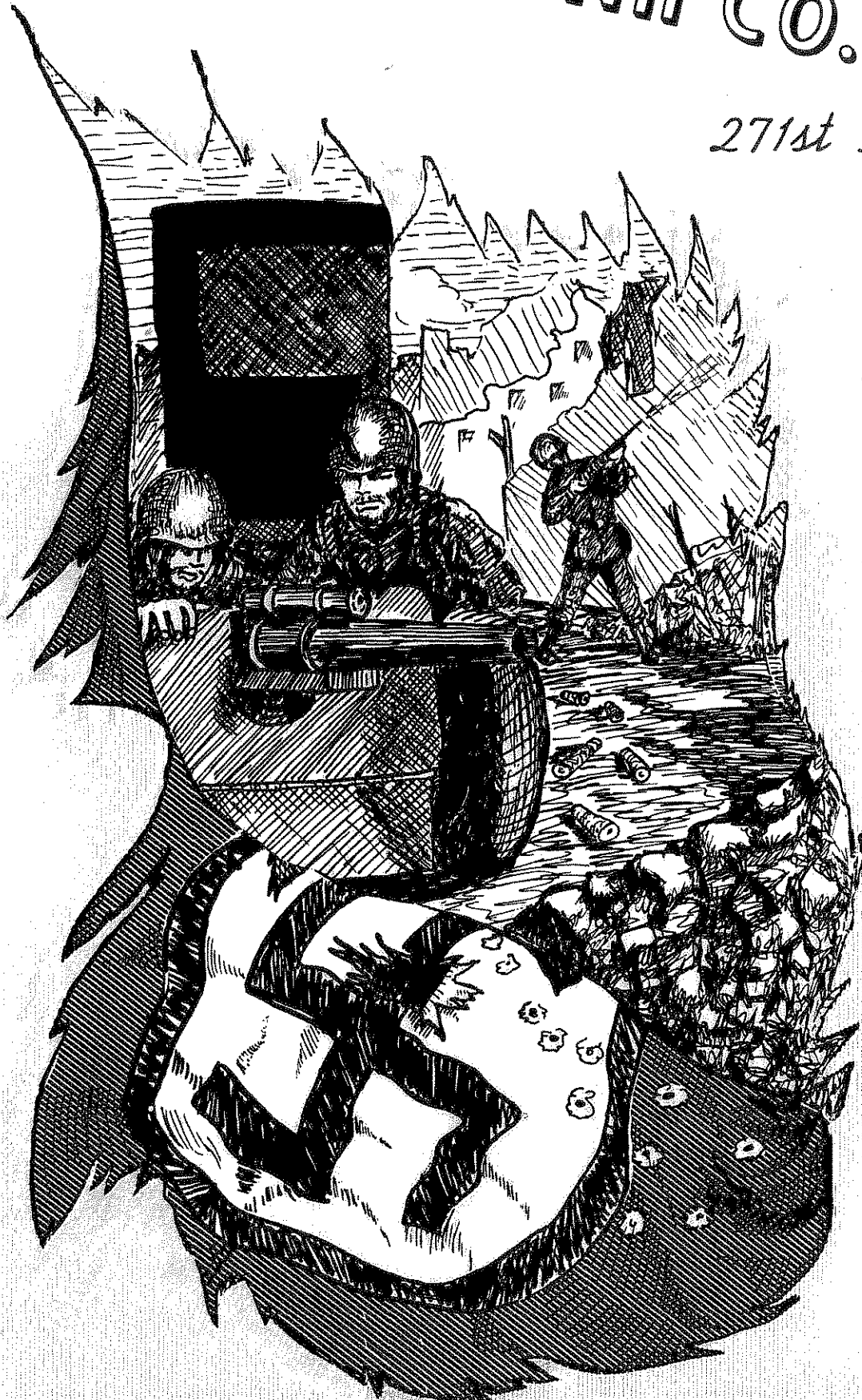


*Story of.....*

Source, <http://www.69th-infantry-division.com/histories/271/History-of-the-271st-Anti-Tank-Company.pdf>

# ANTI TANK CO.

*271st Inf.*



**TRESPASS**

**41**

**HISTORY OF**  
**ANTI TANK COMPANY, 271ST INFANTRY**  
**15 MAY 1943 — 20 JULY 1945**

**COMPILED AND WRITTEN**

**BY**

**REUBEN LEVIN**

*This History is dedicated to the men of Anti Tank Company,  
271st Infantry, who made the History.*



## PREFACE

The History you are about to read began twenty-one years ago, almost to the day. Nineteen years ago the Author, Reuben Levin, entrusted the original manuscript to me and expressed the hope that one day it might be published.

The manuscript has traveled widely since 1945 and has waited patiently in dark closets and beat-up foot-lockers. Now, again in Germany, where its story matured, it is being published.

It is a fine record, well told. It is a soldiers story, as a soldier chose to relate it. Except for minor changes the manuscript is exactly as Reuben Levin wrote it.

I hope that each of you will feel the same sense of pride in the accomplishments of our country's citizen-soldiers as I felt in each reading of the saga of Trespass 41.

ARTHUR R. DATNOFF  
Lt Colonel, Infantry  
Oberammergau, Germany  
15 May 1964



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*Part I*

*Before the ETO*

17. 6. 1941

Officially this history of Anti Tank Company, 271st Infantry begins on 15 May 1943, date of activation of the 69th Division. But actually, the company was beginning to take shape before that. First to arrive at the company area at 44th Street and 3rd Avenue in Camp Shelby, Mississippi were the men of the cadre, who came from Camp Adair, Oregon and the 96th Division late in April. Still with us now from the original cadre are Nelson, Yendral, Bergstrom, and Lord. The first charter members of the new company were 1st Sgt. Fine and Sgt. Barnes, who arrived on 12 May. And within the next week or two the organization was filled in.

It didn't take long until training was in full swing, and with General Bolte and Col. Harmony giving the orders, it was really training. First in the long line of bivouacs was the nine day firing problem at Davis Range. It was typical doughboy weather-what the recruits had heard about in civilian life they now saw in reality. You were always wet, be it with sweat or rain. Rough, rough, rough!!

Through June, July, and August, basic training dragged on and on and oooooon. But the shining light of furloughs was coming ever closer. The first batch left early in September, and those who could not wait (to get home) had their wives coming down to dear old Hattiesburg. A typical day at about this time was as follows: Reveille, training, chow, training, Retreat, and then, the charge of the husband brigade for the bus. And what a charge it was. From all sides they came running, and if you were in the way, it was TS! Those who were lucky enough to have their cars at camp had very little privacy. If a coupe normally held three, it left the gate with anywhere from six to eight.

By the end of September, with the first furlough cycle not yet over, a great change was about to take place. Replacements were needed for overseas duty, and the 69th was called upon for a large quota. Most of the privates were shipped, which left the company with about five non-coms for every private. It looked like the outfit would never be the same again, but all through the winter men came from all branches of service to fill in the ranks.

In December came the ITP problems preceding D-Series, the roughest bit of training the boys had. Never to be forgotten was December 14, 1943, a cold and wet

and miserable day. Even wearing every stitch of clothing they had, the boys still shivered and froze. The "tactical situation" would not allow for fires, so our boys suffered and suffered. Even now some of our charters members consider that the worst single day in their army careers, combat included.

The 21 day D-Series came in January, and shortly afterward began the famous March to the Sea; a series of problems down to Biloxi, a one day layover there, and some more problems on the way back. That layover in Biloxi was really something! The place was put off limits to all GIs except those of the 69th, and a good time was had by all. By this time the "BBB" that had attached itself to us was a fitting nickname for the 69th. We knew the De Soto National Forest by heart-every tree, every road, every smallest trail was like an old pal, considering how well we knew them.

In March 1944 the hot rumor was a three month maneuver in Louisiana to start in April. But at the end of March came a change in plans. From the latter part of March and throughout April a steady flow of new blood came into the company. ASTP men, Air Corps cadets, and veterans rotated from overseas swelled the ranks, not only bringing new blood but also a new high standard into the Division. Among the newcomers were Hassler, Beers, Buckner, Rocheleau, Carlson, Shepherd, Elias, Coss, Levin, Roth, Pitts, Nelson Clark, Osiecki, Swette, Hermans, Mebane, Buckingham, Ehlinger, Ferrell, Holgate, Lurquin, Stults, Schoonover, and Lefsky. The Division really had a checkered cross-section now. Some men had years of service overseas behind them, while others had little else but basic training.

At the end of April another large shipment of oldtimers left for overseas, and the new blood became predominant. And another round of training started, much to the chagrin of the trainers. In May, Captain Peterson took over the company from Captain Parker, who went to Third Battalion.

During a two week bivouac in June, 1st Sgt. Gootson was killed in a jeep accident, and there followed a succession of acting topkicks: Fortner, Bothe, and finally Pitts, who didn't receive his rating until we got to England. Ratings were a bit mixed up in the 69th-it always seemed as if someone else held your rating.

At about this time our former Air Corps men formed the now-famous, mythical 14th Air Force, with "Maj. Gen." Beers in command, "Brig. Gen." Buckner as Asst. CO, and "Brig. Gen." Rocheleau as Chief of Operations. The staff meetings and field orders were hilarious diversions from the ordinary fare of Army life in Shelby. Physical training sessions were under the direction of "Capt." Potashnick, and TS problems were all taken care of by "Chaplain" Chirba. That is, until the "Chaplain" was Court-martialled for profanity. By unanimous decision of the court the defendant was reduced to Organ Grinder, T/5.

At that time T/O was very limited, but once the 14th began its overseas movement, it became wide open. And now, with a wonderful combat record behind it, the 14th is a bestarred outfit. "Marshall" Beers has eight stars, "Vice Marshall" Buckner has seven, and Roth and Levin, as Chief of Operations and Chief of Staff respectively, are "Generals" of the AAF, with six stars. 5 Star "Gen." Martin is at present in command of the detached section with the 29th Division at Bremen, but "Vice Marshall" Buckner will soon take over that command, in order to give the organization the rank it deserves in the Bremen Enclave.

D-Day in Europe took us by surprise out in the field. As soon as the first reports came in over the radio, the commo section gave us a complete coverage on the invasion. Each platoon was gathered around its sound power phone listening to radio reports coming from the message center. The bivouac was forgotten in the face of the history being made that day in Normandy.

Rumors of shipment and overseas movement filled the air all summer. The Division left for a 30 day bivouac late in the month of September, and it was out in the field on that problem that it was alerted for overseas. But some shook their heads and said, "The 69th will never go overseas!" When we returned to camp on the 14th of October stocks of new equipment and all kinds of supplies had been amassed for us. And in the very short time of two weeks the Division was all set to go.

Those last few days at Shelby were all too short; to be left behind for good were Service Club 2, Theatre 3, PX 23 (with Lil and Katie behind the candy counter), PX 24 (with Lucille at the cigar counter), Service Club 3, Theatre 6, Lake Shelby, the

unending bus lines, and in Hattiesburg, the USOs, the Forrest Hotel, the Saenger Theatre, the outrageous prices for food, military supplies, and everything else, for that matter. Camp Shelby had been rough, but we would always remember it.

Early on 1 November 1944 Anti Tank Company entrained at Shelby, and after taking the salute from Col Lane on the siding, off we went. Destination was still secret, but most of us knew we were headed for New Jersey. The Pullmans were quite comfortable, and the trip very pleasant. Heartbreaker of all was when Queen saw his own house from the train, with his mother on the porch. But the train roared on.

