

*"The captain was knocked out and it was impossible for any of his men to reach him. First move when he regained consciousness was to drop off the pier into a flat boat which was moored to the pier, and a few minutes later the troops ashore were astonished to see their commander casually clambering up the bank of the canal.*

*"The action that day, which was the last for the battalion, gained the bridgehead and paved the way for the surrender of more than 18 German divisions then cut off in the industrial pocket."*

Capture by the 79th and 17th Airborne Divisions on April 11th of the western part of the Ninth Army objective, the north bank of the Ruhr River, led to preparations for the occupation and government of this sector of the Rhineland. The Cross of Lorraine was assigned an area which initially extended along the Ruhr River. On this day the 17th Airborne Division began to relieve the 79th Division which moved to an assembly area to await further orders.

Enemy harassing fire continued, however, to create minor trouble for the Division at Kettwig in the form of light artillery and small arms fire. To erase this activity the 312th Field Artillery Battalion was dispatched and quickly put an end to the enemy's counter-thrust.

With the 313th Regiment assigned to Military Government in Essen, the Division took over its new sector on April 13th, relieving elements of the 35th and 75th Infantry Divisions. This same day found units of the Division attached in Dortmund to Military Government, while the remainder moved on.

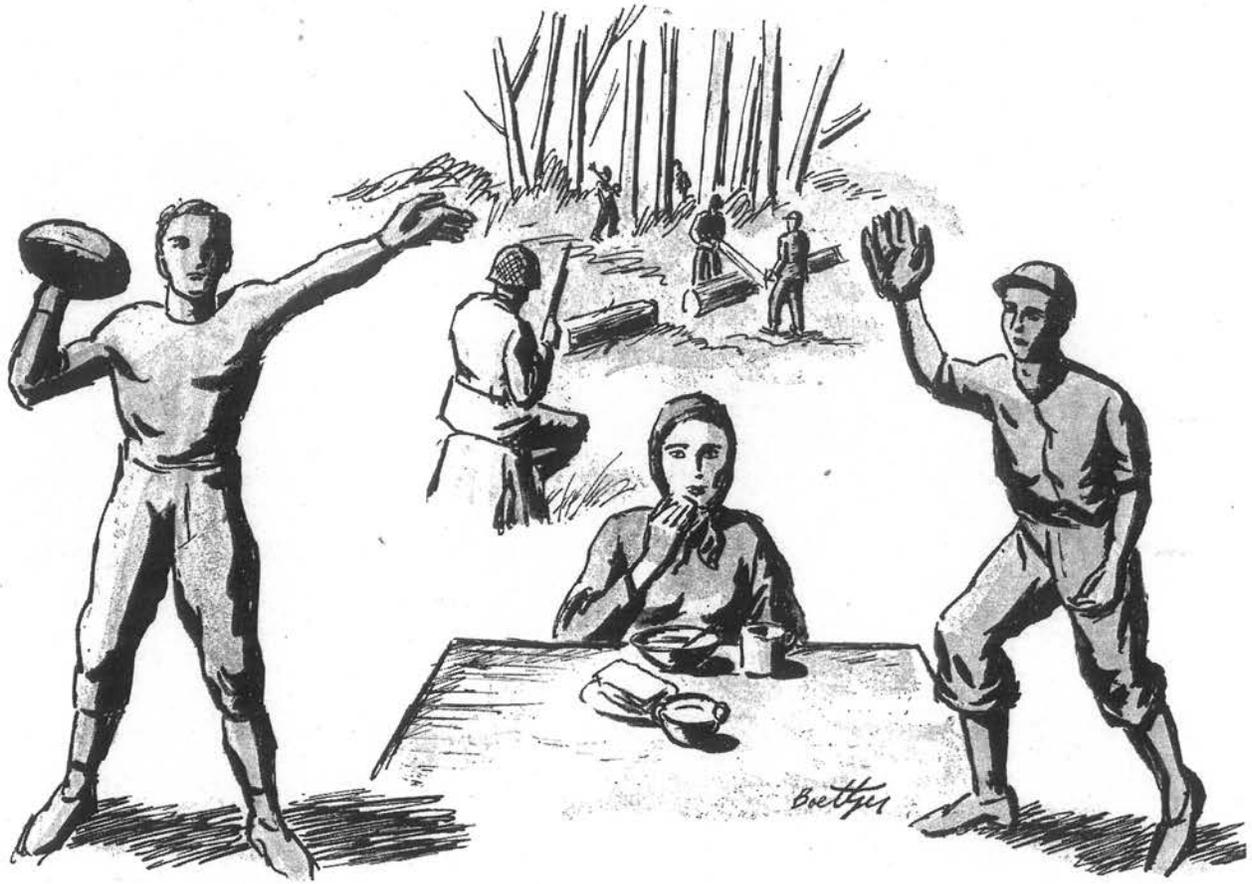
*"Assignment of the 79th Infantry Division to the Ninth Army afforded me great pleasure, inasmuch as I had noted with keen interest the fine record made by the division since operations were launched on the Continent.*

*"It was with a feeling of complete confidence that your division was chosen as one of the two assault units for the initial Rhine crossing in the Ninth Army zone.*

*"I particularly wish to commend your division upon the skill and speed with which you accomplished the crossing, in the face of determined opposition and numerous difficulties beyond your control. Equally impressive were the rapidity with which you built up your fighting strength on the far shore, and the energy and power with which you exploited the initial bridgehead."*

*Lt. Gen. W. H. Simpson,  
Commanding, Ninth U. S. Army  
April 18, 1945*

Summing up the period of April 14th to April 30th, the remainder of the month was spent in policing the assigned area. Elements from the 79th Division were attached to Military Government detachments in Dortmund, Huls, Westerholt and other important cities and villages. Now that the end of the war was practically at hand, order in the 79th Division area had to be maintained and enforced. The road from the beaches in France to Germany had been long, but the fighting ability of American youth had won the fight against aggression.



# THE GOVERNING PHASE—JOURNEY'S END

## CHAPTER II



The 79th Infantry Division accepted the news of Germany's surrender unconditionally on May 8, 1945, calmly. There was no celebration.

The wet misery and shrapnel of Cherbourg, the bitter fighting through the Foret De Parroy, Hatten and Rittershoffen—and the bridging of the Seine, Meurthe and Rhine Rivers were too close.

Too close, too, was the memory of Cross of Lorraine men who fell in battle.

On April 16th the Division lost contact with the enemy as liquidation of the Ruhr Pocket meant relief and a military government mission.

The 8th and 86th Infantry Divisions closed up to the Ruhr River, uncovered the 79th Division and by the 17th of April all units of the Division had either a patrolling or military government role.

During the month of May, the Division guarded 294

were distributed for this purpose. The Division G-4 (Supply) section worked closely with Military Government branches in organizing and supervising the needs of various Prisoner of War and Displaced Persons camps.

Near the end of May the 79th Infantry Division received orders to relieve Third U. S. Army units occupying Cheb, Czechoslovakia, and part of the surrounding Sudetenland.

The first week of June was marked by the completion of the Division's movement to the Sudetenland. The trip, a 400-mile move, meant an overnight bivouac at Mechterstadt.

Division units were listed at the following localities after the move: Division Headquarters—Franzenbad; Division Artillery, 304th Medics, 779th Ordnance, 79th Quartermaster Company, and 79th Reconnaissance Troop at Cheb; 315th Infantry Regiment—Marienbad; 314th Infantry Regiment—Faulkenau; 314th Infantry Regiment—Gras-



*Company A, 313th, Standing Retreat*

installations in addition to manning road blocks and patrol duty.

The 79th Counter Intelligence Corps detachments screened hundreds of civilians, resulting in the capture of many prisoners of war in civilian clothes. More than 900 persons were listed in the automatic-arrest column, among them 80 SS and 46 Gestapo members, all believed at the time to be implicated in political murders and other atrocities.

During this period the Division personnel assisted in the movement of 1,500 displaced Russians to their homeland. In addition hundreds of displaced persons camps were organized by the 79th Division. It was estimated that from 80,000 to 100,000 displaced persons were processed by unit military government teams. The feeding of the displaced persons and prisoners of war was accomplished by using existing German food stocks which had to be supplemented by Allied C rations. Over three and one-half million rations

litz, and 304th Engineer Battalion and Division Rear—Asch.

The new area assignment made news for most leading newspapers in the States. Here is what a United Press dispatch had to say:

*"Cheb—Troops of the 79th Division, now occupying a portion of the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia where, in 1938, Hitler won his last bloodless victory, are only 75 miles from Lidice, probably the most tragically celebrated to feel the ravages of modern war.*

*"Lidice, the town that is no more, but which will never be erased from the maps or the hearts of the Czech people, lies in what became Russian-occupied territory almost due east of the Division area. All that remains of this village, whose name in a world-wide symbol of Nazi brutality, is a wheat field dotted with countless blood-red poppies, and a freshly painted sign saying: 'Here used to stand the village of Lidice.' As a reprisal against the assassination of Reinhardt ('The Hangman') Heydrich, terrorist Nazi gauleiter in*

*Czechoslovakia, the entire population of the village was exterminated, and the village obliterated.*

*"Of the 667 population, all the men were shot and their bodies thrown into a common grave. Women and children were sent to concentration camps. Only two survivors are known.*

*"A small plot in the wheat field has been cleared as a memorial to Lidice's dead. It is marked by Czech and Russian flags, a two-foot high crucifix, and a sign: 'Here lies the bodies of Lidice's victims, murdered June 10, 1942, by the German invaders.' The peasants have no way of knowing whether the simple memorial is the actual site of the grave."*

Settled in their new area the 79th Infantry Division met and solved new problems. As two-thirds of the Division boundary faced the Russians, an agreeable policy for traffic control on the border was made with our Allies.

The processing and discharging of German prisoners of war was another job well done. The task went to Division Artillery personnel who established a large camp on the airport outside of Cheb. There were approximately 40,000 enemy soldiers in the camp and the problem of feeding, housing, and guarding them was taken in stride by the artillerymen.

For the period, June 10th to August 7th, more than 36,000 prisoners of war were processed and discharged, leaving only 8,000 to be handled by a relieving processing team.

In addition, the Division had the responsibility of looking after some 94,000 Displaced Persons, predominant among them were Sudeten Germans and German refugees. Cheb was the site of a large camp housing SS, SA and Nazi Party members. No serious sabotage efforts were reported during the Division's period of occupation.