We detrained at Camp Kilmer on the foggy morning of 3 November, and dragging our packs and duffle bags, were led to our temporary home there. No sooner had a sumptuous breakfast been served than the processing started. Everyone marvelled at the smooth efficiency of the operation, and our men helped it along, for no passes were to be issued until the processing was over. From one area to another area we were hurried to take part in gas drills, and lifeboat drills, or to listen to lectures on censorship, on what to do in case of capture, and a dozen other topics. On the supply end, Lt. Morris, Sgt. Whalen, and Levin were really kept busy with the packing and crating and getting things by the inspectors. At last on Sunday, November 5th, it was all done, and the first passes were issued that evening. For those who lived in the vicinity there were 24 hour passes-everyone else had 12 hours off. That first night was profitable enough for the taxicabs. Since no one knew much about the train schedules, and with those near home wanting to get there as soon as possible, the fares to New York, twenty odd miles away, ranged anywhere from three dollars up. But that first glimpse of New York showed it had been worthwhile. We were quite fortunate for passes at Kilmer; some men had as many as six in the eleven days we were there. And for those staying behind in camp recreation and refreshment facilities were super. PXs were stocked with items we hadn't seen for a long time, Service Clubs were well staffed, the Theatres featured the latest movies and Broadway stage productions, and the messhalls put out a sterling brand of food. Kilmer was just a stopoff on the way overseas, but it was a very pleasant stay we

had there nevertheless.

The last passes expired on the morning of the 12th, and then the final processing began. Clothing checks, shots, and record checks took place. And then our baggage and equipment was taken away for loading on the ship. There was a lot of letter writing done that last night-letters that were to be censored for the first time, and many was the end of a pen chewed as the writer thought, "Now how shall I say it?"

In the afternoon of 14 November we boarded a train for the short ride to Jersey City. From there a ferry ride brought us across to Pier 44 and the waiting troopship. As we glided across the river, the men made the most of the sights of the famous New York skyline-who knew when we might ever see it again? It was like the last deep breath before plunging in for a swim. It was difficult to realize that what we had always read or heard about was actually happening to us. We marched from the ferry slip right on to the pier to the accompaniment of an Army band playing "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place", and then formed the long columns on the pier. A last touch of America was the coffee and doughnuts the Red Cross girls were handing out.

And then it started - Jones --- John A., and up the gangplank went a loaded soldier - and another - and yet another. And once up on the ship, we were led to our compartments. Anti Tank was assigned to Compartments D1 and D2, two decks below the promenade, and below the waterline. Bunks were in tiers of four and extra space was at a premium. Morale was not too good that first night on the MS John Ericsson, formerly the Swedish luxury liner Kungsholm. Somehow or other, the luxury was gone. It was strictly business.

We slept fitfully that night on board as the loading was being completed, and early on the morning of the 15th, the ship slipped out from its berth. Since the decks were off limits that first morning, the portholes in the latrines were crowded with GIs straining for a last glimpse at the Statue of Liberty. And then we were out in the open water, and the shores were no longer visible. Our ship was just one in a large convoy of vessels of every type; there were tankers, and more transports,

and Liberty ships, and the Aircraft Carrier directly astern of us, and the speedy destroyer escorts scooting around the outer edges of the convoy. It was an impressive sight, and an indication of the tremendous problems of shipping and supply that were being met every day.

The weather the first few days out was fine, but on the third day the sea roughened a bit, and several of our buddies had a greenish hue around the gills. Some of the boys were sick most of the time, but the majority just took it in stride.

At first we just lounged around the decks playing cards or just talking, but the CO of another regiment on board put a stop to that. Thereafter there were eight hours of training each day. Crew members and men who had been on troopships before were surprised, to say the least. So, since orders are orders, we trained. There were rounds of calisthenics, which looked more like acrobatics when the ship pitched or rolled in the seas. There were classes in Hand to Hand combat, with Lt. Braun demonstrating on Budden. There were French classes by Lt. Gearon, Buckner, Guidry, and Celotto, and German classes by Mikkelson, Krochmalick, and Levin. There were lectures on anything and everything, and after England was announced as our destination, there were talks on English money and customs and people for hours on end. And when there weren't any classes and one had just settled down on deck with a good book, or started a game of hearts, along would come a crew with hoses to wash down the decks. You just couldn't win. Even at night, when it was too stifling down in the compartment and we would take a blanket up on deck to sleep, along came the guards to "feel" along the wall with their feet for any culprits seeking fresh air. So we would go below for a while and then try to sneak back up again. It was a continual game of hide and seek, with the hidiers having most of the fun. It was really funny to see the guard approaching and snuggle up into the corners to avoid his seeing you, or rather, feeling you. Beers was champion of the deck sleepers - most of the fresh air fiends finally had to content themselves with sleeping on the floors of C Deck, where it was a lot cooler than down in our compartments.

Every evening Buckner and his Vocalists held forth on deck, starboardside,



midships. It was right by the entrance to the movie, and countless GIs would stumble all over the choir trying to find the door in the blackout. And speaking of blackout, who will ever forget the daily announcement over the loudspeaker --- "Blackout is now in effect. There will be no smoking or showing of any lights on any open deck. If you are not now in your quarters, return there at once and make sure that all portholes are closed and securely dogged down".

Meals aboard ship left a lot to be desired, but all was forgiven when we saw the Thanksgiving Dinner - turkey with all the trimmings. Nobile and Potashnick, through some vague connection in the galley, kept the boys supplied with snacks all day long.

So day after day our convoy made its way through the South Atlantic, carrying us ever nearer our destination. Church services were well attended on board, and everyone was thinking of what lay ahead. But the calm seas and the blue skies had a soothing effect. Everything went quietly enough until the ninth day out. In the midst of Major Hick's lecture on the German military machine, the ship's whistle let go with a blast and all hell broke loose. Ships started zigzagging, the DEs started dropping depth charges, and the convoy increased its speed. But luckily the enemy sub took flight.

On the tenth day out sea gulls were sighted so we knew land was not far away. And early on the morning of 26 November up went the cry, "Land Ho"! Past the Isle of Wight and across Southern England our ship made its way until it moored in Southampton that afternoon. There were so many men crowding the shore-side rail that an order was given for half the men to stay on each side to prevent the ship from listing. This was our first view of the war area; Southampton had suffered heavy bombings and much of the city was in ruins. The poverty and hunger of the people was evidenced by their hunt for anything edible or useable in the trash thrown overboard. A cigarette thrown over the side by a GI was a prize indeed.

A British band played a welcome for us and over the loudspeaker came official greetings by a British General, speaking in the name of the King.

That night on board was quite different from the ones at sea. Men set in the dim-out and talked, and thought, "What now"?



*Part II Continental Tour, England to Germany*



Early on the morning of 27 November we debarked and lined up in the train shed alongside the pier. And then came our first experience with British railroads. What they lacked in modernity they made up for in comfort. Our faces were pressed to the window panes throughout the short journey to Winchester for our first glimpse of England. Most apparent was the spotlessness of the little country villages, and the ever-present Victory gardens. Not a square foot of ground lay idle. And on the military side, gone was the simulating-busy air bases, supply depots, anti-aircraft positions, and training camps were actively contributing to the war effort.

Upon arrival at Winchester we marched to Winchester Barracks for our first army meal abroad. Far better it was than the meals aboard ship. From there, trucks carried us out to our new home, Longwood House. The castle had seen better days, but proved quite comfortable for us. The biggest problems for the first few days were getting the fireplaces to work, then getting fuel to run them with, and then getting the smoke out of the room and the heat to circulate. Jennings and Roth became the heating experts. Every day would find them with a new heating system in their room.

Bit by bit the boys entered the social world of Owslebury, Twyford. Upham, Botle, Bishops Waltham, and Winchester. Once the Anti-tankers got rolling it was hard to find a pub, theatre, dance hall, or telephone booth without one of them there. Of course it wasn't easy getting used to certain staples of British life, such as the "honey buckets" behind the castle. Or the driving on the left side of the road. Or the 'arf and 'arf or bitters. Or certain idioms of the language, such as "Keep your pecker up", meaning keep your spirits up, or "Knock me up sometime", meaning call on me sometime. There were moments of intense embarrassment for a newly-arrived Yank.

Our days were spent cleaning, assembling, and checking new equipment that was arriving for our future adventure in Germany. Drivers were sent to Liverpool and other ports to pick up our vehicles, and soon our company took on a combat look. Besides all this there were hikes, close order drill, zeroing in of weapons, and myriad other last minute preparations.

Our stay in England was indeed a pleasant one. The passes to London were great experiences; one had to see the Piccadilly Commandoes to believe the stories about them. Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, the London Underground (subway to you), King's Cross, Waterloo, and Parliament, were places we had heretofore only read about—now we were actually seeing them. The Army was giving us a real sightseeing tour, and free of charge too. Levin even travelled as far as Edinburgh, Scotland to see his mother's family for the first time in nineteen years. Lt Morris visited relations in Wales, and others got to see brothers, cousins, and friends who were stationed nearby.

The company had two smash successes in the Christmas and New Year parties it held at the castle. The Ballroom was beautifully decorated with greenery and holly and mistletoe, (As if the girls needed any inducement!) For music, we had the 69th Dance Band once, and then an English band the other time. Beer and snacks from the kitchen kept the bar running, and for entertainment, Sgt Bothe, Potashnick, and Mc Donald put on a bit of a show. Everyone had a good time; the lassies, their escorts, and even the unattached men watching from the sidelines. One highlight stands out—at the Christmas Party, while waiting for transportation for the girls to get home with, a group was sitting or standing around the fireplace in the lobby of the castle. And then someone got the idea to start singing Christmas Carols. So with Lt Morris and 1st Sgt Pitts leading, the group rendered some beautiful music. It was really a thrilling sight—soft music sung by a group of men and women etched in the brilliant flames of the fireplace. It was indeed a time for Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men.

At first our stay in England promised to be a short one, but with the shipment of replacements to bolster our forces in the Ardennes, it seemed that we would remain a while longer. Life took on a regular routine. There were the nightly trips into Winchester, the daily training, the Retreat formations, with Arfa never failing to hit a sour note on the bugle. It was hard to keep a straight face when his lips just wouldn't blow what his mind wanted them to. Arfa's bugling really was something. As an excuse for missing Reveille most of the men would say they hadn't

been awakened by the bugle call. And on Sunday mornings when the CQ would wake Arfa to blow the call for breakfast, he would stick his head out from under the blankets, reach for the bugle, and say, "Open the door wide and stand back."

Shortly before we left England the company had group pictures taken, with the castle for a background. Once a whole section of the platform collapsed, but there were no casualties and on went the focussing. The photos came out quite well, and for a while there, Bendall was kept very busy sending cardboard mailing tubes home. A look at those pictures now will show us many faces no longer with us, Krochmalick injured his back while training one day, and he never returned to us. And "Heavy" Waldrop left the company in England too because of a skin rash brought on by an allergy to woolens.

After eight pleasant weeks in England we finally got orders to move to the Continent. Another decisive step forward-all roads led in one direction now-toward the front.