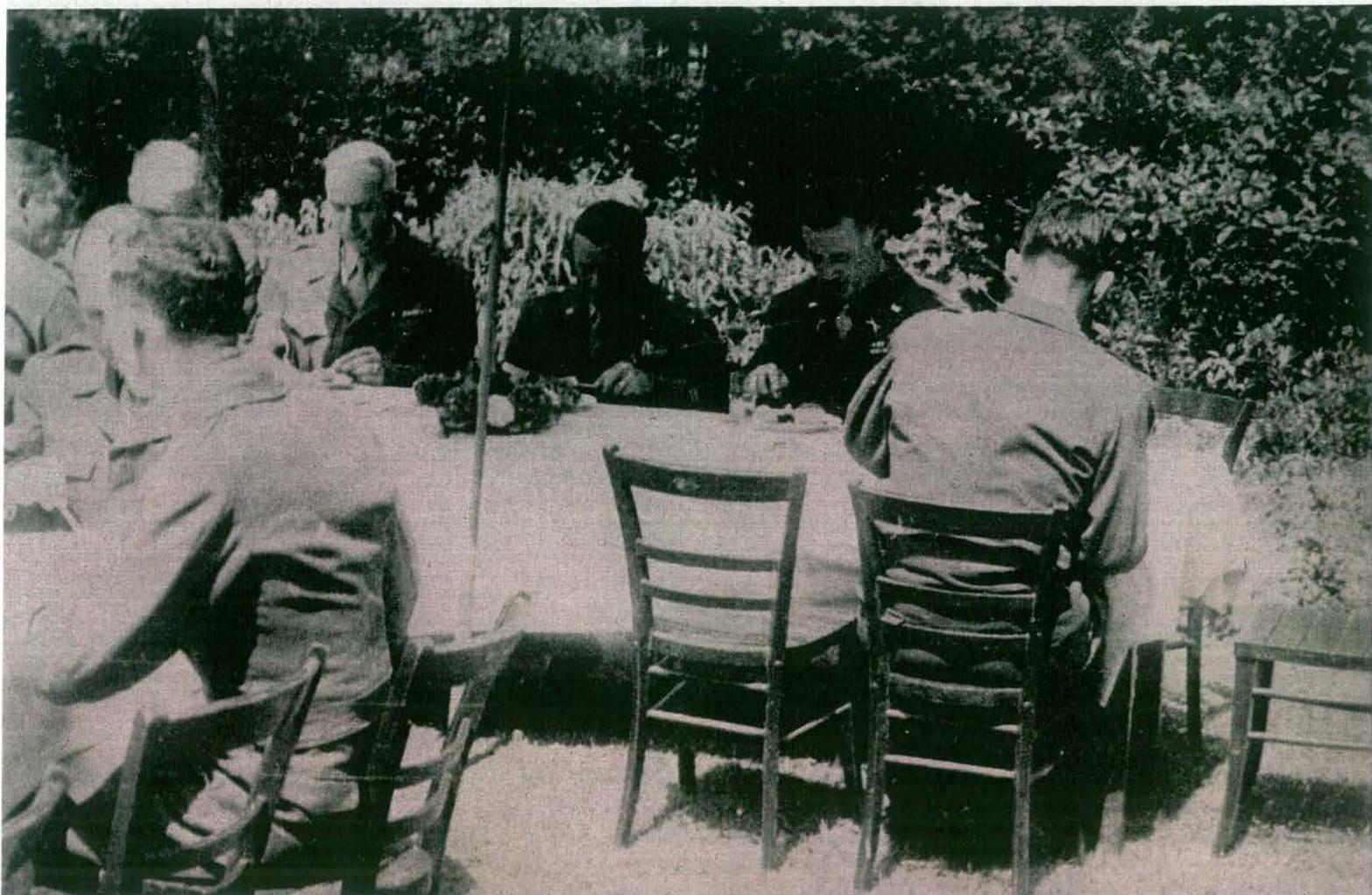
During May and June and for many weeks more the 79th Division experienced changes in personnel under the redeployment system. It affected the entire Division from the Commanding General down. Maj. Gen. Ira T. Wyche, Division Commander, left and Brig. Gen. Leroy H. Watson replaced him 20th May. On June 22, the 79th Division received its initial notification to transfer all enlisted men with scores above the critical score of 85 points to the 16th Armored Division for shipment to the United States. This directive was the first in a long list of orders subsequently rescinded in connection with the entire redeployment question for the Division.

On June 26, the 79th Division was directed by Third U. S. Army to transfer all personnel with 80 or more points, also to the 16th Armored Division.

The month of June was also highlighted with a gigantic parade and celebration in the city of Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, marking the return of President Benes to his country.

Troops of the 314th Infantry Regiment, with V Corps units, gave the parade its military atmosphere. The Division band played appropriate musical numbers and added color to the ceremony. It was the first formal dress review

*Farewell dinner at Neheim, Germany, given by General Wyche for all unit commanders through Battalions.*



in many months for 79th Division men and they went through their paces with a snap and sparkle that won commendations from military and civilian personnel.

In July, the Division started a large athletic program, with softball, baseball, track, volleyball, golf, tennis and swimming among the main sports indulged in.

Divisional champions were crowned but emphasis was placed on athletic competition in small units where a larger turnout of men enjoyed all sports throughout the period.

In baseball, the Division organized a hardball team and played a successful series of games with neighboring divisions while the 315th Infantry Regiment paced the units in softball with "Ray" Ostrowski, their pitching star, making quite a name for himself.

The two Division tennis stars, Charles Allen, of Division Headquarters, and John Woods, of 79th Signal Company, pounded their way through the XXII Corps tournament at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, and the Third Army tournament at Nuremburg, earning a berth on the Army team, playing for the ETO championships at Wimbledon, England. While not winning the tournament, the play of the 79th Division boys was well regarded by the press.

Later in the season, the football and basketball crowns went to Special Troops teams following a schedule interrupted by redeployment. Special Troops swept all opposition aside in basketball and were tied one game in football.

Throughout the various Division sectors special athletic and social programs were arranged to commemorate the Fourth of July. A parade in Cheb was the only event to take place as inclement weather forced postponement of athletic events planned for the day elsewhere in the 79th's area.

The Second Battalion of the 314th Infantry Regiment, which distinguished itself at Fort Du Roule, passed in review and was followed by a detachment of Czech Army troops stationed in Cheb. Following the parade, the mayor of Cheb made a speech in which he thanked America, through the Division, for its role in liberating his country from Nazi tyranny. The ceremony was held in what was once Adolf Hitler Platz.

By the middle of July, the 79th Division had taken into custody a total of 1,346 persons in the automatic-arrest category. This was for a period of one and a half months' stay in the Sudetenland and high ranking officials were quick to commend the Division for the smooth functioning of Displaced Persons and Prisoner of War camps.

At the same time orders were received to the effect that the 79th Division would move to the II Corps area, vicinity of Salzburg, on or about July 30. This order was cancelled and the Cross of Lorrainers were once again given a new mission—this time to initiate an eight-weeks' training in preparation for indirect redeployment to the Pacific in early October.

The new training program swung into high gear with the building of ranges and intensive range and field-range firing. This work had barely begun when, on August 1st, the Division was alerted for movement to a tent training camp in the vicinity of Hammelburg. The 16th Armored Division relieved the 79th Division and all Divisional units closed into the tent camp on August 7th. Training then began again and everyone was given the task of learning everything possible about the Japs.

During the Division's stay in tent city, it rained con-

tinuously but the men continued to train in knee-deep mud for whatever mission lay ahead. After five days of intensive training under miserable conditions, the 79th Division was alerted for indirect redeployment. The readiness date was August 27th.

On August 14th, the Japanese announced they would accept the Allies' surrender terms, bringing to a close the greatest struggle of nations in the history of the world. Relief showed on everyone's face. Thoughts turned to "How soon do I get home?"

Soon after V-J Day, redeployment was stepped up. Men in the Division with V-J Day scores of 72 points and over were transferred to the 99th Infantry Division, scheduled for an early return to the United States. This move took out of the Division all remaining men who had come in at Camp Pickett, Virginia, except those who volunteered to stay.

On August 16th, the 79th Division was directed to relieve the 6th Armored and 99th Infantry Divisions in the northern Bavaria area of occupation. The 99th Division was to replace the Division in the tent camp; a happy thought for every Cross of Lorraine man. The actual relief of the 6th Armored and 99th Infantry Divisions, however, did not take place immediately. One of the 79th Division's new missions, the operation of installations for the care of Displaced Persons and Prisoners of War was started while the 79th Division troops were in the tent city. Inspection teams were organized and sent out to gather all available information concerning the proposed installations which the 79th Division was to supervise. By that method, the Division was fully acquainted with its new mission when, on August 22, it was ordered to take over the task. On August 29, the relief by all units of the Division was completed and the 79th Division Command Post was established at Kitzingen.

The new area taken over by the 79th Division was known as Lower Franconia, Franconia being the old name for northern Bavaria and this particular region being lower than that directly east. The entire area was slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut. It was estimated that, during the Division's occupation of the area, there were somewhat less than a million Germans in the sector. Before the war there was about 800,000, but refugees brought the figure up to more than 900,000. Centers of population were the three Stadtkreise of Aschaffenburg, Wurzburg and Schweinfurt.

Wurzburg was the communications center of the Division area before the war, and when the 79th Division took over the sector, it immediately reestablished communications in cooperation with military government personnel.

German telephone operators and employes rehabilitated all commercial lines needed for military purposes. This was accomplished under the supervision of Division Signal experts.

After military communications needs were taken care of, the task of rehabilitating the telephone facilities for necessary civilian use was undertaken.

The 79th Division continued its occupational duties centering immediate attention on Displaced Persons and Prisoner of War camps in its area. Vast improvements were carried out both for the physical welfare and sanitation of the displaced persons and prisoners of war; also all camps were winterized by the 304th Engineer Battalion and eligible internees were released.

When the Division took over this new area, many prisoners of war had been paroled to communities for work details and records of them were either non-existent or poorly kept. In some cases, even SS prisoners were paroled. All of these men were put back in camps, their records checked and those eligible reparaoled. A total of 10,055 prisoners of war came under the Division's control.

The handling of displaced persons was a continuous problem and a separate section was set up in Division Headquarters to handle the details. On September 14th, the Division was ordered to assume responsibility for the displaced persons' camp at Wildflecken. This camp, largest in the area, had been formerly operated by Third U. S. Army. With the taking over of this camp, the total number of displaced persons in the 79th Division's area was increased to 35,000.

The constant turnover of personnel under the redeployment system made training difficult. However, two excellent Information and Educational school were organized and operated to instruct 300 men in such subjects as motor mechanics, languages, history and the political sciences.

During September, the shifting of troops indicated the category of the Division would soon be changed. Men with V-J Day scores of 56 to 59 were transferred first, followed by men with scores of 56 or under. The higher point men went to the 102nd Infantry Division while the lower point men were sent for occupation duty with the First Infantry Division. Several packets of high-point personnel were sent to units bound for the United States during this period.

Pass quotas were enlarged to Paris, Riviera, England and Switzerland, making it possible for many more men to enjoy seeing these places.

Memories of past campaigns were revived during the occupational stage of the Division. It was requested to send troops to the French cities of Laval and Luneville by their respective mayors to be honored at ceremonies commemorating the liberation of the two cities.

A detachment of the 313th Infantry Regiment was sent to represent the Division. This Regiment had liberated Laval on August 5th and 6th, and Luneville on September, 20, 1944.

In both cities reviews were held and the part played by American troops in the liberation, hailed.

In late October, 1945, after the Division had been on and off the "alert" many times for shipment home, it finally received what turned out to be the official order from higher headquarters. Again came a reshuffling of personnel. All men with 69 points and under were transferred to lower point division, getting in return men with 70 points and over. This brought an interesting fact to light. The only old 79th Division men remaining had either 70 or 71 points, as previously all men with 72 points and over had been transferred to homebound units.

On November 14th, first units of the 79th Division entrained at Aschaffenburg, Germany, for rail movement to the Calas Staging Area in the vicinity of Marseilles, France, the last units arriving at the area, November 20th. Again, memories of former battles were brought to mind as the route of the train went past Drusenheim, Herrlisheim, Gamsheim, Strasbourg, Brumath, Saverne, Sarrebourg, Emberminel, Luneville and lastly Neufchateau.

As we bring our narrative to a close, we look back with pride on the accomplishments and achievements of the men who, while fighting and dying, brought fame to the 79th Infantry Division as well as to themselves and their coun-

try. Witness the names of those who died in action or of their wounds; the 12,608 names of those entitled to wear one of their country's most precious decorations, the Purple Heart; and the 5,463 names of those decorated by their country and its grateful allies!

The 79th Infantry Division, during its stay in the European Theater of Operations, served under the 6th, 12th and 21st Army Groups, saw action with four different Armies: the First, Third, Seventh, and Ninth; and was assigned or attached to nine different Corps: V, VI, VII, VIII, XIII, XV, XVI, XIX, and XXII.

From June 19, 1944, when the Division took the first group of its prisoners in combat, until contact was lost for the last time with the enemy on April 16, 1945, a total of 27,659 prisoners of war were taken. During the period from April 17, 1945, until June 2, 1945, when the Division was on occupational duties in Westphalia, an additional 7,807 prisoners were apprehended. This latter group included stragglers, soldiers in civilian clothes, and automatic-arrestees. A grand total of 35,466 prisoners of war is only one phase of the glorious combat record of the 79th Division!

Statistics available on the destruction of German combat vehicles by the 79th Division, covering the period from June 19, 1944 to April 16, 1945, and shown in the following chart, indicate further the effective part taken by the Cross of Lorrainers in contributing to the eventual defeat of the Nazi war machine.

Type	Destroyed or Abandoned
Tank	151
SP Gun	8
Armd Car	17
Armd Personnel Carrier	60
Light Personnel Carrier	14
Ambulance	5
Sedan	68
Doodlebug	5
Tractor w/Trailer	1
Reconnaissance Vehicles	7
Truck	307
Motorcycle	16
Amphibious jeep	1
H/D Truck	20

The above statistics are just a few of the accomplishments of the 79th Division—there are many others.

For instance, the Division was . . .

FIRST to enter Cherbourg,

FIRST to cross Seine River,

FIRST American troops to reach Rhine River.

Yes, the 79th Division has played its part in World War II well but the success resulted from teamwork by all branches of the service.

In General Eisenhower's "Victory Order of the Day," the 79th Division and every other unit in the European Theater of Operations received this message—on who won the war . . .

*"Every man, every woman of every nation here represented has served according to his or her ability, and the efforts of each have contributed to the outcome. This we shall remember—and in doing so we shall be revering each honored grave and be sending comfort to the loved ones of comrades who could not live to see this day."*

## EX PFC EDITS DIVISION'S WORLD WAR NEWSPAPER

With this issue, *Lorraine Cross*, official newspaper of the 79th Infantry Division, resumes publication in Europe after a lapse of more than 26 years.

Editor-in-Chief of *Lorraine Cross* in World War I was a Pfc. in Division Headquarters named James M. Cain. After his Army hitch he turned his hand to fiction, and "The Postman Always Rings Twice," "The Embezzler," and "Serenade" are only three of many outstanding works. He is currently working and writing for Hollywood, but he has not forgotten the Division. In a recent letter to the G-2 he said in part:

"I believe I am correct in the statement that we were the only military paper which ever put out an 'extra,' this on the occasion when General Pershing reviewed us, and in his address to the Division formally gave us credit for the Montfaucon capture, over which at the time a wrangle was going on between ourselves and the 37th and Third Divisions, both of which thought they did it.

"It gives a former member of the Division a great kick to read the record from D-Day on, and I wish there were some way you might communicate to the boys the excitement with which the former gang is learning of the recent achievement. I knew General Kuhn, the 1918 Commander, very well, and can testify to the passionate pride he took in the Division to the day of his death, and only wish he could be alive to learn what it has done."

In an early issue, *Lorraine Cross* plans to reprint Pfc. Cain's "The Taking of Montfaucon," originally carried in *The American Mercury* in 1929 and subsequently reprinted by *Infantry Journal*. It will be included also in the Division's permanent history.

## MINES, BRIDGES, ROADS—THE KEYNOTE OF THE COMBAT ENGINEERS!

"15 June 1944. Crossed English Channel on Liberty Ship 'John Steele.' Anchored off coast of France, 2100 hours. German planes bombed Utah Beach." With that terse note the unit history of the 304th Engineer Combat Battalion in the ETO began. Lieutenant Colonel William G. Van Allen, the outfit's commanding officer, well remembers how maintaining roads, sweeping for mines, and filling craters started before the battalion had time to catch its breath after debarking on the beach. By June 19th, the first bridge built by the unit in a combat area—a timber trestle over the River Gloire—was finished.

The men of the battalion climbed Fort de Roule with the Doughboys when they took Cherbourg, and had a finger in just about every phase of that operation. Company A filled in an anti-tank ditch that was holding up tanks and infantry. Company B assisted in the placing of explosives in air vents of the fort, a practice the Germans found most irritating. While fighting still raged in the city, Company C opened the main road into Cherbourg, clearing out several snipers en route.

The Engineers were with forward assault units on the drive into La Haye de Puits and at Bloody Hill, and they stayed that way in the hectic days of rat-racing that marked the Division's rapid dash across France. Engineer Reconnaissance was in Laval with the first wave, checking potential bridge sites across the Meyenne River. B Company, at the same time, was holding hurried "classes" in a rear area, studying a type of equipment they had never used before—the treadway bridge. Equipment was moved up immediately upon receipt of the reconnaissance report. Four hours after construction started, vehicles were crossing. That was the record time for the battalion's first treadway!

The role of the battalion in combat continued without pause. At the Seine River Crossing, men and vehicles were moved through a black night and Luftwaffe-infested day with no loss of lives. At the Somme River, working against time, they built three bridges, one with largely on-the-spot material, on a while-you-wait basis for two Division spearhead columns and supporting tanks. In the Foret de Parroy, the troops moved on roads the engineers had constructed under fire. In Alsace, the battalion built 59 bridges, laid mines and booby-traps by the thousands—and, when ordered to withdraw, demolished almost 100 bridges, among them many that had been laboriously constructed during the advance. The Rhine was where the battalion supplied one company each to two regiments, an engineer platoon to each assault battalion, and supervised the sweeping, clearing and marking of exit lanes from the far shore for assault units.

In the Foret de Parroy, the 304th Engineers went in for a chore usually reserved for Corps and Army Engineers: road building. Under constant fire they hauled sand and gravel—a 1000 truckloads of the latter in five days. They laid hundreds of yards of corduroy and Sumervel track. And, when they had finished, the infantry found itself moving through the shell-scarred forest on a military road of surprisingly good quality. Throughout the operation, the enemy was uncomfortably close. One engineer company had to stop work one day to gather in 12 PWs who had sneaked in through the exposed left flank of one of the regiments.

With combat over, the Engineers still continued their missions. In the Ruhr, they did Military Government work; while in Czechoslovakia, they helped repair railroads and built a trestle bridge at Eger; and during their stay in Bavaria, winterized numerous displaced persons camps.

## COMBAT MEDICS

Adding to the achievements of the 79th Infantry Division during World War II is another glowing chapter—that of a small but heroic unit—the 304th Medical Battalion.

Essentially designed to save lives and conserve military strength, the 304th Medics consisting of a well-knitted group of professional doctors and enlisted men trained to do their job under the strains of battle, received its initial training with the Division in the United States.

After months of constant and intensive training under all battle conditions at Camp Blanding, Florida, and various maneuver areas, additional training for forthcoming operations was staged at Camp Phillips, Kansas, under the direction of Lt. Col. Roland K. Charles, MC, who served as the Division Surgeon for more than two years.

However, even after arriving in England, the training program was far from completed. Additional schooling in the art of saving human life and mock landings on the shores of the English shore line were conducted for the big test to come.

On June 17, 1944, the long-awaited moment neared. D-Day and H-Hour for the Division was rapidly approaching. The Battalion assembled and the medics moved to their respective units. Each man knew his duty. The crucial test of the medical service was at hand.

During the actual landings on Normandy, casualties were heavy, but the medics' pre-battle training demonstrated its worth and they functioned smoothly. From Company Aid Men to Litter Bearers to Battalion Aid Stations; then by ambulance to the Collecting Stations went the sick and wounded, each receiving the finest attention and treatment that modern medical science could offer.

Shortly after the invasion started it was learned under battle conditions that certain changes had to be made. It was found that litter bearers of the regimental medical detachments were expected to perform more gruelling and arduous tasks than they could properly handle. The problem was solved by having the Collecting Company ambulances haul patients directly from the Battalion Aid Station to the Collecting Station, thus relieving the Collecting Company litter bearers of making hauls from the Battalion Aid Station to Collecting Points. This method left the company personnel free to be employed as reinforcements for the Medical Detachment litter bearers. The rolling terrain of western Europe was favorable to this system of ambulance evacuation.

The winter months found the medics in Alsace and here their duties increased. Pneumonia, trench foot and other winter diseases created additional problems. Evacuation was necessary for the more critical cases. The increase in the number of patients kept the medical teams on the job, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

With the beginning of Spring, trench foot and pneumonia decreased. But, with the Cross of Lorraine at the banks of the Rhine, extensive and complex plans to handle any situation which might occur had to be mapped out.

Under the arranged plans, one half of the Battalion Aid Station personnel and equipment was to cross the river with the second wave of infantry. On the far shore, a temporary aid station was to be established until such time as the doughboys could move forward. These operations functioned smoothly during the assault of the Rhine beaches. Forward aid stations were set up several hundred yards behind the advancing troops. Casualties from these stations were immediately sent back to the rear for additional treatment.

At times, the supply situation threatened and became critical, but the well-organized supply system kept the all-important items moving to the front. This smooth system may be credited to the plans made in England, at which time all units were brought up to T/E (table of equipment) allowances. During combat, however, each Collecting Company was furnished with additional expendable supplies enabling them to serve as advance medical equipment dumps. Equipment and supplies then needed by forward groups such as the 304th were supplied through the Ambulance Shuttle System.

With the end of hostilities against Germany, on May 8, 1945, the medical journal revealed that 931 members of the battalion had received awards and decorations in recognition of their outstanding contribution to victory against the enemy. Listed among these outstanding awards were the presentation of 37 Silver Stars, one Cluster to the Silver Star, 62 Bronze Stars, three Clusters to the Bronze Star, 506 Purple Hearts for wounds sustained during battle, 43 clusters to the Purple Heart, and 279 Combat Medical Badges.

Even with the end of the war in the European Theater of Operations, the work of the combat medic was not finished. Medical supervision was necessary for the civilian population. Thousands of Displaced Persons urgently needed medical attention. The 79th occupation area was flooded with former slave workers who needed clothing and treatment. Medical and sanitary problems that immediately arose were dealt with decisively. Hospitalization and medical care were provided for the seriously ill. Existing hospital plants were utilized, supplemented by supplies requisitioned through military government channels and captured stocks supplied through regular medical channels.

When the 79th Division moved into the area formerly occupied by the 99th Division, similar problems concerning Displaced Persons were encountered and solved. In this area the division had charge of nine Displaced Persons camps with a total population of approximately 44,000 persons. Dispensaries were set up in the camps and five hospitals were established and staffed by foreign medical personnel. But the work did not end even there. General supervision of the medical and sanitary aspects of the German Prisoner of War camps in the division area also fell into the lap of the 304th Battalion. Preventative action against typhus, smallpox, typhoid, and other diseases had to be taken. The work went on without a let-up.

Lt. Col. Tillman D. Johnson, Commanding Officer of the 304th Medical Battalion, replaced Lt. Col. Roland K. Charles, the Division Surgeon, on March 9th, and Major Fred D. Lage, became the new Battalion commanding officer.

For the courageous devotion to duty during World War II, the men of the 79th Division hold the medical detachment in high regard. Their record will long live in the hearts of men who fought beside them in this great war.

## A SALUTE TO THE EYES OF THE DIVISION

You never know what to expect in Reconnaissance, that's what gives an outfit like the 79th Reconnaissance Troop its color. One day you're five miles out in front of everyone else; the next, you're chaperoning displaced persons in a rear area camp. But, Captain James F. Beaver, who commanded the troop through all its action, and his men learned early in the game that where the Division moved, there moved Reconnaissance—probing, prodding, protecting.

There was the assignment at Stattmatten where 12 of the troop went in dismounted to help a task force free two platoons of trapped Yanks. With five light tanks supporting the fire-power of three M-8's, and first platoon jeeps covering the flanks with their mounted .50 and .30 caliber machine guns, the "Dismounted Dozen," along with 15 infantrymen, accomplished their assignment in a short but bloody fight.

Ask any man in the troop which aspect of his combat record gives him the most pride and personal satisfaction. He won't point to an impressive series of rough, costly engagements. Recon's had plenty of those, but that sort of stuff is first of all the infantry's meat. The trooper will more likely point to his outfit's reputation as a versatile gang that could, and did tackle any assignment, good, bad, or indifferent.

Between Utah Beach and the Ruhr Pocket the Troop saw plenty of action. But it wasn't action in the protracted, bitter sense that characterizes infantry warfare. Recon's fighting came in quick, intense, white-hot spurts. When the Troop spearheaded the Cross of Lorraine's lightning thrust across France and to the Belgian border, troops don't like to recall the times their jeeps and M-8's, especially the lead vehicles, rounded curves or nosed over crests of hills to come face-to-face with zeroed-in German anti-tank guns.

"Liberating" towns used to be a specialty in France. It was not unusual to ride through six or seven liberated villages on a single mission. Invariably the elated citizens flocked to the streets and swarmed over the armored cars and jeeps. The reception always included numerous handouts of cognac, calvados, mirabelle, or schnapps, as well as the welcoming embraces of local mademoiselles. Men of the first platoon remember particularly a beautiful blonde who bestowed an emphatic kiss on each of them as the column entered Nogent le Roi. Next day she appeared minus her golden tresses. The newly-freed French had shaved her pate to cueball luster for having ardently "collaborated" with German soldiers during the occupation.

The Seine Loop remains the most poignant memory in the minds of the Troops. It was there they suffered their highest toll of casualties. It was there they performed some of their most brilliant reconnaissance, at one time penetrating ten miles beyond the tightly held German front.

To the layman, the very word "reconnaissance" brings to mind all manner of furtive missions and hair-breadth escapes from supermaniacal situations in the shadow of enemy positions. Any seasoned trooper will tell you that there is danger aplenty, but its more a matter of getting out in front, moving forward until someone shoots at you, and then fighting like hell to get out alive with the information. And once or twice the 79th Reconnaissance Troop has been involved in deals that make Fearless Fosdick's predicaments look like a Riviera furlough.