On 19 January 1945 our vehicles and guns left Longwood and joined the Regimental convoy in Winchester. The company got a large store of English blankets from a stockpile of excess goods in Winchester Barracks, and a goodly supply of K Rations disappeared into our vehicles too. The Red Cross Clubmobile was on hand again with coffee and doughnuts, bringing a bit of cheer into our departure. From Winchester the convoy proceeded south to a marshalling area at Hersley Park, where the trucks were parked again and the men had a night's layover. The camp was kind of primitive-beds had baling straps for springs, and no mattresses, there were no lights, and the food was hot cans of C Ration. Italian PWs tried to sell us coin bracelets and other trinkets for souvenirs, but the prices were such as to discourage even the hardiest fool. Some of the boys took in a movie, but most of them just lolled around the Nissen hut trying to keep a fire going, and "shooting the breeze".

Early the next morning the convoy drove the rest of the way down to Southampton, and then began an all-day loading of the vehicles and guns onto the Liberty Ship "Pearl Harbor". While this was going on most of the boys wandered around the dock area sightseeing. Someone found a PX nearby, and it wasn't long before everyone

had bought up all the candy and cigarettes their cards were good for. The "Pearl Harbor" sailed the next morning and dropped anchor just outside the harbor to await darkness. Submarines were still a menace in the Channel, so all crossings were made at night. Accomodations on board were far from comfortable; bunks were slung in tiers of four right in one of the holds, and since there was no heating, we used all the blankets we could lay our hands on. All meals were alike-hot cans of C Ration, except for a few occasions when the Navy gun crew aboard gave us some soup and stew to augment our diet. Those sailors really treated us swell; they let us use their showers, they snuck us out food once in a while, and made our trip all the more pleasant.

We arrived at Le Havre on the morning of the 22nd, but didn't head up the Seine till the next day. That voyage up the Seine River was just like a pleasure cruise. The first sights of Normandy were beautiful, only marred here and there by the battered hulk of a German tank or halftrack. The countryside was one white blanket of snow, and wherever there were people on shore there was smiling and waving in greeting.

The "Pearl Harbor" arrived at Rouen late on the 23rd of January, and while the vehicles were being unloaded, the men took their first good look at France. Rouen itself was a shambles. Everywhere was the evidence of bombing and demolition. The French stevedores and laborers begged for food and cigarettes. We had been eating C Rations for four days and were quite sick of them, but to a Frenchman they were a prize. There was a lot of fun as some of our boys tried out their High School French on these men. No doubt the natives had as much trouble trying to understand our French as we did theirs. It was an even exchange. After waiting around for a few hours, during which time some generous MPs, recently returned from combat units, fed us candy from a nearby PX warehouse, the convoy took off for a long, miserable, freezing ride to join the company.

While all this was happening to the drivers the company was on the move too. They entrained at Winchester on the morning of the 20th, and after the short ride to Southampton, boarded the HMS "Llangibby Castle". The ship was a typical troopship



as far as accommodations were concerned; the same old tiers of bunks, with the same old crowding. The crew was all British, as was the food, and the men were served such typical English meals as tea and beans for breakfast. The crossing was uneventful, except for the fact that "Two-gun" Shipman and "Cold Steel" Childress acquired their nicknames because they strolled around the decks in full battle gear. Sunrise on the 21st found the men getting their first glimpse of Le Havre and France. The ruins everywhere were grim reminders of all that had happened here, and all the fighting that had taken place here not too long before. Since the sea was rough, it was not until late the next day that the company was brought to shore in LCIs. But unlike the initial invasion, the nose of the LCI plopped down on a friendly beach. From the beach it was a long two mile hike with full equipment through the cold, snowy night to the railroad station. But all this was minor compared to those 40 and 8s, the famous French boxcars. From 2100 hours till 0300 the next morning the men lay sprawled in backbreaking positions, freezing more and more by the hour as the train stood in the siding. Lefsky and Shepherd had a bit of an argument with Bert Herbst, who couldn't seem to get settled in his allotted space. At 0300 the train began its journey, and at 1600 hours on 23 January we arrived at our destination. Trucks carried us from the station to our new home.

Again Anti Tank Company was to live in a royal setting-this time it was a French chateau. Unfortunately, its former occupants, the Germans, had looted the place thoroughly, even going so far as to rip out the wiring and the fireplaces. But the men set to work making the place livable, and made the best of the situation. The Mine Platoon had the worst deal, being quartered in the chateau's chicken coop. There was just enough floor space for the twenty-odd men, and not an inch to spare. To make room for sleeping at night, they had to put all of the chairs and tables outside. Early on the morning of the 24th the drivers arrived with the vehicles, and there was a mad scramble for a few inches of floor to sleep on.

Our first real contact with the French people came around the Chateau and in near-by Buchy. It was not long before a bartering system was set up, and we got our first taste of "cidre" and their long loaves of bread. And they introduced us to a new

drink which ranks with the Zombie, Tequilla, and Vodka. Some of the boys really took a liking to this potent liquid called Calvados, especially T/Sgt Fortner, who bartered for it with GI property. For him Calvados brought reduction in grade to Private and transfer out of the company.

It was really cold at Buchy, and it snowed heavily while we were. Our attention was devoted to chopping wood and then getting it to burn. Not far from the Chateau a Flying Fortress had made an emergency landing in a large open field. Our air enthusiasts made frequent visits to it, and Powell and Stroud were so interested in the thing that the men guarding it gave them flying helmets for souvenirs. For days afterward those two kept yelling "Contact" in their sleep.

Captain Trudell gave us quite a speech on our future mission there. He stressed the need for military security and told us there might be enemy agents in the vicinity seeking information. A few people became over-observant, and one poor Frenchman was almost arrested as a Nazi spy because he was wearing a pair of boots that he had stolen during the occupation.

It was a great disappointment for those looking for the famous French Mademoiselles to find no young girls at all. It seemed <sup>THE</sup> Germans had taken them all along in their flight.

It was at this location that Queen broke out in a rash and was evacuated to the hospital at Rouen. And here too Curly Stults couldn't get his truck out of a rut in the snow and hit the Captain's jeep head on. There were no casualties, but the jeep was in a bit of a mess.

Originally it was planned that the company would make the next leg of its journey in 40 and 8's while the vehicles went ahead empty, but after practise loading showed it could be done, it was decided to transport the men by truck. Due to bad weather the departure was delayed one day. Most of the snow had melted away when we left Bose Roger on the morning of 1 February for the 135 mile trip to Pierrepont. It was a swell day for travelling, and the men enjoyed the many sights along the way. We passed through famous Soissons, Compiègne, and Beauvais, and all along the way, we received cheery welcomes.

We slept in the schoolhouse that first night in Pierrepont, except for the Third Platoon which stood guard on the trucks. It was crowded sleeping in the school rooms, but everyone dreaded the thought of where we might be sleeping the next night-those squad tents we had seen along the way did not seem too promising as future homes. And sure enough, the next morning found us wallowing in the mud of the Spring thaw, watching the Engineers erect tents for us. Ironically, right next to our area was a nice grassy spot. So after some debating pro and con, it was decided that we move the tents to the better location, but the company had to erect its own this time. The squads got to work and it soon developed into a race to see who could get the first one up. Shepherd and his squad were the winners of the contest, and as a reward, were set to putting up another one. When all the tents were up it really looked good; in fact, far better than we had expected. Everyone had a cot, and those GI stoves couldn't be beat for heat. There was a constant hunting for fuel until someone discovered a big supply of peat nearby-then it became a constant transporting. It still is a matter of debate as to who first discovered the bee hives that were to give us so much trouble here. A few days after everyone started to have honey with their meals, a claim for 1600 dollars was put in by a neighboring Frenchman. He said the hives had been damaged beyond repair and was really mad about it. An investigating officer was sent down to the area, and some of the boys were subjected to some close questioning, but nothing ever came of it. This officer was none other than Capt Datnoff, our present CO.

After the heavy traffic had torn up the roads, a speed limit of 12 miles per hour was put into effect, and it was really maddening to creep along at snail's space. Another traffic highlight was that all traffic had to be one way in a large circle covering the whole divisional area. Thus, to go to Pierrepont, one kilometer away, one had to go in a circle covering about thirty kilometers. Efficiency plus!

While we were at this location, Lt. Braun found a Tiger tank in the nearby city of Marle, and the gun squads were taken out to see it in the flesh. It was getting high time one was thoroughly zeroed in. The Mine Platoon practised blowing some mines under an abandoned American halftrack.

We got our first pay in French (toilet tissue) francs here at Pierrepont. It was quite a change from the British currency, but it didn't take the boys long to adapt the exchange values for use in a card game or a throw of the dice.

On 7 February the company moved to the "G" Company area near Liesse, in preparation for the next day's motor march. Thus we could avoid the bad roads in our own area when we started out. The new area was quite muddy, but since it was only for one night, ~~one~~ one minded very much. The next afternoon saw us on our way to the marshalling area near the front lines. At 1625 hours we crossed the border and entered Belgium. Every step now was carrying us closer and closer to action. As darkness fell, it started to rain, and staying on the road was a problem. We all remember the ruins of the large city of Dinant, and the time that we had to proceed with no lights at all over a bridge there, so that Germans wouldn't spot us. The convoy took a wrong turn in Dinant, and it took quite a while to straighten the situation out, but again we were on our way. The roads got progressively worse as time went on, and the night seemed endless. Eyes strained to pierce the night's blackness, and there was a constant struggle with the road. About all a driver could do was follow those bits of red light on the vehicle ahead. Several trucks wound up in the ditches, and Lt Deaton's jeep came to a halt wrapped around a tree by the side of the road. It was really a nightmare of a drive, and soon one lost all sense of time or place or feeling. It was just a case of ever onward. Artillery flashes in the distance were a vivid insight into what lay ahead. The situation really defies description-one had to be there to realize what it was like. At long last, we met our Advance Party and were led into the final lap of our journey, arriving at Faymonville, Belgium at 0430, after a gruelling trip of 186 miles.

No one cared to do much house hunting at that time of night since we knew nothing about the area. But as it grew lighter men took off to have a look around the battered town. Every new glimmer of light from the East brought more horrible details into focus. All over was evidence of the breakthrough-GI meals left unfinished on the tables, letters from home strewn on the floors, abandoned equipment, and the pathos of personal possessions lying around. It was really a sickening sight to see

all the cows, horses, pigs, and dogs that had been killed in the fierce fighting. And then the bodies of humans we found. The bullet-riddled, bloodstained shirt of the First Division Chaplain laid respectfully in his room. The piles of GI weapons, ammunition, and supplies that had been captured by the Germans and then left behind. All this was what we found that morning. In the whole town, only about a dozen rooms were still in livable condition, and the company was spread out in these. Men cleaned up their quarters a bit and then went out to have another look at the horror and destruction, as if to make sure it was real.

On the 10th, the officers went on a reconnaissance to look over the area on the front we were to occupy, and their jeep just missed being hit by mortar fire near Hollerath. They returned to the company to pass down the information they had gathered. About all we knew was that we were going into a relatively quiet sector, but <sup>not</sup> many slept well that night.



*Part III Watch on the Rhine*





We left Faymonville early on Sunday, 11 February 1945, and proceeded through the first belt of the Siegfried Line and into Germany, where we took up the positions of the 99th Division, replacing AT Company, 395th Infantry, near Daubenscheid. The CP and Mine Platoon remained at that area, but the gun platoons were immediately put into positions with their respective battalions. First and Third Platoons took up positions on the right flank around Hollerath, and Second Platoon settled on the left flank behind the town of Hellenthal. This was it, and no question about it either; the 69th had definitely left Shelby!