V-E Day found the Troop in Ludinghausen, just a little north of the Ruhr, controlling the town jail and rounding up prisoners and displaced persons on daily patrols over a 500-square-mile area. Then the Troop moved east to Lippstadt, continuing the same type of work. On the move to Czechoslovakia, it operated the bivouac area and drivers' mess at the half-way point, Waltershausen. Concerning that last job, Captain Beaver told his men: "We've done everything except run a filling station and hot-dog stand, and now we're doing that!"

## AN MP'S WORK IS NEVER DONE

Traffic control, prisoner guarding, control and disposition of displaced persons, and regulatory work of the armed forces were only some of the main activities which the Military Police Platoon, under its commanding officer, Captain Lewis G. Rountree, indulged at the cessation of hostilities. The MPs are usually depicted as people who generally do nothing except put up "off limits" signs and cut down on the good time a soldier may be trying to have. However, keeping an eye on the GI was probably the smallest part of an MP's work. Like a tidy housewife, an MP's work was "never done" and it included a lot more than spanking the "children."

Sixty-eight MPs, the entire personnel of the platoon in those early days, landed with the frontline troops on the beaches of Normandy. They immediately began to route divisional traffic to its proper destination on the narrow beach-head, and within 24 hours the platoon had its first casualty. From the Normandy beaches, through France, during the pounding of the Siegfried Line in Alsace, and into Germany, the divisional MPs kept to their posts, often under direct artillery fire, and usually at the hottest intersections, controlling the convoys that rumbled by day and night.

Major Fred W. Morris, the commanding officer of the platoon during most of its combat days, was killed during the Rhine crossing. Up to that time he had seen one of his men, Corporal Richard Hayes, receive the Silver Star and the Croix de Guerre during the Normandy breakthrough for rescuing a wounded comrade while braving strafing fire from enemy planes. During the 180-mile, 72-hour trek against organized resistance encountered by the Division in its race to the Belgian border, the platoon followed right behind the 79th Reconnaissance Troop—the spearhead of the advance. Many times the MP's raced back to halt the columns while the Troop cleared a road-block. At Soultz, 12 of the MP guards were wounded when enemy planes bombed the PW enclosure. But the Rhine River crossing was where the platoon suffered its greatest losses—four killed and seven wounded, including the commanding officer—while directing traffic at the crossing site and later while standing guard at the PW cage. During this river operation, the men had a repeat performance of their Normandy beach-head experiences, and were also called upon to help launch the assault boats for the first wave. Later, when the nearly completed bridge was knocked out, Lieutenant Daniel L. Donnelly, who was killed a short time later, as traffic control officer, performed the liaison work which enabled the 79th Division to continue the attack by routing all traffic, including badly needed artillery, over another bridge constructed by the 30th Division.

The 79th MP Platoon has received some measure of reward for its "high performance of duty." 16 Bronze Star Medals and two Oak Leaf Clusters to the Bronze Star Medal, one Silver Star, and the Meritorious Service Plaque with Star have been awarded the platoon. Two of its men have received battlefield commissions. But beyond all honors is the respect these combat MP's have received from the men in the foxholes who saw them daily and realized that an MP is more often a greater help than a hindrance in the life of a doughboy!

## COMMUNICATIONS—THE NERVE CENTER OF THE DIVISION!

In its combat operations, during which it worked tirelessly at the gigantic task of installing and maintaining means of communication between the Division Commander and the front-line soldier, the 79th Signal Company, under the leadership of Major Claude M. Perlewitz and Captain Roy F. Tweedle, compiled an impressive array of statistics. The Division Signal Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Fred Sciotti, and his successor, Major Claude M. Perlewitz, can well be proud of the company's records. It laid 3,775 miles of wire. Its Message Center jeeps covered 144,000 miles—five times around the world. From Normandy to Czechoslovakia, its men acquired 32 Bronze Star Medals, 20 Purple Hearts, and seven Presidential Unit Citations while attached to Infantry and Artillery battalions!

It was on June 18th, at 0100, that the company debarked on Utah Beach. 15 minutes after moving into the first command post area, an enemy artillery barrage came in and four signal men were casualties. During the drive to Cherbourg and south through the Normandy Peninsula, the primary means of communication was field wire. Heavy enemy artillery fire kept the repair men on the go 24 hours a day. With the breakthrough and the rapid advance across France, the Division travelled too fast for wire, so radio was the main means of communication.

River crossings didn't phase the wire-laying teams in the least. At the Seine bridgehead near Mantes-Gassicourt, all bridges had been blown except a catwalk over the dam. At 0200, on a Sunday morning, orders came to have a line into one of the Regimental observation posts by daybreak. That line was 15 miles long and reached the west bank of the Seine—but it was in by daylight. That night and next morning, the infantry moved across, with orders to hold the eastern loop. One regimental team walked its lines across a foot bridge. Another took theirs over in a row boat. As soon as the Engineers finished the treadway bridge, a Signal Company vehicle was the first to cross—it was laying wire.

During the breakthrough by the Germans in the Ardennes sector, the 79th Division was spaced out to cover an area previously covered by three divisions. When the Division withdrew to the Maginot Line, it was reinforced by elements of two armored and two infantry divisions. None of these units had their signal companies with them and so the bulk of the communications work fell on the 79th Signal Company. And the heroic stand in the sector of Alsace around Hatten earned the Third Battalion of the 313th Regiment, with its attached wire and radio crews, a Presidential Unit Citation.

During the Rhine Crossing two wire crews, assigned to the 313th and 315th Regiments, operating from "ducks" sank two weighted cables. If these failed they were ready to send two regimental teams across with field wire in assault boats. Two radio crews were standing by. If all these were unsuccessful, two messenger runs were ready to begin operations in amphibious vehicles. No opportunity was overlooked. Two signalmen found themselves piloting assault boats in the initial wave—when they came into the Army, they had listed motor boats as a hobby on their classification forms.

## OVER A MILLION MILES TO DELIVER SUPPLIES!

As one war correspondent put it, the Cross of Lorraine is "the most traveled division in the ETO." Keeping the Division supplied, in and out of combat, with the essentials making possible that reputation was the responsibility of the Division Quartermaster, Lieutenant Colonel Fredric A. Maples, and the 79th Quartermaster Company under the leadership of Captain Richard A. Hanson.

Statistically the company's records were in the seven-figure bracket. It made 56 moves on the continent for a total of 1,956 miles. In the space of a year its vehicles racked up 1,098,384 miles, from Normandy to the Sudetenland, for an average of 19,000 miles per vehicle, and representing the expenditure of 140,000 gallons of gasoline!

Paper work and riding around were not the sole lot of the company. As early as the Normandy campaign, the men received their baptism of German artillery and sniper fire. On August 19, 1944, the Service Platoon, returning to the Division area with supplies, was ambushed near Tilly, France. For 45 minutes, a barrage of small arms and 20-mm. fire engaged the truckers, whose first responsibility was to the supply train. After getting all the big two-and-a-half ton trucks to safety it was discovered that only four trailers had been abandoned, and they were later recovered. This "little fracas" caused seven Qmers to be eligible for the Purple Heart and led to two Bronze Star Medals being awarded.

During the Vosges Mountains breakthrough, one of the truck columns was strafed no less than five times near Soufflenheim, emerging without a scratch and with one downed German plane to the credit of Peter M. Dounias, of Chicago.

It was the Truck Platoons that helped make possible what higher headquarters described as "one of the fastest opposed advances of comparable distance by an infantry division in warfare"—the Division's remarkable, 180-mile, 72-hour thrust to the Belgian border!

In or out of combat an army moves only if wheels are kept turning and a lot of stomachs are kept filled. And, as the trucks continue to pound the roads between Division units and supply points, it is easy to see why the 79th Quartermaster Company so proudly wears the gold wreath sleeve patch attesting to the excellence of its meritorious service.

## MAINTENANCE MIRACLES KEPT THEM ROLLING

" . . . For superior performance of duty in the accomplishment of exceptionally difficult tasks . . . " That was all the citation for the Meritorious Service Plaque said. It didn't explain that it was in recognition of the winter's work on the cold Alsatian plains when the 79th Ordnance LM Company was up against its toughest job. The ground was frozen hard and the spades of the artillery pieces sprung from steady pounding against unyielding emplacements. So Ordnance men went up to where the howitzers were and welded the spades back straight without the weapons having to leave their positions. Army depots said there were no truck replacements for KO'd vehicles. Ordnance took half of this wreck and half of that and another vehicle was back on the road. Runs of 185 miles to collecting points were everyday occurrences to scavenge for needed parts. Ammunition supplies were critical and Ordnance did its best to keep the rationed rounds spaced to where they were needed most and kept constantly on the alert to get more. Such were some of the difficulties faced in fighting off the powerful German counterattack in Alsace after the Belgian Bulge, but after it was over, the company had the satisfaction of winning the Meritorious Service Award, as well as seven Bronze Star Medals.

The Division Ordnance Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Clarence E. Sperry, and his successor, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Werner, Jr., as well as the Commanding Officer of the Ordnance Company, Captain James W. Soverns, can well be proud of the accomplishments of the miracle men who kept the outfit moving! Even though in winter weather, the artillery and automotive mechanics alike had to use icy lots and yards for outdoor "shops." The artillery section made a record of never having more than one of the Division's artillery pieces out of action for more than 24 hours. For a period there were no new vehicles to replace those knocked out, and only the worst sort of a wreck was ever sent back to supporting Ordnance companies and then only after they had been stripped of every usable part. In addition, trucks, no matter how much they were patched up, were kept in the Division until replacements were again available.

The ammunition section had its own troubles. Artillery battalions called for shells and the infantry regiments for mortars and higher headquarters doled them out sparingly. But somehow the Division Ammunition Office saw to it that nobody ran out completely.

Aside from its work in Alsace, Ordnance's biggest task was performed during the time the Division was still in England. Arriving at the assembly area short of one-fourth of its weapons, vehicles, and other major items, and with only 40 per cent of all spare parts and accessories, the company worked at Tiverton for five days and nights to draw, check and turn over to the combat troops everything from machine-guns to trucks. The equipment and parts were received so fast that the clerks could hardly keep an accurate count of what amounted to 160 GMC 2½ ton truck loads. There was one section of the company that did not get in all the scramble for equipment—they had a job of their own. The welders in only two days installed machine-gun mounts on 147 trucks! There was a blackout then, but the welders' arcs were so conspicuous at night as they rushed their work that the crews said "what the hell!" and turned on the spotlights on the wreckers too.

On the drive to Cherbourg the vehicles began to receive direct hits from German 88's and it was up to Ordnance to get them back into service. The automotive section for the first time took a step ahead of its training and assignment and started cutting up frames of blasted trucks and jeeps and putting them back together so as to get one good vehicle from two or three wrecks. That's a job for echelons further back, not for a light maintenance company that travels with an infantry division. But it was experience that proved invaluable later in that Alsatian winter. The welders even came to the rescue of field hospitals crying for surgical accessories and several times fixed them up with home-made gadgets of various kinds.

The breakthrough from the Normandy peninsula for Ordnance meant mostly moving at night, working during the day, and resting when there was a chance. What with damaged vehicles to nurse along and some so smashed they had to be hung from the booms of the wreckers, the company more often looked like a "Grapes of Wrath" caravan than a military convoy, but in some fashion Ordnance always managed to move all the unserviceable vehicles and find time to get them in shape if they could be fixed at all. Nor infrequently a vehicle that was swinging from a wrecker to begin with was running under its own power by the time the next area was reached.

At the Seine bridgehead the company spent some busy days trying to get work done between diving for foxholes and doubling as ack-ack. When the Division reversed itself after knifing through to the Belgian border, Ordnance tagged along through Joinville and Neufchateau not always so certain just what the score was and at one time the company was moving ahead of the assault guns and wondering if it had joined the infantry! In some bivouac areas the jeeps sank so deeply into the mud the mechanics couldn't get under them to work. So they tipped over the vehicles on their sides and fixed them that way.

Luneville meant a big break for the automotive section. For the first time, in a railroad yard, they had a hard floor to work on and overhead shelter from the rain. They went to town and turned out close to 800 major jobs during their stay there. Socalled rest periods were unknown to the Ordnance personnel. Whenever the Division paused between campaigns—whether it was before the fight in the Forêt de Parroy, or the Alsatian campaign, or the rest at Pont-a-Mousson before preparations were made for the Rhine crossing—then Ordnance got busy with inspections, checks, repairs, and replacements for weapons, vehicles, and other equipment.