The positions of the platoons varied greatly. Second Platoon was in the woods, and the men lived in log dugouts. First and Third had houses for the men, but couldn't do much moving around during daylight, for they were under perfect observation by the enemy. The CP was in a pyramidal tent, the Miners in dugouts, and the officers of these two platoons lived in an abandoned German pillbox.

It snowed and rained those first few days and the cold weather added to the discomfort. Everyone was busy getting dug in and settled comfortably. Those first nights on guard really were tense; eyes and ears strained for every movement or noise. In order to hear better, most of the boys stood in one spot all the time, and after their two hour reliefs in the cold, they were half frozen. 10 in 1 Rations were the food we had, so each squad had its own cook, and some of the boys came up with culinary gems that the Quartermaster General never dreamed of when he first produced the new ration.

The first "screaming meemie" raid took the boys completely by surprise. No one had ever heard them before, so the first volley was a nerve-wracking experience. There was a mad dive for foxholes, and in Schoonover's squad, the boys got mixed up a little. Kachelmeier dove right in on Ferrell, Duda, Mebane, and Wattman all headed for the same hole in the same leap, and Cochran just ran around wildly searching for an empty one. He almost dived into a well, but finally found himself a hole, by which time the whole thing was over. The boys came out of the experience with new confidence. They had come through their baptism of fire. Serious as the situation was, there were a lot of laughs too. Once Tomczuk came barging into his

house during a barrage and hit the doorway with his bazooka held crossway. Result: Tomczuk and bazooka in a tangled heap outside. Or the time Herbst saw a pool of gasoline near his guard post one night, and lit it for no good reason at all. In a moment the place was lit up like a Christmas tree, and Hassler came running to chew Herbst's head off. Or the night Kachelmeier woke his whole squad to repel a counterattack, which turned out to be two riflemen returning from outpost duty. And then there was the night on guard when Robinson thought he heard some Jerries. He told Tomczuk about it, but Tom said it was just water dripping from the trees. But Robbie was adamant, and said he was going to fire three shots and then run into the house. Tom said he would trip him if he started to run or our own men would shoot him. So Rob thought a minute and then said, "Well, Burris and Kik will be relieving us soon, and they'll out-number the enemy." And so it went during the jittery period on the lines before the jumpoff.

As days went by, time dragged more and more, and the men grew jumpy and irritable waiting for the impending attack. It was the same story every day-eat, sleep, and pull guard.

The Mine Platoon got in a few dry runs though, and managed to keep busy. First they cleared an area for the Aid Station, and then one for the Collecting Company. After that most of their attention was devoted to finding needed supply routes and checking them for mines. Their searching brought forth four supply routes from Daubenscheid forward, one of which was an excellent hard surface road leading right into the International Highway. After it was cleared of the roadblocks the Germans had left behind, it became the Regimental MSR, and after its discoverer, the road was named Morris Boulevard.

At this time, Lt King went over to Regiment as GRO, taking Puncell as his clerk. And here too, Lt Braun began his "salvage operations" by hauling in two disabled German Weasels.

After days of puttering by him and Percy, one of them somehow got to working. From there on in, the clatter (or purr, as Lt Braun called it) of its engine was a familiar sound in the woods around the CP.

On the 24th men went back into Belgium for some wellneeded showers, although after making the trip over the ruts and mud holes that were being used for roads, one wondered whether it wasn't better to remain dirty but in one piece. The men of the gun platoons who couldn't leave their positions got clean clothes brought out to them, but had to content themselves with the well-known "bird bath". Our initial issue of free PX rations came in about this time too, and we had our first taste of Hershey Tropical Chocolate. But on the whole, those rations were well appreciated by the men. We'd have our Milky Ways and Oh Henrys later on.

The Mine Platoon was first to prepare for the jumpoff. At dusk on 26 February, Lt Morris, Sgt Carlson, Levin, and eight others moved out with "E" Company, which was moving into the town of Hellenthal to get set for the jumpoff the next day. The first job facing our men was the removal of a friendly minefield just outside of town, and as they marked time on that moonlit night, eleven minds had but a single thought - that minefield. There was a last minute study of the sketch of the field, and a final going-over of plans, and then the men tried to get some sleep. They tried, but weren't too successful - there was too much lying just ahead of that white house they were staying in, and the screaming meemie barrages that night didn't help the situation any either.

At 0600 the next morning, right after the artillery concentration that preceded the attack, the Mine Platoon detail stole down the road toward the minefield. Those first few moments were trying indeed, but the fact that the veteran Sgt Carlson and Lt Morris were leading them was a great help. When the mines appeared out of the early morning haze and fog, the men needed that leadership. Everyone did fine hauling up the mines until there was a sudden blast, and then all hit the ground as one. But no one was hurt, so the work went on. And then yet another blast, and Pastore fell with a moan. An Anti-personnel mine, not on the sketch at all, had gone off and a piece of shrapnel had pierced his wrist. While Carlson gave him First Aid, the rest of the men went on with the mine removal, only stopping long enough to hit the dirt as two rounds of enemy artillery landed above the road behind them. Levin made the last trip out into the minefield, and stepping very gingerly,

looked all over for another mine, but there were none to be found. When he got back to the road, Lt Morris asked him why he had gone back in again since the other men had picked up the last mines. But as he passed them going in not a soul had told him that - another year wasted off his life for nought. After the job was all done, the men returned to the house they had slept in the night before, and let out a collective sigh of relief. Everyone was soaked to the skin with perspiration, and it was not from the heat either! When the enemy started zeroing in on the town, the men decided to seek shelter in the ditches alongside the road rather than stay where they were. So one by one, they made their way down the International Highway toward the bridge site. As a shell landed close by they all dived off the road - into about a foot of water in the ditch. The minefield, the artillery, the watery ditch, and the chatter of fire all over the nearby hills was their baptism of fire. And in one of the blasted houses at the foot of the hill the Miners found a mascot in a brown dog pinned under a load of debris. That is how Atco joined the company.

Lt Braun and Nelson Clark were the first to arrive from the direction of Hollerath, and they took Pastore back to the Aid Station. On the way up Clark tried to drive through a line of mines across the road, and his left front wheel just tipped one of them over. There was a very anxious split second there as the spider rolled off the mine but luckily, nothing went off. Lt Gearon soon came up with the rest of the Mine Platoon, and as soon as the bridge was in, the platoon crossed and assembled at the foot of the hill leading to Dickerscheid and Buschem. Lt Morris took one group of minesweepers up the left fork toward Buschem, and Lt Gearon the other up the right fork. The rest of the men huddled in a group for comfort at the foot of the hill, and occasionally another party of men would go forward to relieve one of the parties in action. It wasn't until K rations were brought up that everyone realized how wolfishly hungry they were.

Early that day, Second Platoon moved forward and into position outside of Hellenthal, with Kagan's squad crossing the bridge and setting up at the foot of the hill. Everyone was a bundle of nerves that first day; we probably never realized till then how very green we were. But as the day wore on, one took on a sort of

hardness about him. There was a job to be done, and we had to do it - and it was progressing too. The road to Dickerscheid was clear a half hour after the town was taken, and in fact, the detectors were sweeping the approaches to it while the fighting was still going on. And in the heat of it all, one had to laugh at Erickson standing in the middle of the road taking pictures, with firing going on all around. The other group headed for Buschem was held up by constant enemy fire, and had to complete the job the next day. Those first few days and nights of the attack are jumbled together in an endless line of time. Even back in the comparative safety and quiet of the CP area, the men of the Mine Platoon could almost hear the whir of shells overhead. One's ear was always cocked for the tell-tale whistle, one's body ever-ready to hit the ground.

On the second day of the attack, the road up to Buschem was cleared, and from there road work continued forward. That evening Third Platoon moved up into Buschem and dug in under a harassing hail of enemy fire. Lefsky will never forget the sleepless night he spent in the same foxhole with Herbst up there. Ciervo and Landers struck a well in digging their shelter. The ground was hard as rock to dig in, but the artillery spurred the men on the new efforts. But they finally had to give up, and took shelter in a barn nearby. It was a cold, sleepless, and miserable night for all concerned.

Serving gallantly and heroically those first few days of the attack were 16 of our men assigned to the medics as litter bearers. Through the thickest fire, and with no regard for their own safety, they sought and evacuated wounded men from the forward areas. Our hats are off in salute to Mikkelson, Carver, Brewer, Hall, Bekier, Fisher, McCurdy, Bowman, Horn, Gegg, Wattman, Shipman, McDonald, Arfa, Spring, and Guidry, for a job well done under the most trying conditions.

Early on the morning of 1 March, First Platoon moved into Obereifferscheid to support Third Battalion, and they had a hot time of it too. All night and into the morning the enemy kept up a steady hail of fire, and Platoon Sgt Bothe was hit over the eye by shrapnel that same day. Casualties were heavy in that area and our men fought their own fears and went out to help the riflemen lying wounded.

Figlin brought in one GI, and since the aid men couldn't get up there, gave him First Aid himself, applying a tourniquet to stop the bleeding. His prompt action probably saved the man's life, for it wasn't till long after that he was evacuated to the rear.

All day on the 1st, our men were under heavy fire, and that afternoon Third Platoon got a heavy blow. An 88 hit the house in which some of the men had taken shelter, and that one round sprayed the whole place with hot shrapnel. Lt O'Neal, Lorenz, Schoonover, Ferrell, Stroud, and Cochran were wounded, and Aid-man Biles had his hands full taking care of them. At the blast of the shell Cochran jumped out the window and ran for the Aid Station, and Schoonover couldn't imagine what had happened to him - no one had seen the quick exit so it looked as if there was nothing left of Cochran. Later on they pieced together the whole story. While all this was going on, the enemy never slackened fire, so the wounded couldn't be evacuated till that night, when they were carried down the hill to waiting trucks. Afterwards, the entire platoon moved back down the hill and spent the night with Second Platoon. March 1 was a bad day for AT - Farnham was hit too that day, while returning from some road clearing. His loss, together with Westfall's leaving with an ulcerated stomach, was a hard blow for the Mine Platoon.

The men of Third Platoon slept the sleep of the dead that night after they moved back down from Buschem - they had had a rough time, with little sleep, were bone-tired, and their nerves were at the straining point. In the dugout where Hassler's squad was asleep, Lefsky chose this time to have a nightmare. The squad awoke to a bloodcurdling shriek and then heard Lefsky screaming, "Get me out of here - there are two of them!". Hassler thought they were caught like rats in a trap as he tried unsuccessfully to reach his pistol. "This is it!", muttered Landers as he got tangled in his sleeping bag. Acheson could almost see a bayonet coming his way. And Ciervo just kept yelling, "Kamerad, kamerad, I surrender!". Biles was the first to realize that Lefsky was just ranting in his sleep and woke the guy to put an end to the horror. The private war of Lefsky's was really a nightmare.

On 4 March Headquarters and Mine Platoons moved to a new location near

Hollerath, and the men got to sleep in houses for the first time in a long while. Lt Braun, Clark, and Roth were kept busy during that time with the German Weasel, hauling trucks and guns out of the mud, evacuating wounded, and bringing supplies up to the forward positions. It was more than worth all the time Lt Braun and Percy had put into it back in the woods.

On the 6th, the enemy started a counterattack in the Obereifferscheid area, but it was repulsed quite easily by Cannon Company's swell firing. What we didn't know then was that the enemy had made a last show of strength before vacating his positions. On the 7th, the Miners went forward from Reifferscheid to clear the roads, and for the first time, there was no enemy to hold them up. After proceeding to Obershambach on foot, a change in plans had to be made. There was a long column of vehicles waiting to use the road to Schmidtheim, and it would take hours to do the actual minesweeping. So Lt Morris and Sgt Whalen sat on each side of the hood of Levin's jeep, and proceeded to "look-sweep" the road, with the convoy following close behind. At every suspicious spot in the road, at each puddle or mudhole, the whole line of vehicles would stop while someone investigated for mines. There was an anxious moment once when some empty mine boxes were spotted beside the road, but luckily, there were none buried. It was with great relief that we first sighted the city of Schmidtheim. Only through this unorthodox, but speedy method was the regiment able to occupy the city on time. The trip back to the CP was far different for the Miners. Speed going back was ten times the snail's pace we had come up at.

That night Second Platoon received orders to move to the 273rd area around Giescheid. Everything was thoroughly snafued, what with mined roads all over, lack of clear orders, and utter confusion. They returned the next morning to join the rest of the company in moving forward to Schmidtheim. Going ahead to procure billets for the men in Blankenheim, Captain Trudell was killed instantly when his jeep hit a Teller mine just outside the city. Thrown from the vehicle in the explosion, 1st Sgt Pitts suffered severe wounds, and Kenny Bauman very luckily came out of it with just a scratch. The Mine Platoon later removed over 30 mines

from that stretch of road, and it was just after dark that we parked our trucks and crowded into the three small rooms up in the castle. Everyone was badly shaken by the tragedy that day had brought. And to make matters worse, word was received that night that Lt Gearon, Whritenour, and Weston had been hurt when the maintenance truck hit a mine near Honningen. In one day the company lost its Company Commander, Executive Officer, and 1st Sergeant. Percy returned the next day, but the other wounded were out for a long time. The light of day on 9 March found us a very sorry crew indeed, but Lt Morris took over command, and restored a bit of order when it was direfully needed. Sgt Carlson became Acting 1st Sgt, but later took over the Mine Platoon, when Sgt Whalen was recommended for a Battlefield Commission.

When the Germans retreated in the face of the heavy thrust of the First and Third Armies rushing to a junction near the Rhine, the Fighting 69th was literally pushed off the line. Our area had been triangular, with the vertex at Blankenheim, and now the divisions on either side of us occupied the entire front. We settled down to a well-earned and sorely-needed rest in that area. There were showers and clean clothes, the warm sun had wonderful recuperative powers on the men, there were movies, band concerts, the Red Cross Clubmobile, and all the other little things that are such big things to fighting men. True to his usual form, Lt Braun did some more "salvaging", and hauled in a couple of amphibious German Volkswagens. Sgts Carlson and Whalen even came up with a little truck of their own. Of course, sometimes Sgt Carlson would spend a few hours trying to figure which wire went where, but it ran. And Stults drove in one day with a swell civilian car, but he didn't have it long. They all had to be turned in. They kept Percy real busy those days, having ~~no~~ mercy for the strip of adhesive tape over his eyebrow, covering his "wound" from the mine accident. The vehicles of the company got a good overhauling here too, and the men stripped down their "boodle" to help lighten the load. And we had the chance to turn in a lot of clothing and equipment that was no longer necessary.

On the 14th First and Second Platoons moved down into more spacious quarters



in town. Some of the squads really had nice rooms fixed up. Sgt Camara's room boasted a radio, rug, a desk that took up one whole wall, oil paintings, and indirect lighting. He and Yeagley found an electric generator in the house which was to figure greatly in our subsequent lighting systems. It was immediately named "Old Faithful."

On the next day the CP moved out of the castle and down to the building which housed our kitchen. That kitchen was about the hardest place to get to ever-from the castle it meant going down five flights of stairs, from the house in town it was even further. But chow was good those days, so it was worth the trouble, especially for three meals a day.

To keep the civilians from re-using the mines left all along the sides of the roads, the Mine Platoon blew up all the mines they could find. The castle rocked one day when they blew about 20 in one blast. And speaking of fireworks, remember the day the company went out to fire the extra 57 ammo? It was quite startling to get the message dropped on the range from that Cub plane overhead, saying that our ricochets were falling in an area occupied by men of the 28th Division.

It was in this area that we met for the first time a sizable civilian population. Theretofore all the civilians had been evacuated before we got to a town. And here was our first glimpse of the Germans-they looked far from the Super Race at that time.

Beers and Hassler became Engineers one day, when their squads were assigned the task of repairing some roads around the castle. Never was a job more carefully super-intended, what with the two "Marshalls" of the 14th Air Force in command.

We got our first passes at Blankenheim-two days at the Eupen Rest Camp. And one fine Saturday we looked down out of our windows and watched General Reinhardt present Silver Stars on the balcony below us. We had seen those men earn their awards in the fighting days just past.

On 19 March the Company moved over into the city Courthouse, a few blocks from the castle. All day was spent in cleaning the place for a long stay, but it turned out to be a very short one instead. Captain Datnoff arrived the next day and

took over the company, just after our other officers had returned from a reconnaissance of the new area we were to move to on the morrow.

At 0700 on 21 March we set out for a beautiful 50 mile trip to the Rhine River. It was through picturesque hilly country that we passed, only here and there a strafed vehicle or train to remind one of war. We were to occupy the Rhine Hotel at Niederbreisig, a richly-appointed and beautifully furnished hostelry right on the banks of the River. The soft beds were a decided improvement on the floors of the castle and courthouse and the dugouts from Hollerath to Hellenthal. But all our choosing of rooms was for nought, for the Engineer outfit that was in the process of building Victor Bridge right beside the Hotel took it over for their billets. So we moved next door to a luxurious house that had belonged to some Nazi bigwig. There was a pantry bulging with jam and preserves, a grand piano for Sgts Fine and Buckner to play on, and some swell beds for a fortunate few. The Second Platoon was out down-river, manning their guns along the bank to blast anything coming down the river, to prevent any damage to the bridges that were so vital to our troops in the bridge-head. Everyone in the big house settled down comfortably, and then came a deafening roar and every window in the place was shattered to bits. We thought the Germans had us zeroed in, but it was only a 240 mm rifle going off behind us. It kept up its barking all night long, but we got used to it and slept right through.

The next day the entire company moved down the river to Brohl, where the guns were set up in a row along the bank, and thus began the "Watch on the Rhine". We even had huge lights mounted on tanks for night firing. Everything floating by was a target-no harm must come to those bridges up the river. The men had a field day firing their small arms and machine guns, but it was cut down when some men on the far side were hit by rifle fire from our side. The <sup>57's</sup> ~~75's~~ got in their lick too, and Buckingham got the razzing of his life when he failed to hit a small boat passing by. He claimed the gun wasn't boresighted correctly.

Mine, Headquarters, and the CP were in the offices of a large lumber factory; the platoons were out in houses near the guns, and the kitchen was in the factory itself. There was beaucoup of wine and beer hauled in from nearby wineries and

breweries, and the company really had a good time there. The Miners built a basketball court in the factory, but didn't get to use it much.

Percy Whritenour left for the hospital from Brohl-his stomach had been acting up, so he was evacuated, and the outfit lost a darn good mechanic.

While we were at that location we had a good opportunity to watch the huge quantities of supplies rolling by to join the beachhead. There were endless lines of tanks and guns and men and supplies all day long every day. The civilians watching the convoys knew without a doubt that their war was lost. And as Corps and Army artillery and ordnance units and other rear-echelon outfits moved forward, our orders were to dig in deeper. But orders are orders!

The week we spent at Brohl was pleasant indeed. The weather was that of Spring at its very best, and the Rhine was really beautiful. Many a man realized his longheld desire to relieve his kidneys in the waters of the Rhine. But as always happens when AT gets set in a good location, we got orders to move.



*Part IV*  
*The Home Stretch*



On 28 March we crossed the Rhine River on Victor Bridge at Niederbreisig at 1206 hours. This was the largest tactical bridge in the world and as we crossed Germany's last natural defense, we wondered about what lay in store for us. At any rate, we were entering the final stage in the Battle of Germany.

At about 1400 we passed through Ehrenbreitstein, the historic fortress occupied by the U.S. Occupation Forces in World War I. Wherever we went now, it meant the first time Americans had ever penetrated that far. Germany was no longer just fighting on its own soil; the heart of it was now being overrun.

Our convoy continued through the world-famous watering place of Bad Ems, and on to Nassau, arriving at 1545, shortly after the city had fallen. The company was billeted in a large apartment house, with the motor pool across the street in a vacant lot. The lights and water system were kaput, so Sgt. Camara's generator went into action again, and that OD latrine screen went up across the street. It was in Nassau that the company hit its first fertile territory. Wine and champagne were in great abundance, [to say the least. In suitcases, boxes, cases, crates, and by the armload and jeepload, the supply rolled in. And almost as quickly as it rolled in, it was guzzled down. You'd think it was the Navy the way stuff was going down the hatches. Individual feats may well go down in History. While Googy Mebane thought he had something in liquor of 1900 vintage, Elias was sipping nothing less than some brandy 110 years old. Greene used kerosene for a chaser after some champagne, but at last reports was still OK. That made two narrow escapes for him in one day; earlier, he, Brav, Joseph, and Zeck were walking down the street when a truck started chasing a horse. Brav and Joe hurtled over a fence and Greene and Zeck burrowed into the ditch, but the horse wasn't so lucky. Another horse kaput.

As far as comfort was concerned too, Nassau marked our best quarters till then. Almost every man had a bed or couch, and the clean sheets meant so much. Even a couple of radios blared forth once in a while. It was here that Erickson set up his photo shop, and everyone took pictures in the Nazi uniforms lying around, from uniforms of SS Colonels, through Air Raid Wardens, and down to Street Cleaners, Trolley Conductors, and Movie Ushers. Through subsequent failure in developing,

lost to the world and History are photos of Budden as an Oberleutnant, with a monocle, cigarette holder, and haughty sneer; or Hauptmann Durst, chest full of medals, among which was the Nazi Mutter Medal, bestowed on deserving frauleins for their procreative endeavors. Or Green Bay Hermans in the tunic of a Luftwaffe pilot and the cap of a street cleaner, arm in arm with Levin in the tunic of a street cleaner and the cap of a Luftwaffe pilot-it was simply a case of necessity, Levin wearing a mere size 7½ hat.

Unsung heroes of our stay at Nassau were the drivers. For as much as 36 hours at a stretch, they were busy shuttling men across the Rhine, and they missed out on quite a bit of the fun and frolic the other boys were having. They did a great job and deserve a lot of credit. Rex Martin even picked up a prisoner on one of his trips. Johnny Lurquin hit the trails of an 88, driving blackout, and knocked the steering gear on his truck for a loop. And while inflating a tire there one day, Trainque had a freak accident. The tire flew up and broke his arm.

Not all at Nassau was fun and frolic-two patrols were organized to ferret out German soldiers by-passed by our advancing troops. Capt. Datnoff led the search, but the results were other than might have been expected. No Jerfied were found, but we did get the locations of some neat, well-stocked wine cellars. And Hassler's squad picked up their black rabbit mascot, the Gomphehl.

And Nassau will never be forgotten for another reason, for it was there that a great misfortune occurred. Brewer was killed there accidentally on the night of 29 March.