The men of the 79th Ordnance Company can well be proud of a job well done and wear their Meritorious Service Award with distinction.

## THE 79TH DIVISION AIR CORPS

The Alsatian weather was colder than it had a right to be, and a low overcast hung continually over the battlefield, forcing the little Piper Cub to fly well within range of small arms fire from the ground. Observation was difficult, but highly necessary if the artillery, which was breaking up repeated counter-attacks, was to continue helping the doughboys holding out in Hatten and Rittershoffen.

The silver ribbon of the Rhine River looked very peaceful to the pilot and observer in the tiny plane, but both knew that somewhere was a ferry site through which the Germans funnelled supplies to their attacking forces. Lieutenants Charles Blitch and Richard Smith were scanning the shore line looking for possible places where the enemy could launch his barges when they spotted the tiny specks that could be nothing else but waiting craft.

"Big Red! This is Lone Wolf. Big Red! This is Lone Wolf. Think we've spotted those barges. They're about on the coordinates you have. Put in a few and we'll adjust. Okay?"

Smith's information was rapidly correlated and seconds later three rounds from the 310th Field Artillery Battalion batteries came screaming in. They were "on the nose."

"That's shooting, Red. Bring 'em left a hair."

On the target, the 310th Field Artillery Battalion poured a stream of shells on the enemy barges, and within the space of a few minutes the carriers were so much kindling floating down the Rhine.

It was this type of work, often under the most dangerous conditions, by artillery observation planes that enabled the 310th Field Artillery Battalion to earn the Presidential Citation for its superlative interdiction and harassing fire during the defense of Alsace. The accurate observation and adjustment of fire by the Division's artillery observers throughout the European fighting amazed the Germans who, later in PW cages, expressed wonderment and horror over our artillery. It must be "automatic," they said, because nobody could pour in shells that fast manually. This was a compliment to the men who manned the weapons. And, "you must have 'inside' information, they said, "because nobody could spot targets that well." That was a compliment to the artillery observers.

The Cubs landed, literally, in Normandy with the Division on D plus 8 and had their first casualty on the day they went into action. Lieutenant Lock G. Chan and his plane disappeared and were never heard from again. In Normandy days pilots flew without observers.

From the initial landings, when they hopped the hedgerows, until V-E Day, when they spotted targets in the rubble of the Ruhr, the 11 pilots, eight observers, and 23 members of the groundcrew had flown 2,241 missions for a total of 180,000 miles during approximately 3,000 combat hours in the air! These missions were put in when AAF communiques were telling of bad weather grounding the big bombers; during the days when the Luftwaffe was detailing special missions to shoot down aerial observers; and during the other days when the Division was clicking off miles like a Brooklyn taxi meter.

Eight casualties were suffered by the pilots and observers—four by enemy aircraft, two by enemy ack-ack, one in a crash landing, and one of whom no details are known.

The Piper Cubs, known technically as L-4's, are unarmed and have little defense against enemy attack. They rely on their slow speed, about 75 miles an hour, and low altitude to protect them against the high-speed, high-flying pursuit planes of the enemy, and on their great maneuverability to evade flak as well. Being part of Division Artillery's organic equipment, two planes and crew are assigned to each battalion and two are assigned to Division Artillery—a total of 10 planes. They are equipped with a sending set and are on the ack-ack warning hookup, a system which enables the unarmed craft to scurry for safety when the enemy aircraft warning is put out.

Pilots always had permission to cut for the tall grass when the warning was broadcast that enemy planes were active in the vicinity. But a string of decorations attest to the blithe reception which greeted some of these alarms. In addition to 24 Air Medals with 35 Oak Leaf Clusters, seven Bronze Star Medals with one Oak Leaf Cluster and a Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the latter decorations earned by 1st Lt. Joseph Greenes, as a forward observer in the actions around La Haye du Puits and the Forêt de Parroy, were awarded to these flying artillerymen.

Near Joinville, Lt. J. P. Kane had his controls shot away by an ME-109 but managed to bring the Cub in to a crash landing without injury to either himself or the observer. As they ran from the wreck the German came diving in to strafe them, only to be met by a hail of lead poured aloft by alert ack-ack crews. The fire was accurate and the pilot parachuted to safety and a PW cage.

After the breakthrough the Division raced along, especially during the drive to the Belgian border. It was the job of the Cub planes to work with reconnaissance, covering the flying columns and spotting roadblocks and strongpoints. They seldom landed twice on the same field, and many a cow pasture and stretch of dirt road felt the impact of the landing gear of these small, sturdy planes.

The Seine Loop fighting was another field day for the observers. Targets abounded, and when they called for fire, response came from a record number of pieces. Artillery is credited with an enormous amount of damage to the enemy and a major share in repulsing the German attempt to pinch off the Division's bridgehead which threatened the Paris defense.

Another river barrier which the Division pierced and which afforded the Cubs unlimited opportunity for observation was the Rhine. Excellent weather enabled them to pin-point individual mortar positions which were recorded on G-2 maps, and which later were blasted out of the way of the assault troops by another record artillery concentration. Out long hours over the Rhine's far shore, flying from morning until night, they were on observation missions not only for their own artillery batteries but for the regiments as well. This close scrutiny by practically the only means available, since infantry patrols had difficulty in crossing the river, was given a major share of the credit for the subsequent success of the smash into Germany's industrial heart.

Cub pilots and observers are primarily artillerymen, knowing the difference between an aiming stake and split trails. "We're not broken down Air Corps Joes," said Lt. Blitch, "but artillerymen who know how to fly."

In Alsace a German officer POW was asked by Lt. Hutter about the American weapon the Germans feared most. His reply was, "That artillery observation plane of yours—when that is in the air we are always catching hell."

## FIGHTING PARSONS

Among the men who wear the Cross of Lorraine, there is a small group, never numbering more than 15, who wield an influence far out of proportion to their rank or numbers. For theirs is an influence that is not of the Army, and was known by most long before the Army was thought of—they are the Chaplains.

Since the Division landed on the continent in June, 1944, no finer record has been written than that of its chaplains under the leadership of Chaplain John W. Early. Living and dying with the men at the front, caring for the wounded and comforting the suffering, they shared all the dangers of the battle field with the men under their care. Statistics in the Division Chaplains' office reveal their record in cold, hard figures: 11 Purple Hearts, eight Silver Stars, and two Bronze Stars; two killed in action and seven evacuated because of wounds. When the Division reached France, it was accompanied by its 15 chaplains. By V-E Day, only seven were left. During the intervening 10 months, 24 chaplains had served with the Division, and 14 had been lost through combat and non-combat reasons.

A chaplain's life is never an easy one, and this was true during combat. There were then three serving with each Regiment, two with Division Artillery, two at the Medical Battalion's clearing company, one with Special Troops, and one at Rear Echelon. Between them they were able to reach all the men in the Division at least once a week, while those in forward positions spent all their time with their particular units. Much of their time was spent at the forward medical installations where they were in position to attend to the needs of the seriously wounded. Frequently they accompanied the litter-bearers forward in moves to evacuate men who had fallen. They were constantly under fire themselves, and many have mentioned the lasting example set them by these men.

There is no finer story than that of Father Dominic Ternan of the 313th Regiment and New York City, of whom it was said that "he feared neither man nor beast." A member of the 79th Division from its early days, he was among the first to fall in action. On June 19, 1944, the Division's first day of combat, he left a battalion CP with the Commanding Officer and a group of enlisted men to find a company headquarters. On their way, they came under enemy fire and took cover in a ditch. One of the men was wounded and asked the chaplain to say a prayer with him. Father Ternan crawled over beside the wounded man and was shielding him with his body when a burst of enemy fire hit him in the back, killing him instantly. An article carried in an issue of *Readers' Digest* called this act "the perfect picture of Christ-like devotion." He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

Another story that men of the 79th Division like to retell is that of Chaplain Edward J. Clary of the 313th Regiment, who resided in Richmond, Virginia, prior to joining the service.

In the Division's first month of combat, he was constantly in forward positions on his missions of mercy. In July, 1944, when his Regiment was engaged in heavy fighting south of Montgardon, a report reached an aid station that several wounded men were lying forward of the front lines. Chaplain Clary at once volunteered his help and accompanied the litter-bearers to the scene, where under heavy fire he supervised the evacuation of the wounded. He went with them to the aid station and was helping them there when the station received a direct hit and he was killed. For his services he was awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart posthumously.

The citations awarding the Silver Stars—seldom given to non-combat men—to the six other chaplains credit them with impressive lists of achievements. It was in the bitter hedgerow fighting in Normandy that four of them won this decoration: Chaplain Clifford F. Frith of the 315th Regiment, Lawrence E. Cousins and Jerome J. Healy of the 314th Regiment, and Robert M. Paradis of the 313th Regiment. Chaplain Frith was credited by his regimental commander with being in a half-dozen places at once, everywhere bringing a word of good cheer and doing an immense amount of work. For wounds received while doing this type of work he was evacuated from the Division. It was at La Haye du Puits that Chaplain Cousins earned the Silver Star. He assisted aid men, badly overtaxed by the high number of casualties on countless trips to and from wounded men. Finally, he offered his jeep, with himself as driver, in the work of evacuating these men to safety, and though painfully wounded himself during this operation, he refused to quit until all had been evacuated. Father Healy, known to the Regiment, as "the man of a thousand escapes," also earned his Silver Star at La Haye du Puits. There under intense enemy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire, he accompanied a litter bearer squad forward to assist in evacuation of two wounded men. Father Paradis' Silver Star was earned by his work in the vicinity of Bloody Hill where he assisted aid men and litter bearers at an aid station.

Later Silver Stars were awarded to Chaplains Carl A. Heckmann of the 314th Regiment and Charles P. Cowherd of the 313th Regiment. The former earned his award at the Meurthe River crossing near Fraimbois where he offered his services to aid litter bearers. During this task he was wounded and evacuated to a hospital for treatment. Chaplain Cowherd holds the distinction of holding two Purple Hearts; the first won at Alsace. Here he was also awarded the Silver Star.

Chaplains Nordgren, Pentz, and Helm, who joined the Division in the United States, were still with it when combat ended.

The foregoing is only a brief outline of the achievements of the 79th Division's chaplains. Yet from it can be seen the reasons why the men of the Division hold them in such high esteem. And while their occupational hazards decreased with the Army of Occupation, their good work continued.

## THE FIFTH G!

Since landing in Normandy, Military Government has undergone countless experiences. In France, Civil Affairs, as they were then called, had to enter a town as soon as possible—usually with the forward foot troops. In several places, Mantes-Gassicourt and Limay, for example, they were in ahead of the infantry. After contacting the FFI and the local leaders, a mayor was appointed and the first steps were made toward re-establishing a responsible civil government. Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Sponholz and his men were quickly followed, as a rule, by members of the Civil Affairs Detachment who were to remain for several months in the area assigned to them. In the rat-race days, however, the permanent detachments were slow in catching up to the Division, and, as a result, the Division's Civil Affairs officers were often scattered miles apart.

In Normandy, Civil Affairs faced a tremendous health problem, as thousands of dead animals had to be buried by civilians to prevent diseases. In Alsace-Lorraine, inasmuch as there were many Nazi sympathizers in that region, a special problem arose. Careful investigation of the choices for public office was necessary before a civil government could again be started. Again, public health had to be watched closely because of the danger of outbreaks of disease during the winter. At Haguenau, the MG personnel faced one of its biggest problems when a withdrawal had to be made from the Division's Lauter River positions. It was impossible to tell the people that the army was planning to make this move—but they could see for themselves that something was up. As the Germans gradually approached Haguenau, plans to evacuate the civilian population were put into operation. The French government had trains running as far east as Mommenheim, but it was up to Civil Affairs to get the civilians from Haguenau, Bischwiller, Brumath, Wissemburg and the other towns to the railhead. Using all types of conveyances, and dodging the roads necessary for military traffic, Civil Affairs was able to evacuate about half of the 25,000 people living in this area. When the forward infantry companies pulled back into Haguenau, Civil Affairs was still there, seeing to it that the remaining Frenchmen were being supplied with adequate food and had the opportunity of getting out.

But if this was a workout, it was only a preliminary one compared with the problems of Military Government faced by the Division as it drove into the Ruhr. In this industrial heart of the Third Reich, where the cities like Essen and Dortmund were 75 per cent destroyed, there was no water or light and very little food. Hundreds of thousands of liberated slave workers from all over Europe further complicated the situation. To feed, house and guard them was the first problem. Order was re-established as quickly as possible, frequently with the aid of the Reconnaissance Troop and the Military Police, and camps were set up for each of the nationalities. Plans were made for their early repatriation, and, by the time the 79th Division left the sector, most of the Western Europeans had gone home. German food stores were requisitioned and made available for these displaced persons. When there was not enough to go around, German officials were called in and instructed to make up the lack.

The next problem was the establishment of a civil government. Known anti-Nazis were put into office and surveys made to determine the state of the population's health and supplies. In such a highly industrialized district as the Ruhr, most of the food must be brought in from outside, so plans were made for the resumption of transportation between the Ruhr and the surrounding regions.

When the Division was in Czechoslovakia, MG's job was complicated by the fact that, although the unit was in an allied country, the region it occupied was 98 per cent German. The problem of preserving military security and assisting the Czechs in re-establishing their government and rehabilitating their economy was immense. There were also over 100,000 displaced persons in the Division's sector to be cared for and helped.

Military Government has always been the unit's official contact with the civilian population, bringing it smack up against problems ranging from the feeding and evacuation of entire towns to officiating at births.

WILLIAMS, Charles W., Sgt.  
 WILLIAMS, Clarence W., T/4.  
 WILLIAMS, Garnet P., Pfc.  
 \*WILLIAMS, Jack R., Pfc.  
 WILLIAMS, James N., T/5.  
 WILLIAMS, Otis A., Sgt.  
 WILLIAMS, Willard J., Sgt.  
 WILLIAMS, William A., Capt.  
 WILLIAMS, William D., Sgt.  
 WILLIFORD, Guy, S/Sgt.  
 WILLIS, Delford J., T/Sgt.  
 WILLIS, Harry S., S/Sgt.  
 WILLIS, Wallace G., Sgt.  
 WILLOUGHBY, Paul E., Pfc.  
 WILLS, Marlon H., Pfc.  
 WILLSON, David M., 1st Lt.  
 WILMOT, Raymond H., S/Sgt.  
 WILSON, Charles L., 1st Lt.  
 WILSON, Gerald L., S/Sgt.  
 WILSON, Julian L., Pfc.  
 \*WILSON, Lawrence L., M/Sgt.  
 WILSON, Thomas W., 1st Lt.  
 WILSON, Weaver O., S/Sgt.  
 WILSON, William C., Jr., 1st Lt.  
 \*\*WILTSE, Woodrow W., 1st Lt.  
 WINHAM, Robert E., 1st Lt.  
 WINKLER, John M., Capt.  
 WINNINGS, Nay, Sgt.  
 WINSTEAD, Hugh T., Pfc.  
 WINTER, Charles H., Sgt.  
 WINTERS, Harry M., Pfc.  
 \*WITMEYER, John J., 2d Lt.  
 WITTHOFT, Arthur J., 2d Lt.  
 WITTRICK, Eugene E., Sgt.  
 WITTWER, Victor D., T/Sgt.  
 WODALL, James E., Pfc.  
 WOELTJEN, Henry, 1st Lt.  
 WOLF, Adam M., 1st Lt.  
 WOLFE, Byron S., Pfc.  
 WOLFE, C. H., Jr., T/4.  
 WOLFE, Harvey C., Pfc.  
 WOLFE, Robert W., Pfc.

WOLFGANG, Robert O., Sgt.  
 WOLKE, Albert, T/5.  
 WOLPERT, Louis A., 1st Lt.  
 WOMAC, R. L., S/Sgt.  
 WOOD, Herman C., Pfc.  
 WOOD, Joseph R., Pfc.  
 WOOD, Paul B., Sgt.  
 \*WOOD, Sterling A., Col.  
 WOODARD, John H., 1st Lt.  
 WOODARD, Wallace L., T/5.  
 WOODELL, John H., Pfc.  
 WOODING, Kenneth, Pfc.  
 WOODS, David P., Sgt.  
 WOODS, Gordon H., Pfc.  
 WOODS, James J., Jr., Capt.  
 WOODS, Joseph H., 1st Lt.  
 WOODS, Leslie L., T/5.  
 WOODS, Robert A., Pfc.  
 WOLF, Lynell A., T/5.  
 WOOLWORTH, Alan R., Pfc.  
 WOOSLEY, James N., Pvt.  
 WOOTEN, John H., Sgt.  
 WORLEY, Cleophas, Pvt.  
 WORRELL, William J., T/Sgt.  
 WORTH, Edward H., Cpl.  
 WRAY, Robert V., Jr.  
 \*WRIGHT, Darold S., T/5.  
 WRIGHT, Edward C., S/Sgt.  
 WRIGHT, Julian L., Cpl.  
 WRIGHT, Merrit L., M/Sgt.  
 WRIGHT, William J., T/5.  
 WRONA, Charles, Pfc.  
 WYATT, Lisle M., Capt.  
 WYATT, Vernon E., M/Sgt.  
 \*WYMER, Glenn I., Capt.

YEARTY, James E., 1st Lt.  
 YEARY, Curtis C., T/5.  
 YEARY, Woodrow W., Pfc.  
 YENDRZESKE, Alexander, Jr., S/Sgt.  
 YONKERS, Leo E., 1st Lt.  
 YORK, James H., S/Sgt.  
 YOUIN, Benjamin, Pfc.  
 YOUNG, Douglas E., Pvt.  
 YOUNG, Grady W., S/Sgt.  
 YOUNG, Randolph S., II, Capt.  
 YOUNG Sam W., Pfc.  
 YOUNGBERG, Philip H., T/5.  
 YOUNGER, Edward E., Jr., Pfc.  
 YOUNKINS, Roy C., T/Sgt.  
 YOUNT, Percy P., Sgt.

Z

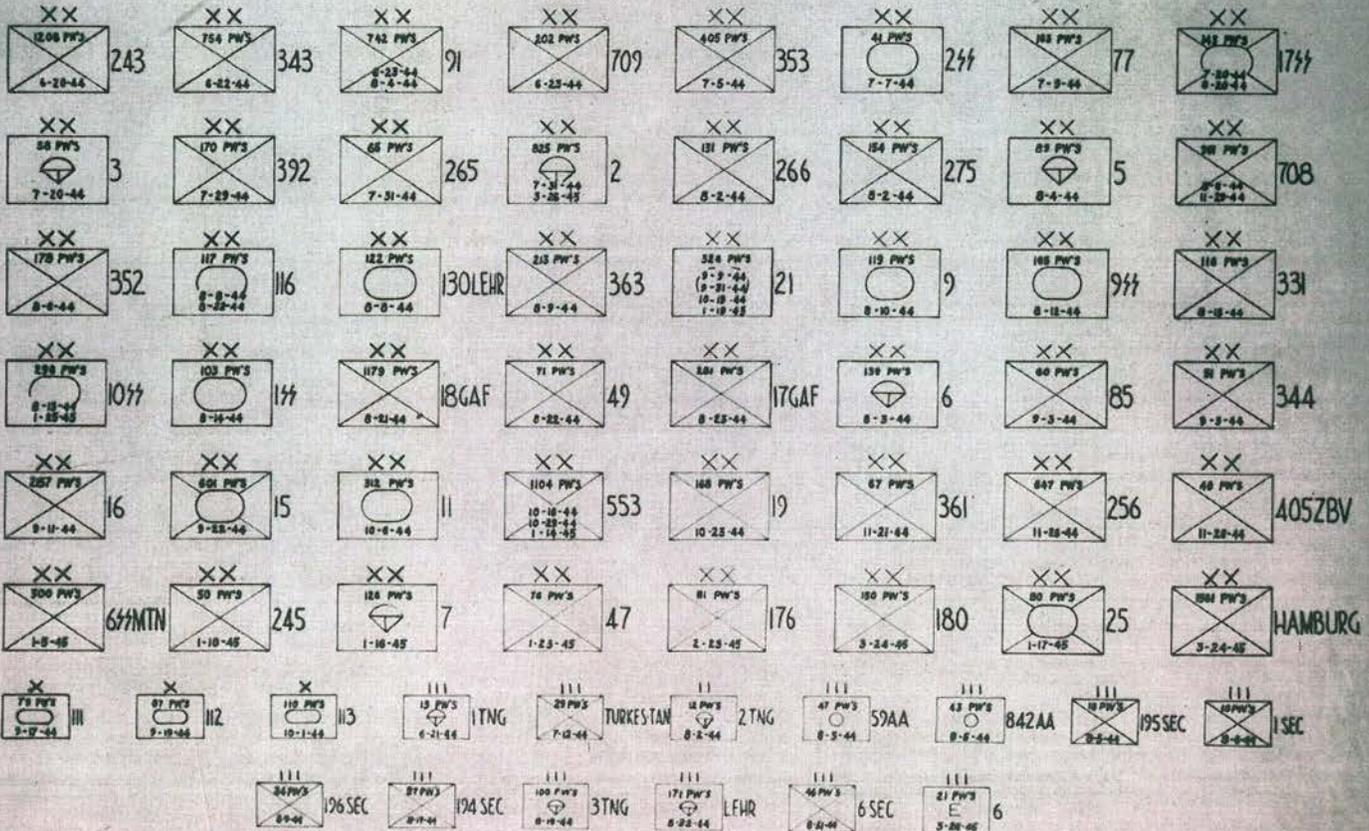
ZACHARIAS, Henry G., Jr., Sgt.  
 ZACK, Daniel A., T/4.  
 ZAEBST, Robert J., 1st Lt.  
 ZAKEWSKI, Joseph S., S/Sgt.  
 ZALES, Frank R., T/5.  
 ZAMBON, Frank P., S/Sgt.  
 ZASADINSKI, Joseph, T/5.  
 ZAVOSKY, Joseph, Sgt.  
 ZAWACKI, Benjamin J., Sgt.  
 ZAWADA, Leo P., Cpl.  
 ZBYSZYNSKI, Theodore S., Pfc.  
 ZEGOWITZ, Frank L., Cpl.  
 ZEHRUNG, Wallace, S/Sgt.  
 ZIEGLER, Bernard F., T/5.  
 ZIEMANN, Arthur G., S/Sgt.  
 ZIGON, Henry R., Sgt.  
 ZIMMERMAN, Glenn J., Cpl.  
 ZIMMERMAN, Darwin D., 1st Lt.  
 ZIMMERMAN, Robert W., T/5.  
 ZIMRIN, Henry L., 1st Lt.  
 ZISKA, Frank, Jr., S/Sgt.  
 ZORN, Henry J., Cpl.  
 ZWOLINSKI, Raymond J., Pvt.  
 ZYGMUNT, Chester M., T/5.  
 ZYLA, Frank, 2d Lt.

Y

YAKIMOFF, Emil I., M/Sgt.  
 YAMBOR, Michael A., Sgt.  
 YANACHEAK, Don, Sgt.  
 YANKOSKY, Joseph, Pfc.  
 YARLING, Walter G., T/Sgt.  
 YATES, Clifford T., 2d Lt.

†—Posthumous.  
 \*—Oak Leaf Cluster.  
 \*\*—Two Oak Leaf Clusters.