We left Nassau early on the morning of the 30th for a four-hour ride to Schupbach, where Lt. Braun and Beer's squad had been holed up since the night before in a Women's Labor Camp, holding off the other billet-hungry advance parties of the Regiment. And that wasn't all they had been doing; they had been busy scouting the neighborhood for generators, trucks, and what else have you. During our stay there six generators joined the company. And Lt. Braun hauled in a truck full of radio equipment valued at about half a million and having an 800 mile operating radius. The truck wasn't suited to our needs, so we turned it over to the Division Signal Company.



The camp was an ideal location for us, with its good motor park and its commanding position over the surrounding terrain. Our Guidon fluttered proudly in the breeze from the tall flagpole. It was here that Capt. Datnoff made his first speech to the company, and the consensus of opinion had it that a good man had taken over the reins.

The first afternoon someone excitedly announced a horde of Germans were approaching the camp from town, and we all rushed out, only to find a veritable parade of civilians returning the things they had stolen from the place and were forced to bring back by the authorities-Looting in reverse! What a motley crowd it was-from five year olds hauling chairs twice their size to old ladies wheeling in closets on those omnipresent German go-carts.

Special mention and credit goes to the kitchen crew, who had hot chow cooking within 20 minutes after the trucks had stopped rolling. They really worked, and Oscar of the Waldorf couldn't have outdone them with what they had to work with. So to Sgt. Smith and his pilots of the range and immersion heater-Hats Off!

Stories about the camp's use in the past were varied, but the consensus of civilian opinion was that it had been a camp for women workers of the soil (comparable to the English WLA) and had been visited often by convalescent German soldiers. We assume these visits were regulated, otherwise it all might have become a tearing down process rather than part of a convalescent program.

Our generator mechanics had a field day here in Schupbach. Yeagley and Camara got the Third Platoon generator going, which was a singular feat, since it was the first AC current we had, and it meant we could play radios. It was a real powerhouse, and our camp was a brightly-lit place. Sgt. Camara hauled in a large generator the next day, but it was a real poser for the boys. After hours and hours of wire pulling and button pushing by a large crew led by Lt. Backer, it still wouldn't run. So it was with great regret that it had to be left behind. Every platoon had a new one when we pulled out. Even "Old Faithful" was traded in, which was a sorry blunder as we later found out.

And talking about mechanical difficulties, that place really was a plumber's

nightmare. Everyone was all excited about the possibility of having hot showers there; the only trouble was that although the water went in one end, it couldn't come out the right pipe at the other end. And despite the combined efforts of Carlson, Oney, Emerson, Hudock, and Bagala, the situation remained unchanged, and the "birdbath" remained in vogue.

There were some firsts instituted there too. Lt. Morris demonstrated the Panzerfaust for the entire company, and the Deer Season was officially opened by Lt. Braun, Clark, and Burris. Sgt. Nelson took a try at firing a Panzerfaust, but took a long time in pulling the trigger. So the crowd kept yelling, "Don't flinch" or "Pull the trigger", until he did finally fire the thing. Then there was a resounding cheer we knew he could do it.

We got all set to move on the evening of 31 March, and it was then that Sgt. Hassler's squad got a quick shuffle. Their truck had gone to Ordnance for repair, so they loaded their equipment on their platoon's other two trucks. This meant their discarding a good deal of extra boodle, including a sizeable quantity of wine. And then, just before we were to leave, there was their truck back. So it was off again, on again with their equipment.

We finally left Schupbach at 2330 hours that night. This was our first blackout drive in quite a while, and the night was not without its share of adventures. Half the convoy took the wrong road, but our radio control system straightened that out. But Sgt. Hassler had to be difficult. At one turn the convoy took Hassler went straight on, and wound up on the Autobahn. Seeing some vehicles ahead, he sped up to them, only to discover they were no part of our company at all. So they decided to head back and made a U turn on the highway, and took off like a bird. After about 25 miles they met a column that had been attacked by SS troopers. So they made yet another about-face, and headed back the way they had come. By this time they were all thoroughly confused. The enemy might be in any direction, and they hadn't the slightest idea of where the company was. At one time they were only two kilometers from Frankfurt. The only vehicles to be seen along the road were strafed German trucks, many of them with the dead drivers still at the wheel.

A gruesome night, to say the least. At about 1000 on Easter Sunday their prayers were finally answered when they met up with a truck from the 273rd. The driver directed our boys to First Battalion, and Hassler was off to the races once more. Their escapade ended when they joined the company at Alten Buseck at 1100 that morning. We were living in a tobacco factory there, but the hard floor didn't bother them—they slept like babes. Of course, their return was a great disappointment to the rest of us. We had presumed that Hassler had taken off to capture Berlin, and all he had to show for his absence was a captured German lieutenant.

We might mention our radio control system here, for it saved our convoys many times on those long night trips. Capt. Datnoff rode in the lead radio jeep, there was another jeep with a radio at the tail of the column, and the remainder were spread out within the convoy. Thus, if a vehicle fell out, or if part of the convoy got lost, a jeep could radio the information up to the Captain, who would decide whether to hold up the entire column, or direct the wandering vehicles to the right place. This was a great factor in the success of our convoys.

The men had a good chance to see the work of the Air Corps as we passed through Giessen, the largest city on our route. Gutted buildings, silent factories, and smokeless smokestacks gave mute testimony as to the effectiveness of our Air arm. The doughboy still has to go in on foot and take those places, but his job is a lot easier after the Forts and Liberators have paid them a visit.

The tobacco factory was far from comfortable, but it was at least a roof over our heads. Sgt. Buckner's squad slept right on a pile of tobacco the first night, but moved downstairs the next day. The rug on the floor and the sink in the corner lent the bare walls a semblance of home. But just a semblance, no more!

The four 88's in the yard gave the boys their first close-up view of that famed and dreaded German weapon that had been turned on them so often before. And for some unknown reason, there were four new airplane engines in the barn.

Of all the generators we had just acquired, not one would work, so Sgt. Camara took a detail to go back to Schupbach for the ones we had abandoned. After hours of "flying blind", and during which a tank side-swiped Holgate's truck and knocked

Polcari on his ear, they found that all the generators were gone. All that riding, and no generators.

We spent Easter Sunday there, and the boys all got to go to Services. Protestant Services were held in a small church in the town, and Chaplain Kelley held Mass out in an open field. Surroundings don't make much difference; those attending make up the Service. And the Lord is with us whether it is in a field, or church, or school, or even in the foxhole.

There was even a miniature Easter Parade in town, with the civilians strolling the streets in their finery. And that little girl across the street from us in the well-filled white blouse attracted some attention on that score too.

It was at Alten Buseck that Rachwal acquired his two comrades, and the kitchen crew two swell KP's, in Nicolai and Jacob, the Russian boys who became known as Stalingrad and Leningrad in no time flat. For the record though, they are Nicolai Mikailow and Jacob Poljakow, both of Moscow, who had just been freed from a German PW camp in Giessen. They gave our company the Continental touch.

We were the first American soldiers to stop in the town, so it meant a deluge of civilian problems. One elderly woman wanted us to take her son prisoner-he had been a deserter for months. Many soldiers surrendered right at our gates. And one woman was scared by some mines she found in her yard, so she asked the nearest soldiers (Cannon Co.) to do something about it. They called for our Mine platoon, and by the time the story got down to us, we were to go out and clear a minefield. Sgt. Shepherd and his squad went out with all their equipment to investigate. Net results were ten mines, still boxed and sealed, lying inside the lady's fence. There was a dull boom a while later, and the lady's worries were eased.

During a Third platoon search for weapons in town, Lefsky and Loberfeld discovered a cartographer's office, with tens of thousands of German military maps. This important find was reported to Regiment, and then went up to the higher echelons through channels.

Visits to a nearby camp netted the company a horde of typewriters. Most of them were primarily for teletyping and telegraphic work, and had only capital letters.

And, of course, the transposing of the Y and Z was something that took some time to get used to. But they have us beat in one respect-all the extra doodads on their keyboard would make an ideal comic strip epithet - '\*ϕ ☆ '\*:!

A beautiful sight to see were the flights of C 47 Dakotas, landing and taking off from the nearby Luftwaffe airfield. Supply was a big problem at that time, what with our ever-lengthening supply lines, and those planes meant that the stuff was getting there.

Lt. Braun really outdid himself here when he brought in that cream colored convertible. But after working on it all day, he had to go out on the Advance Party, so Sgt Carlson inherited it. But at the time, he didn't know the real extent of that inheritance, but was soon to find out. Sgt. Nelson brought in an Opel, later abandoned, and Yeagley got one too, but that one was short-lived. Ehlinger, Kik, Hermans and Levin borrowed it to visit the airfield, and therein lies a tale of adventure on the high road. The trip out there was without mishap, but not so the return. First the ignition wires fell apart, and no one knew which end went where. But experimentation and blind luck got that fixed, and off they were again. They took a short cut home, and wound up on a road definitely unfit for civilian cars. At one detour there was a large rock pile over a soft spot, and here came the climax. With a final surge of effort, the little Opel rose to the occasion, but it couldn't quite clear it. With a grinding and rasping crash, off came the battery, transmission, and other assorted parts, and little Opel had expired. And our wandering friends had a nice two mile hike to do, although it took them that long to think up a good story for Yeagley. He took the news hard, but like a soldier.

De Geyter and Shipman will remember Alten Buseck too, for they dug a beautiful 6x6 when they were caught using a top-floor window as a urinal. Bad boys!

Joe West had a fast one pulled on him by a French laborer. Joe was moseying down the street when he saw this fellow in a yard trying to chisel a chicken. When the Frenchman saw Joe, he called him over and started to give the woman a long spiel, pointing ever so often at Joe. Then he grabbed a chicken, took Joe by the arm, and headed down the street. At the first corner he waved goodbye and took off

in another direction. Since Joe could neither understand French nor German, it took him a while to figure out that he had been the fall guy-the Frenchman had probably told the woman that Joe wanted the chicken. If Joe had known that at the beginning, he would have waved goodbye at the corner, but with the chicken under his arm, not the Frenchy's.

A great event at the tobacco factory also, was the promotion of Tores and May-to privates First Class.

On our second day in Alten Buseck we received orders to move, and started out at 2030 hours for an unforgettable nightmare of a drive - that is, with the exception of Kagan's squad, which had to stay behind because their truck was away hauling replacements. They didn't realize the gravity of their situation until the company pulled out, leaving eight of them the only GI's in town. They stayed in the parking lot, with the civilians staring at them, and them staring right back. Someone remarked, "Well, at least all their weapons have been collected.", but someone else countered with, "Yes, but they still have butcher knives." So it was a great relief when Rex Martin drove up in the truck. They joined up with Service Company's convoy, and met the company the next morning.

In the meantime the rest of the company was having itself a tough time. Between Kesselbach and Ruddinghausen, Cannon Company led us up a dead-end cattle track about 12 feet wide. It may have been a good tank obstacle, with its ditch on one side, and the high bank on the other, but it was definitely unhealthy for Anti Tank. We spent two whole hours turning the convoy around. Guns and trailers had to be uncoupled and turned around by hand, and then the drivers jockeyed the trucks around on the narrow road. One of our Headquarters trucks had to be winched out of the ditch, but that was the sole mishap.

Sgt. Camara was having a bit of trouble with everybody giving orders at once, and blew his top at one of the GI's. "Whoinhell is running this? Whyinhell don't you mind your own business and turn your own truck around?", he shouted. The GI asked "Do you know who I am?" And Camacho said, "Hell no, and furthermore, I don't give a damn!" So the other guy answered, "Well, I happen to be a First

Lieutenant." You could hear a pin drop for a second, and then came a thin voice, "I'm sorry, sir!" The boys got a good laugh out of this.

Enough happened that night to fill a book, it was a 79 mile, 13 hour trip, replete with adventure. Quite often the convoy would halt somewhere in the black of night, and the driver and squad leader would both fall asleep, and wake up what seemed like hours later and find the convoy gone. Then would follow a weird chase, another blind flying session until the leading vehicles showed up ahead. That night was cold and misty, and it rained most of the time too. Most of the human cargo in the back of the trucks was quite oblivious of what was going on. They were all asleep, curled up in the grotesque positions the lurching of the trucks would throw them into. In one truck though, two boys were awake, but they too were oblivious of the surroundings, for they were engrossed with their thoughts, their longings, their desires. One was reminiscing of his dear mother, recently died; about his being all his father had left in the world; how his father lived only for the day he'd be coming home and starting college. And the other, dreaming of his wife and family. Two soldiers sharing their confidences, and prayers, and aspirations in an Army truck, rushing through Germany in the black night, while the others slept. Slightly incongruous, but deeply touching!

At 0900 on 3 April, it was a tired company that pulled into the town of Geismar, suburb of nearby Fritzlar. Lt. Braun had three or four houses all ready for us, so we didn't lose any time in hitting the sack. There would be enough time later to have a look around.

Geismar was primarily devoted to dairy farming, so our larder was always well filled. Down at the Third Platoon house, Sgt. Hassler fried some Kartoffeln, a la Berks County, Pa., and even the "Marshall" had to admit they were good. It was soon after this that Sgt. Beers had a pleasant surprise when a German fraulein walked in on him while he was taking a bath. A fitting cartoon for Esquire, but he'd better not let Shine see it!

Lt. Braun and Sgt. Roth took off that afternoon on one of their vehicle hunts, and when they were still gone the next morning, the Captain took Sgt. Shepherd

and his squad out as a search party. They went over 100 miles round trip and saw nary a sign of Lt. Braun, for he had been back with the company since an hour after the party left. He had acquired an amphibious German Volkswagon, and gotten stuck on the road. So he and Roth spent the night out there, got pulled out in the morning, and then headed back for Geismar. This same Volkswagon figured greatly in our later convoy headaches. Sgt. Carlson picked up an old truck here for the Mine Platoon, and Lt. Morris got himself a car.

At 0900 on 5 April the company received orders to proceed to Elberburg, but at 1030 that order was changed, and we were ordered to Kassel at once, to relieve the 318th Infantry Regiment of the 80th Division. The East end of the city was still being fought for, and to the North and East of the city, our forces were still meeting resistance. The Germans had put up a fierce resistance throughout the fight, and as a last resort the night before we arrived there, fanatical young Tank OCS men started a counterattack with Panther tanks that were assembled at point of their guns in the Henckel Locomotive Plant in the city. They inflicted some damage, but were finally either destroyed or driven from the city.

Our billets in Kassel were in a large apartment house, which had formerly been a sumptuous Old Ladies Home, until Hitler commandeered it. The city park nearby made an easily camouflaged motor pool. Chairs and tables hauled down to the basement of our house made up the mess hall, and the kitchen crew was well set in the tiled kitchen the house had. Of course, there were a few things lacking-like electric lights, and most of the windows, but it wasn't too bad a place. Most of the boys took sun baths during the day on the terraces that ringed the courtyard. what to do at night was no problem at all-there were 14 men on each relief, meaning 84 men on guard every night. But that was nothing compared to what we had when we took over the guard on the public installations. The First and Mine Platoons guarded the Railroad Yards, and the Second and Third Platoons guarded the PX Warehouses, the Power and Gas Works, and a hospital. The company had its fill of guard duty in Kassel, to put it very mildly.

The city was an important prize, since it was a manufacturing center, and an



important communication and transportation hub. Its normal population was in the neighborhood of 200,000--the largest city we had yet seen on the continent. Among the store of supplies was one warehouse containing about 25 railroad carloads of Champagne, Cognac, fancy sardines, tuna, chocolate, and cigars and cigarettes. The company got a large supply of foodstuffs and PX rations from it. We never miss out on a thing like that. Not Anti Tank!

The first night we were in Kassel, we were called upon to remove explosive charges from a main bridge over a creek dividing the city. Lts. Whalen, Braun, and Morris, and some men from the Mine Platoon went down to investigate. The Germans had placed heavy charges in the right places, and Lt. Whalen went clambering over the girders and cross-ties to remove them. His background in the structural trades came in very handy. The Lieutenant had a shiny new bar on his shoulder those days, for a few days before, he received a well-earned and well-deserved battlefield commission. It was hard at first for his boys to keep from calling him "Jim" as always, but it was with pride and pleasure that his men addressed him as "Sir" or "Lt". Whalen. It seemed as if they were putting an extra stress on those words. One day "the Greek" offered to drive him over to the motor pool in Lt. Morris' Opel. They got in, Hatzopoulos put it in gear, gave it the gas, but nothing happened. He tried it again, but still it wouldn't move. So Weber looked inside and told him to let out the clutch. The next thing we knew was that the car was careening off a wall of the building. The boys nearly died laughing. As for Lt. Whalen though, he just opened the door and got out, and said, "That's OK Greek, I'll walk over." Lt. Morris must never have heard of that incident, or he wouldn't have let Hatzy drive his new car when we left Kassel. That car was really the best one we had picked up yet--brand new and sweet running. It had only 100 kilometers on it when we got it, and Lt. Morris was really proud of it.

To prove its versatility, the Miners became a Firefighting Platoon one day when a fire broke out near the Railroad Station. The whole company was alerted for it, but the Mine Platoon went ahead and took care of it by themselves. The fire was endangering highly important medical and radio supplies, so it called for quick action.

The fire became so heated, and the smoke so dense, that the boys worked with their gas masks on-the only time they actually saw some real use. It took a lot of work, but the fire was finally subdued.

It was in our motor pool in the city park that the company furnished an Honor Guard for the presentation of Bronze Stars to men of the Regimental Special Units.

On April 8th we again started into action. Early that day Lt. Whalen, Sgt. Shepherd, and eight men of the Mine Platoon went out with the attacking battalions. Everything proceeded smoothly until they came to the pontoon bridge across the river at Witzzenhausen, where the enemy had started to zero in. They crossed under fire, but all made it safely. A little while later as they were driving down the road in Herman's truck, a machine gun opened up and it seemed to be following the truck down the road, getting ever closer. So in no time flat, ten men were having a race to the nearest ditch. When Hatzopoulos stuck his head up once, Combs hollered over, "Get down, I like your moustache the way it is." When the firing stopped the men went ahead to disarm and remove a 250 pound aerial bomb from the road, where the Germans had rigged it up as a cratering charge. Just then five PW's were herded past, so Lt. Whalen had them do it. The bomb was about four feet below the surface of the road, and he made them dig with their hands. Later on our boys gave them their intrenching shovels to work with. That same day the boys dug out another bomb, but this time there were no PW's around.

In the meantime the rest of the company had left Kassel, after waiting hours for orders. The convoy pulled out at 2000 for a weird drive over forest roads. That night was blacker than black, and cold to boot. Sgt. Hassler's truck got a flat, and Sgt. Camara's developed motor trouble, so the maintenance truck stayed behind with them, and the rest of the convoy went on-on to more trouble. Lt. Braun hadn't gotten his Volkswagon running yet, so Sgt. Carlson was towing it with his jeep, Sgt. Roth at the wheel of the Kraut wagon. Coming around a hairpin curve the Volkswagon apparently decided to take a short cut straight across the canyon. So off it went into space, and the generator tied to the back of it came up into the back seat with Graziano. Lord knows what stopped the little Volkswagon, but it came to a halt right on the brink

of disaster. And just about that time Graziano decided he'd ride the rest of the way in the truck. The Volkswagon was winched back on the road in the dark, and the convoy proceeded.

While all this was going on, Sgts. Hassler and Camara were also having their troubles. First Camara drove into the ditch, then the maintenance truck; it seemed as if they were all taking turns at it. To beat all, they got lost in the dark. They were really glad when Lt. Morris came back to lead them the rest of the way to the company. The convoy passed through towns still burning from artillery fire earlier that day, and finally arrived in Witzenhausen late that night. We occupied four houses there, and due to the late hour we couldn't evict the civilians, so we locked them in the cellars and caught a few hours of sleep.

The next morning we crossed the pontoon bridge, and headed for Friedland, with Figlin's squad spearheading. At one point we were held up by enemy mortar fire for a while, but our rifle troops took care of that, and we were once again on our way. At Friedland all nine guns went into position to protect the approaches to the town, while the regiment reorganized.

We spent a few pleasant hours at Friedland. The Mine Platoon searched houses for weapons, etc., and found everything from cap pistols to flint-lock rifles. At the town schoolhouse Hermans took down the pictures of Adolf and his cronies, and smashed them on a fencepost outside. The boys found a lot of Nazi flags here too, and the mail clerk, Bendall, was busy with packages from there on in. Besides this, there was a load of French perfume found, and a large store of eggs for the company larder. A fruitful day, or should I say, lootful? Tomczuk and Fowler even found a Jerry bus in perfect order, and turned it over to the MP's. Gryzwacz had a political discussion with the Burgomeister, who happened to be female. When he told her what the German army had done, in response to her question as to why we were fighting the Germans, she said it was all American propaganda. As Camara said, "What the hell can you do with people like that?"

That afternoon the company moved on to Mengelrode along a route infested with snipers. Lt. Braun and Nelson Clark, leading the regimental Advance Party, ran into

a little trouble entering the town, and Lt. Braun was in his glory firing his jeep's machine gun down the street. They captured four prisoners then, and got 15 more after the company arrived. In the melee they even shot a leg off a deer. The company arrived there about 1900, taking up positions to cover approaches to the regimental area. We were billeted in some farmhouses and were just getting set, when we heard machine gun fire on a hill nearby. Sgt. Carlson asked for some volunteers, and Arfa, Lawry, Healy, and Zelenty went to investigate. It turned out to be some Cannon Company men out deer hunting. Later on though, it was the real thing when the Luftwaffe came over for a visit. Robinson was unfortunate enough to dive into the wrong ditch-a sewer ditch. But it turned out to be a quiet night. Carlson had his generator going, and the radios had sweet music for the boys.

The next morning, 10 April, Lt. Morris and some of his Miners blew up some Panzerfausts in the fields. The civilians thought the fighting had started again, and took off in a hurry..

At 1300 hours, the company was alerted as part of a motorized column in support of Second Battalion. We were to carry "E" Company in addition to our own men. While waiting for orders to move the men of the two companies took things easy by the side of the road. De Joy of "E" Company held a swell accordion recital for a large audience. Another group was bunched around a radio, and still others just slept in the grass. We stayed there all afternoon, so it was decided to set up the kitchen and cook supper. Just when it was ready we got orders to move, so we really had to bolt the chow. "E" Company didn't have any supper, so we lent them our messkits and they ate too. The cooks put on a good show loading the kitchen truck. The pots and pans and stoves were never loaded any faster than that day. It undoubtedly would have set a new world record, had we been timing them.