# UNITS CONTACTED AND PW'S TAKEN BY THE 79th INFANTRY DIVISION



## PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATIONS

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Place of Action</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Place of Action</i>
2d Battalion, 314th Regiment . . . . .	Fort du Roule, France	3d Battalion, 313th Regiment . . . . .	Oberroedern, France
1st Battalion, 314th Regiment . . . . .	La Haye du Puits, France	2d Battalion, 315th Regiment . . . . .	Hatten, France
3d Battalion, 314th Regiment . . . . .	Fraimbois, France	310th Field Artillery Battalion . . . . .	
Company A, 315th Regiment . . . . .	Embermenil, France	. . . . .	Hatten and Rittershoffen, France
Company F, 315th Regiment . . . . .	Embermenil, France	3d Battalion, 315th Regiment . . . . .	Rittershoffen, France

## MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE

304th Medical Battalion—With One Star	Band, 79th Infantry Division
79th Signal Company—With One Star	Headquarters and Service Company and Medical Detachment,
Military Police Platoon, 79th Infantry Division—With One Star	304th Engineer Battalion
Service Company, 313th Regiment—With One Star	Medical Detachment, 313th Regiment
Service Company, 314th Regiment—With One Star	Service Battery, 310th Field Artillery Battalion
Service Company, 315th Regiment—With One Star	Service Battery, 311th Field Artillery Battalion
79th Quartermaster Company	Service Battery, 312th Field Artillery Battalion
779th Ordnance Company (LM)	Service Battery, 904th Field Artillery Battalion

## THE 79TH DIVISION IN COMBAT

313th Infantry Regiment	310th Field Artillery Battalion
314th Infantry Regiment	311th Field Artillery Battalion
315th Infantry Regiment	312th Field Artillery Battalion
304th Engineer Combat Battalion	904th Field Artillery Battalion
304th Medical Battalion	749th Tank Battalion
79th Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized	813th Tank Destroyer Battalion
79th Signal Company	463d Anti-Aircraft Artillery, Automatic Weapons Battalion
79th Quartermaster Company	79th Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment
79th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company	Photo Interpreter Team 39
79th Infantry Division Headquarters Company	Prisoner of War Interrogation Teams 50, 55
Division Artillery	Military Intelligence Interpretation Team 434
Headquarters Battery	Order of Battle Team 17

## UNITS ATTACHED TO 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Date Attached</i>	<i>Date Relieved</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Date Attached</i>	<i>Date Relieved</i>
773d Tank Destroyer Battalion . . . . .	9 Sept 44	12 Oct 44	Task Force Herren . . . . .	1 Jan 45	3 Jan 45
44th Infantry Division . . . . .	19 Oct 44	24 Oct 44	275th Infantry Regiment, 70th		
71st Infantry Regiment			70th Infantry Division		

CROSS

**MAJ. S. MAYOR TO HONOR 313TH REGT**

**The Long, Long Road To Cherbourg-- With The 313th**

**PATCH LAUDS 79TH; MANY HERE IN IT**

**3 Veteran U. S. Divisions Won Peninsula**

London, June 27 (U.P.)—Three American divisions, one made up of hardened veterans of the European campaigns, were re-organized as the troops responded to the victorious push up the peninsula. The divisions, comprising the Seventh Army Corps under Maj. Gen. Joseph Lawton Collins, whose wife lives in Washington, are the Fourth, under Maj. Gen. Raymond O. Barton; the Ninth, under Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy, former national commander of the American Legion, and the Seventy-ninth, under Maj. Gen. Ira Wyche.

# LORRAINE CROSS

Exploits Of Old 79th In France Are Recalled

79TH DIVISION'S HEROISM IS HIGH

# Battalion Turns Back 6 Attacks

# 79th's Infantry First Across Seine And First To Reach Belgian Border

Presidential Unit Citation Is Made to 79th Outfit  
Co. A of the 313th Regt., 79th Inf. Div. has received the Presidential Unit Citation for "extraordinary gallantry and heroism displayed in moving against and successfully seizing superior enemy numbers and positions to seize and hold the high ground east of Embourgnon, France."

**CZECH-ARPA DUTY FOR 79TH DIVISION!**

# THE FALCON DIRECT HIT

## 79TH HELPS BRING CHERBOURG FALL

Division Part Of 7th Corps In Drive Against Port

Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force June 27 (AP)—The United States 79th Infantry Division, one of three making up the Seventh Corps which captured Cherbourg, is commanded by Maj. Gen. Ira Wyche, a native of Oeracoke, N. C. General Wyche was assigned to command the 79th Field Artillery Brigade in April, 1941, and was made commanding general of the 79th Division in May, 1942.

# McCardell Tells How 79th Cracked Cherbourg Line

By Lee McCardell (Staff Writer, War Correspondent)

# 79th Division's Wait On Heights Overlooking Cherbourg Described Luneville Celebrates Liberation By 79th

## 79TH DIVISION FIRST TO ENTER CHERBOURG

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, Allied Expeditionary Force, July 15 (AP)—The American Seventy-ninth Division under Maj. Gen. Ira Wyche was the first to enter Cherbourg, with the Fourth and Ninth Divisions collaborating on the flanks. Supreme Headquarters disclosed today.

Immediately after Cherbourg's fall, the Seventy-ninth Division turned southward to help the Eighty-second and 101st Air-Borne Divisions which had been holding the peninsula base line facing the Germans southward, the Command disclosed in a public exposition including the

# Vosges Pass Wo Roer Defense Ben 10 Forts Overrun

PARIS, Nov. 26 (AP)—Four American armies smashed forward on the western front in battles of un- finished fury today. They breached the Germans' Vosges mountain positions with a 10-mile thrust through the Saales pass in the Alsace plain, captured Weisweiler on the road to Cologne and overran 10 Nazi-held fortresses in the old Maginot line. Those were the most spectacular accomplishments of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's Allied armies hurled the Germans back all along the sprawling front. The ground forces had the aid of tactical air forces which, taking advantage of clear weather, poured bullets, bombs and rockets into German strong points and communications lines. At the southern end of the front, the 44th and 79th Divisions of the U. S. Seventh Army widened the Savernus-Strasbourg corridor despite vicious counter-attacks from the north while Lt.-Gen. Alexander M. Patch's Sixth Corps sped through the remaining 10 miles of the Saales pass and spilled out on the Rhine flatlands 10 miles south west of Strasbourg.

30th and 79th Div. commanded by Maj. Gen. S. Hobbs, and the 9th Drive. Lt. Col. J. M. G. today Army 24

**75th wins Corps Title**

**LORRAINE CROSS CZECH AND DIV TROOPS IN JULY FOURTH**

## HEADQUARTERS, 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Office of the Commanding General

2 July 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation by the Commanding General, VII Corps.

TO: All Unit Commanders down to include Company, Battery and Troop Units. (To be read to the troops.)

1. Following is quoted a letter to me from Major General Collins, Commanding General, VII Corps:

"Major General Ira T. Wyche,  
Commanding, 79th Infantry Division,  
A.P.O. 79, United States Army.  
Dear General

I wish to express to you my profound appreciation for the magnificent job that you and your division did in our operations on the Cotentin Peninsula, which culminated in the capture of Cherbourg on 25-26 June.

The division showed its tenacity and superb fighting spirit by the manner in which it broke through the perimeter defenses with which the Germans had ringed the high ground around the approaches to Cherbourg. The battles your battalions waged in breaking the German resistance and in reducing their successive strong points during the period 22-25 June was an operation which called for the highest order of valor.

Finally, to the 79th, 4th and 9th Infantry Division will go the credit for having captured the city of Cherbourg and secured for the Allied cause a major port of entry. It was by this main effort of the American Army that we have insured the build-up and supply of our forces on the continent.

VII Corps looks forward to the day when we will again be privileged to have the 79th Infantry Division with us in battle. Meanwhile, we salute you and the men of the Division for your outstanding success in the Cherbourg Campaign.

Sincerely,

/s/ J. Lawton Collins  
/t/ J. LAWTON COLLINS,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding."

2. It is most gratifying to me and I am sure to each of you that the splendid performance of this Division was appreciated by the Corps Commander. I congratulate you for your part in the brilliant performance of the division in this historic event. I renew my thanks and appreciations already expressed to you. You are now about to launch another attack. Make it even more aggressive than the last.

I. T. WYCHE  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.

## HEADQUARTERS, XV CORPS, UNITED STATES ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 436, U. S. Army  
5 September 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO: Major General I. T. Wyche, 79th Infantry Division.

1. It is a great pleasure to publish the following commendation from the Commanding General, Third United States Army:

"1. YOUR CORPS HAS MOST EXPEDITIOUSLY ACCOMPLISHED ITS MISSION OF SECURING A POSITION IN THE VICINITY OF MANTES GASSICOURT, HOLDING A BRIDGE-HEAD EAST OF THE SEINE RIVER AT MANTES GASSICOURT, AND DENYING THE USE OF CROSSING SITES TO THE ENEMY AS FAR NORTH AS LOUVIERS.

"2. THE AGGRESSIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER IN WHICH THIS MISSION HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT REFLECTS GREAT CREDIT UPON THE CORPS IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGH TRADITIONS OF THE SERVICE AND UPON YOU AS ITS COMMANDING GENERAL. YOUR ABILITY TO ACCEPT CALCULATED RISKS WITHOUT BECOMING INVOLVED IN UNWARRANTED DELAYS HAS CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MISSION.

"3. YOU AND THE PERSONNEL OF YOUR COMMAND ARE HEREBY HIGHLY COMMENDED FOR YOUR SPLENDID ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS MISSION."

2. I desire personally to thank you and every member of your command for the splendid accomplishments of every task assigned. Your achievement as a first class fighting division is playing a large part in the liquidation of the German Army which is our eventual goal. My best wishes to you and your command for continued success.

/s/ Wade H. Haislip  
/t/ WADE H. HAISLIP,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, U. S. Army 17 Sep 44

TO: Every Member of the 79th Inf. Division. (To be read by appropriate comdrs.)

1. Again you have demonstrated the high quality of the 79th Division as a first-class fighting unit. The superior accomplishment of each mission gives each of us more confidence in our ability to accomplish future missions.

2. As the representative of the whole division, I wish to congratulate and thank each of you for this splendid performance.

/s/ IRA T. WYCHE  
/t/ IRA T. WYCHE  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.

## HEADQUARTERS, IV CORPS, UNITED STATES ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 436, US Army  
14 August 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Officers and Enlisted Men of the XV Corps.

1. It is with extreme pride that I publish to you the following commendation of the Army Commander on the historic movement of the XV Corps around the German Armies in Northern France during which the Corps advanced against resistance a distance of approximately 180 miles in nine days, and stopped only because of orders from higher authority:

"Please accept for yourself and transmit to the officers and men of your command my sincere appreciation and commendation for the masterly manner in which the Corps has pressed relentlessly forward, executed difficult changes of direction, and taken calculated risks with the utmost daring. The whole performance on the part of yourself, and your officers and men, has been very superior."

2. You have done a fine job. You have whipped the German wherever you have met him. You have strewn the countryside with the wreckage of his equipment. You have captured thousands of prisoners. With the experience gained in this campaign you will handle whatever lies ahead of us with confidence and ease. My heart-felt thanks and best wishes to you all.

/s/ Wade H. Haislip  
/t/ WADE H. HAISLIP  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, U. S. Army, 4 September 1944.

TO: Every Member of the 79th Division.

(To be read by appropriate commanders.)

1. It is a great satisfaction to me, and I am sure will be to each of you, that the Army and Corps Commanders have taken note of your superior performance in the march to the Seine. It again demonstrates your ability and willingness to realize and assume your individual responsibility.

2. I extend to each of you my congratulations and sincere thanks with great confidence that the division will become greater and greater as the opportunities occur.

/s/ I. T. WYCHE  
/t/ I. T. WYCHE  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

## HEADQUARTERS, XIX CORPS

Office of the Corps Commander

A. P. O. 270  
c/o Postmaster, U. S. Army  
6 September 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Commanding General, 79th Inf. Division, APO 79, U. S. Army.

1. On 28 August 1944, the 79th Infantry Division joined this Corps. At that time it had already established a bridgehead and was astride the SEINE River. The Corps was ordered to advance and in 72 hours the Division covered a total distance of 180 miles, crossing the SOMME River and numerous smaller streams and closing in perfect order on its objective in BELGIUM.

2. During this period the Division fought numerous engagements, destroyed much enemy equipment and took many prisoners. This is believed to be one of the fastest opposed advances of comparable distance by an Infantry Division in warfare.

3. It is desired to commend you, your officers and men on this splendid achievement. The Commanding General, First United States Army, Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges, concurs in the commendation. It is also desired to express to you the pride and pleasure it has given this headquarters and other Corps units to serve with your Division during the past several historic days.

(Reproduced by Hq. 79th Inf.  
Div., 17 Sep 44)

/s/ Charles H. Corlett  
/t/ CHARLES H. CORLETT  
Maj. Gen., U. S. Army  
Commanding.

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS, 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, U. S. Army, 17 Sep 44

TO: Every Member of the 79th Division. (To be read by appropriate commanders.)

1. It is most gratifying to me that every Army and Corps commander under whom we have served has been either orally or in writing, rich in his praise of the division. In each case, the division has contributed in a large measure to the success of the Army and Corps under which it was operating.

2. It is with unbounded pride I call particularly to your attention the statement in par. 2 of this letter and I am sure that each of you will be equally proud of that historic performance.

3. Again, I extend to you my congratulations and sincere thanks for such an outstanding achievement.

/s/ I. T. Wyche  
/t/ I. T. WYCHE  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding

## HEADQUARTERS, XV CORPS, UNITED STATES ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

AG 201.22 (G)

APO 436, US Army,  
30 September 1944

TO: The Officers and Men of the XV Corps

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation from the Commanding General, Third United States Army, on the Termination of our Service with that Army.

1. It is with great pride that I publish to the command the following letter from the Commanding General, Third United States Army:

## HEADQUARTERS, THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 403

29 September, 1944

My dear General Haislip:

My regret at losing you and your command is only equalled by my profound appreciation for and admiration of your magnificent achievements and the superior manner in which, often with inadequate means, you have invariably defeated the enemy.

Please communicate these sentiments to all officers and men of your command and especially to Generals Wyche and LeClerc and to Colonel Vennard Wilson.

May the success you have so richly merited continue to attend you, and may the 7th Army profit as much from your valorous deeds as we have.

Most sincerely,

Major General Wade H. Haislip  
Headquarters XV U. S. Army Corps  
APO No. 436  
U. S. Army

/s/ G. S. Patton, Jr.  
/t/ G. S. PATTON, JR.  
Lieut. General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding

2. I have informed the Commanding General, Third United States Army, of our sincere regret at leaving his command. I have told him that whatever success we gained under him was due to the inspiration of his leadership. I have told him that we will attempt to perform all future tasks in a way that will meet his high standards of accomplishment.

/s/ WADE H. HAISLIP  
/t/ WADE H. HAISLIP  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.

## HEADQUARTERS, SEVENTH ARMY

APO 79, U. S. Army

23 November 1944

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 111)

### TO BE READ TO ALL TROOPS

SOLDIERS OF THE 79TH DIVISION: Following your continuous action from D-Day in NORMANDY until late October, you were committed to the attack only a few days after a short rest. Breaking through the enemy defenses north of BACCARAT, you continued to advance in the face of powerful enemy resistance, overrunning the enemy defenses and capturing many prisoners. During the brilliant action which followed, you captured the towns of BLAMONT and CIREY, reducing the main enemy positions and effecting a breakthrough which permitted the Second French Armored Division to advance rapidly to the northeast and exploit the successes which you had achieved.

Having bewildered the enemy and scattered his forces, you continued the pursuit to the northeast, thus preventing him the opportunity to regroup and make a stand west of the Vosges.

Without pausing for rest, you continued your tireless pursuit of the enemy toward SAVERNE, capturing numerous towns, enemy strongpoints and large numbers of prisoners in three days. Within eight days you had driven the enemy from the area of SEVERNE and SARREBOURG and were preparing to drive him from his last positions west of the SAVERNE GAP.

This difficult assault and tenacious pursuit has contributed nobly to the success of the Seventh Army operation as a whole. It indicates a state of training and discipline of the highest order as well as a plan soundly conceived and energetically carried out. You have achieved a significant victory. I have full confidence in your ability to continue your relentless pursuit until the final victory.

/s/ A. M. Patch  
/t/ A. M. PATCH,  
Lieutenant General, USA.,  
Commanding.

Reproduced by Hq 79th Inf Div.,  
27 November 1944

## HEADQUARTERS, 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION

*Office of the Commanding General*

APO 79, U. S. Army,  
18 December 1944.

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation from the Commanding General, 2nd French Armored Division.  
TO: Every Member of the 79th Division.  
(To be read by appropriate commanders)

1. The following letter has been received by me from Maj. Gen. P. F. LeClerc, Commanding General, 2nd French Armored Division:

"I regret that circumstances have not permitted me to make an earlier reply to your letter on the occasion of our separation. I thank you deeply, not only for myself but also for my division, for the sentiments you expressed.

"On our part, we too have deeply appreciated and will retain extremely pleasant memories of the work done in collaboration with the 79th Infantry Division of the United States Army, and we will regret not having with us any longer an Infantry division as active and as fast as yours.

"I hope that you and your division may continue your series of brilliant advances. Please accept, General, this expression of my sincere esteem."  
/s/ Maj. Gen. LeClerc

2. It gives me great pleasure to transmit to you the above expression of regard from the Commanding General of the 2nd French Armored Division. The mutual respect of the two divisions is most gratifying and will inspire us all to even greater achievement in the future.

/s/ I. T. WYCHE  
I. T. WYCHE,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

## HEADQUARTERS, SIXTH ARMY GROUP

*Office of the Commanding General*

APO 23

13 January 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division, APO 79.  
THRU: Commanding General, Seventh Army, APO 758.

Holding an important sector, the troops of the 79th Infantry Division received the main attack of the present German offensive on 8 January. The Germans, forced to abandon efforts to pierce our lines to the West, launched a powerful coordinated attack against your positions. The splendid defensive action of your division has been most outstanding. Continued attempts of the powerful 21st Panzer Division were completely blocked and dispersed. In spite of the commitment of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division two days later, the entire enemy attack was contained. These accomplishments were made despite the necessity to extend your south flank a considerable distance.

I wish to commend each and every man in the 79th Infantry Division for his determined resistance and steadfast achievement in the face of superior enemy numbers.

/s/ Jacob L. Devers  
JACOB L. DEVERS  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

AMP/jbt

AG 201.22-A 1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH ARMY, APO 758, 20 January 1945.

TO: Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division, APO 79.  
(THRU: Commanding General, VI Corps, APO 46)

To the foregoing commendation of the Army Group Commander, the Commanding General, Seventh Army, adds his sincere congratulations for your stubborn defensive fighting.

/s/ A. M. Patch,  
A. M. PATCH,  
Lieutenant General, USA,  
Commanding

AG 201.2 2nd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS, VI CORPS, APO 46, U. S. Army, 24 January 1945.

TO: Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division, APO 79, U. S. Army.  
This commendation is forwarded with great pleasure.

/s/ Edward H. Brooks  
EDWARD H. BROOKS  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

AG 201.2 3rd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, US Army, 26 January 1945.

TO: Every member of the 79th Division and attached units.  
(To be read by appropriate commanders at the first opportunity.)

Your magnificent defense which frustrated the enemy's planned offensive to regain Alsace will go down in history as a great accomplishment. I wish to express to each of you who participated in the operation my admiration and thanks, the larger share going to the defenders of Hatten and Rittershoffen.

I. T. WYCHE,  
I. T. WYCHE,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

## HEADQUARTERS, XVI CORPS

Office of the Commanding General  
APO 197

SUBJECT: Commendation.

1 April 1946

TO: Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division, A.P.O. 79, U. S. Army.

1. Upon the completion of your mission in the FLASHPOINT Operation, I desire to commend you and, through you, all of the officers and enlisted men of your splendid division for the outstanding manner in which they have accomplished their assigned missions. I desire to thank you and all the members of your division for their superior performance of duty.

2. After a period of thorough training and planning, the 79th Infantry Division rapidly and successfully crossed the Rhine River in their assigned zone of action and quickly overran the enemy defenses on the east bank. Proceeding rapidly and aggressively, they quickly overcame enemy resistance and secured all of their assigned objectives.

3. Knowing the outstanding record of achievement of the 79th Infantry Division, I knew that I was fortunate in having it attached to this Corps for this operation. I knew that it would successfully accomplish any assigned mission and I unhesitatingly selected it as one of the assault divisions for the initial crossing of the Rhine River. By its outstanding performance in this operation, it has added additional laurels to its previous enviable record. It has again demonstrated the outstanding qualities of aggressiveness, initiative and superior fighting qualities that it has heretofore shown in the many battles in which it has participated from Normandy to the Rhine.

/s/ John B. Anderson  
/t/ JOHN B. ANDERSON  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO, 79, U. S. Army, 4 April 1945.

TO: Every Member of the 79th Division and Attached Units.  
(To be read by appropriate commanders.)

1. In my memorandum to you dated 22 March, I stated that this division had been selected for participation in the Allied main effort. That main effort was the crossing of the Rhine. I concluded with the request: "Let each of us resolve that, with the added strength and each one carrying out his full responsibility, we will make the participation in this effort the most brilliant operation this division has participated in to the end that we will bring hostilities nearer to a close."

2. How well you responded to that request is evidenced by the above commendation to the division from the Commanding General, XVI Corps.

3. Please accept my thanks and admiration and join me in the belief that your outstanding performance is now helping to expedite the ending of hostilities.

/s/ I. T. Wyche,  
I. T. WYCHE,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding

## HEADQUARTERS, NINTH U. S. ARMY

Office of the Commanding General  
APO 339, U. S. Army

3330.13 GNMCG

SUBJECT: Commendation.

9 April 1945

THROUGH: Commanding General, XVI Corps, APO 197, U. Army.

TO: Major General I. T. Wyche,  
Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division,  
APO 79, U. S. Army

1. Assignment of the 79th Infantry Division to the Ninth Army early in February afforded me great pleasure, inasmuch as I had noted with keen interest the fine record made by the division since operations were launched on the Continent.

2. It is scarcely necessary for me to point out that the division was in urgent need of considerable rehabilitation upon its assignment to this command, due to heavy losses in personnel and equipment sustained during arduous operations through the fall and winter months. Therefore, it was extremely gratifying to me to note the interest and enthusiasm which your organization evidenced in accomplishing this rehabilitation and fitting the division for its role in operations under this Army. It was with a feeling of complete confidence that your division was chosen as one of the two assault units for the initial Rhine crossing in the Ninth Army zone.

3. I feel that the crossing of the Rhine constituted one of the most important operations undertaken in this war, second only to the landing on the Continent, and that it will be recorded in military history as one of the most brilliant exploits of American arms. I particularly wish to commend your division upon the skill and speed with which you accomplished the crossing, in the face of determined opposition and numerous difficulties beyond your control. Equally impressive were the rapidity with which you built up your fighting strength on the far shore, and the energy and power with which you exploited the initial bridgehead.

4. It is my desire that you express to all members of your command my appreciation of their accomplishments to date under Ninth Army in the Rhine crossing and the subsequent operations in the Ruhr.

/s/ W. H. Simpson,  
W. H. SIMPSON  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

Reproduced by Hq 79th  
Inf Div—18 Apr 45

(9 Apr 45)

AG 330.13 GNMTB

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS, XVI CORPS, A. P. O., U. S. Army, 13 April 1945

TO: Major General I. T. Wyche, Commanding General, 79th Inf. Div., APO 79, U. S. Army.

The Army Commander's letter of commendation is concurred in wholeheartedly. It affords me great pleasure to transmit it to you and your splendid division.

/s/ John B. Anderson  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

330.13

(9 Apr 45)

2nd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, U. S. Army, 18 Apr 45

TO: Every Members of the 79th Division and Attached Units

(To be read to every member of the command by appropriate commanders.)

1. This most gratifying commendation from Lieutenant General W. H. Simpson, our Army Commander, with its commendatory indorsement by Major General John B. Anderson, our Corps Commander, convinces me that each of you who participated in the operations mentioned accepted and carried out your full responsibility in a manner befitting superior soldiers.

2. Please accept my warmest admiration and most sincere thanks for the part you played in adding to the good name of our great division.

/s/ I. T. WYCHE,  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.

DISTRIBUTION:  
"B"

# HEADQUARTERS VIII CORPS

Camp Gruber, Okla.  
3 October 1945

Postwar FO 1

1. a. The war is over; therefore we should have no enemies.  
b. I shall always look back upon my command of the 79th Division as the most successful period of my official career. This is so because of the cooperation of those fine Americans who wore the CROSS OF LORRAINE. If it were feasible, I should like to address this order to every one who wore that shoulder patch. Since this is not practicable, I have selected you with whom I was most intimately associated, as their representatives, in the hope that through you I shall be able to keep in touch with as many members of the division as possible. The high-minded spirit with which you did your several tasks was a great inspiration to me and will continue to be throughout my life. I hope that you will find the time to comply with this order. May the rest of your lives be attended by prosperity, health and the maximum of happiness. Please transmit this wish to all members of the division with whom you come in contact and where practicable, furnish them a copy of this order.
2. I intend to keep track of each of you in the future, learning your whereabouts and your several activities.
3. Each one who receives this order will on or before the 19th day of June annually render a report to me giving your location and the general situation concerning yourself and any other member of the 79th Division about whom you have knowledge.
4. I shall endeavor to keep so supplied that if we should meet either by arrangement or otherwise, we shall always be able to drink an appropriate toast to the CROSS OF LORRAINE.
5. a. Sig Com: Preferably by letter, either typed or by hand. Night letters permitted.  
b. CP's: (1) Mine
  - (a) Permanent: Box 967, Pinehurst, N. C.
  - (b) Temporary: Hq VIII Corps, Camp Gruber, Okla.(2) Others: To be reported.



I. T. WYCZE,  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Former Commander, 79th Inf. Div.

Ms. Enfantin... 79th division, 1942-1945

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