We finally got under way at 1945, and we really were loaded. Trucks with room for ten men were hauling 25. But the springs held out, and through Heiligenstadt and Dingelstadt and many another Stadt, our convoy proceeded. It was another all-night drive, with its share of weird experiences. Once Hermans tried to climb the bank alongside the road with the truck and trailer, and Shepherd jumped out and

pulled a Superman act, trying to keep the truck from tipping over. "Green Bay" took a lot of ribbing on that one. Once Sgt. Earnes took a wrong turn with half the convoy behind him. But they turned back and caught up to us without mishap. We were a tired bunch of men that morning when we pulled into Grossmelra at about 0500. We caught two hours of sleep, and wearily piled out for an early breakfast right on the street, where the chow line was set up. The people were a bit bewildered to wake up and find so many soldiers in their midst. There had been none there for about five days, ever since the Sixth Armored's Spearhead had "taken" the town. They were a bit surprised too, to see that we didn't take any of their food. They had been warned that the Americans were very short of food and were going to take theirs. More Nazi propaganda.

The company waited around on the road for further orders, and while they waited we tried to hook up a radio to hear the news. We tried it in one house, but it wouldn't work. Across the street lights were on, so we hooked it up there. By some strange quirk half the town had lights, the other half was kaput. The big news then was the headlong rush of our troops across Germany. And at 1130 we joined the rush. It was a pleasant ride through Schlotheim and Clingengreussen, through flat country, and we could watch the show all around us. Convoys stretched for miles in all directions, with the Armored Force leading the parade. We watched P-51's strafing enemy strong points, and admired the close coordination between the Air Corps and our ground elements. Alten-Beichlingen, our objective, was still being fought for, so we waited on the road until it was secured, and then moved in. While we were on the road a special meeting of the 14th Air Force was held, with "Marshall" Beers and "Vice Marshall" Buckner reigning supreme.

When we moved into the town, First Platoon was set up to protect its southern <sup>6</sup>approches, and Third Platoon to protect the eastern approaches to Beichlingen.

It was that night that Jack (I caught a General) Figlin caught his German General. The only sad thing about it is that he turned his prisoner over to Second Battalion, which then claimed the credit. While on guard at their gun that night, Landers and Lefsky heard a noise, and hollered, "Halt!" They got a reply in German, so Landers

took a shot in the dark, and hit a Jerry soldier in the leg. After Aid man Biles had fixed him up, they brought him to the CP for questioning, and he said he had come all the way from his outfit to see his wife, who lived in that town. He more or less was taking his own discharge from the Wehrmacht.

We got up for breakfast at about 0330 on the morning of 12 April, and took to the road again with "E" Company at 0630. Little did we know what lay in store for us that day when we first pulled out. It seemed like just another day. Barela took a wrong turn in Freyburg and went blithely on until Lt. Whalen came chasing after him in a jeep. The people of Freyburg really gave us a reception - they even threw flowers at us. But when we got just East of Weissenfels, it was another story. We had hit into resistance ahead. The men of "E" Company dismounted and went ahead on foot, and we knew then that we were in for a fight. The head of our convoy was in Markwerben, the tail in Vichteritz. Sgt. Camara's gun got in the first lick. His squad fired eight rounds across the Saale River at a group of Jerries on the far side, and it wasn't long till the white flags were waving. One soldier jumped off a bicycle and took shelter behind a tree, but De Geyter's next shot was a direct hit - on the tree and the German. While the Mine Platoon searched houses for weapons and snipers, the officers made a reconaissance forward. Just before they got within sight of the main bridge into Weissenfels, it was blown by the enemy.

First Platoon went into position at the eastern part of Markwerben to protect the approaches to that sector, and Third Platoon furnished protection for the right flank of Second Battalion. Second Platoon moved forward to support the rifle troops in the street fighting in the outskirts of the city. Mine Platoon went forward to inspect the main roads, but found no mines. HQ, Mine and Third Platoons took over a few houses in Markwerben and bedded down for the night.

Friday, the 13th of April, was a Red Letter Day for Anti Tank. At 1100 that morning Second Battalion began its operations to cross the Saale River and take the city. Third Platoon had taken up positions along the river, about 300 yards downstream from the crossing site, and at H-20 two of the 57's and two machine guns opened fire. They succeeded in wiping out sniper nests on the far side, and forced

the enemy to take cover. When "F" Company started crossing in assault boats, they intensified their fire, and then followed the advance of the riflemen on the far side by leapfrogging their guns down the river bank, blasting the houses in front of the rifle troops. As a direct result of this support fire, no assault boats were lost, and "F" Company's casualties were light. This marked the first tactical employment of the 57mm AT gun as an Infantry attack support weapon.

Second Platoon helped here too, by supporting the Third from its position on a hill overlooking the river. One bit of humor injects itself at this point. After firing four rounds, Kagan's gun fell apart when the recoil nut came loose. Buckingham told Wessel to load another round, and turned to find the barrel gone. So they loaded the barrel on the truck, hooked up the gun, and took off for the rear. They were definitely kaput for the moment!

First combat vehicles to cross the Saale River were the trucks and guns of First Platoon. The Engineers had fixed up an old German ferry, and they carried over our men. First came a gun, then its truck, and so on, until the whole platoon was across. Capt. Datnoff and Lt. Backer reported to "F" Company's CP, and found that the outfit was being held up by well-intrenched snipers, and it was waiting for tanks to come up and help out. Since the other companies were advancing in their sectors, our officers advised the CO of "F" Company to get moving and keep abreast of the other line companies. They were going to give the doughboys support with our guns. So Figlin and his squad went with one rifle platoon, Barnes with another, and Buckner's men were split up between the other two squads. And those two squads did plenty of firing. Two medics had been killed by a sniper in a house in Barne's path, so he poured a few 57 rounds into it, and all became quiet. They did the same with other targets, using the bazooka in one squad, and the machine gun in the other, to cover the 57 as it was being by-handed forward. The noise of the 57 in the streets was almost enough to drive the enemy away, even if the shots had no effect at all. But they really did, as Capt. Datnoff found upon later examination. One of the rounds had penetrated four walls-others had wrecked whole floors of houses. And the civilians said that the firing and noise really had the soldiers running. The riflemen

kept on down the streets, searching all the houses, and our men helped them when they weren't firing. The tanks finally arrived, and to show what encouragement they gave the men, here is what Sgt. Earnes said in his squad's story-"I'm telling you, my boys and I were sure glad to see them!" The tanks and our vehicles formed a convoy, and the Task Force Commander invited Capt. Datnoff and Capt. Gresham of "F" Company to ride the lead tank with him, on a Victory March through Weissenfels. And some march it was, with the riflemen shooting out windows and street lights.

In the meantime parts of the Second Platoon were crossing the river, and just as Sgt. Coss' squad was in the middle of it on the ferry, a Messerschmidt came over to strafe. They really felt naked and helpless out there in the middle of the river. When that got to the far side they took a slight break to change underwear. Sgt. Coss, who was on the shore when the plane came over, found himself racing Col. McCormick for a foxhole. The Colonel must have been a track a man, for he beat Danny to it. But luckily no one was hurt.

The Mine platoon was assigned the task of herding PW's from the ferry site to the regimental PW enclosure. That night most of the resistance in Weissenfels was overcome, after hard fighting by the men of Second Battalion, and the next morning, the rest of our company crossed over into town on a pontoon bridge the Engineers had erected by then. Our convoy formed up just as it was getting light, but we just sat there for hours. But come to think of it, it wasn't exactly idle time. Sgt. Smith gets credit for opening three saloons, countless civilian cars joined the company, and Arfa even bought an old Ford truck from a civilian for 5000 German marks, worthless to us anyway. All day long prisoners came in by the hundreds, many herded in by our own boys. Fowler got the booby prize for bringing in several firemen off duty-"I thought they were at least Generals in those fancy uniforms!" said Fowler. Potashnick took charge of the searching and grilling for a while, and he really had the Germans scared, what with his M-3 pointing in all directions. It was high comedy with a poker face. And the night before the same city had seen plenty of tragedy. There were quite a few empty places on our trucks, where "E" company men had ridden only two days before.



The garrison at Weissenfels really put up a fanatical defense, but toward the end they probably saw the hopelessness of the situation, and the prisoners came in in droves. More than 1500 were taken that day. Horn even took some prisoners with an unloaded rifle. He just didn't notice it till later.

While we were waiting around the civilians staged a run on a dairy store nearby, so Beers and Hassler and some of their men went out to establish order. They made the people get in line, letting all displaced persons, refugees, and Allied PW's take the head of it. And then the butter and margarine really started going. What we didn't find out till later was that the two men behind the counter weren't the owners at all—they had just broken in and started selling the stock. Nice work, if you can get it.

During the time we were all fooling around in the city, Lt. Whalen, Sgt. Carlson, and eight men from the Mine Platoon went ahead with the leading tank column, as a mine clearing detail. But as the tanks flushed the enemy out of the military camp area outside of Weissenfels, those men helped herd in the PW's. In their own line of duty, they removed two roadblocks of Teller mines in the roads. Sgt. Shepherd and Oney blew the mines up later, when they came up with the rest of the convoy. When the blast went off all the civilians ducked inside and hung out some more white flags. In the block nearest the explosion, there weren't many windows left after Shep got through.

When the convoy finally moved out behind the tanks we only got to the edge of the city before we were again held up. The tanks were drawing heavy 88 fire, and one was knocked out. A call came back for "E" Company to load into our first three trucks and get to the head of the convoy. Through a misunderstanding, Figlin took his squad and went ahead with the riflemen. His men mounted the lead tank, all set for action, with their 45's at the ready. But as the folly of their position, naked there on the tanks, dawned on them, they asked what cooked, and were told to get the hell out of there. Which they proceeded to do in record time. The day was saved, for that squad at least.

Since the column couldn't advance due to the 88's, a flanking move was decided

upon-to surround and capture the gun positions. The Second Division had priority on the pontoon bridge at that time, and we couldn't recross the river for the move, so the whole convoy bedded down in Weissenfels for the night. The company had two houses for billets, and although it was crowded and men slept in hall's and corners, everyone dropped right off to sleep. It had been a full day.

Early the next morning Sgt. Carlson, Levin, and six men of the Mine Platoon went out with the tanks of Task Force Zweibel in the flanking move. Second Battalion and our Third Platoon were in the convoy following. While the task force recrossed the Saale River and proceeded up the West bank, the rest of the company moved up the other side to complete the encircling move, with the aid of Second Division's 38th Regiment. The Task Force was held up at first by 88 fire; so "E" Company went forward on foot to remedy the situation. In close coordination, Second Platoon fired into the town the riflemen were approaching. Although they were on the far side of the river and the range was 2500 yards, the men did some good firing and succeeded in knocking out the enemy observer in the town's church steeple, and enabling "E" Company to move in.

The Mine Platoon detail, lying beside the road waiting to go ahead with the clearing of it, had box seats for the capture of Kreisan and the 88 positions, which had given us so much trouble. Our men on both sides of the river had some close calls from them that day, and it was good to see them done for. From Markwerben, a hail of fire from the 4.2 mortars of a Chemical Gas Battalion was directed at the gun positions. Then as the riflemen advanced through the fields, the tanks lined up abreast, and threw all they had into the area. Exploding enemy ammo dumps and fires in the barracks around the camp, together with the 500 enemy prisoners taken, showed what teamwork could do. When the score was finally tallied there were more than 30 gun positions overrun. The rifle troops had a great time tying white flags to the gun barrels and then elevating the guns. The tanks then led the convoy in a triumphal parade around the whole captured area. Through fields and ditches, and down the roads had procession sped. And then back to Weissenfels to spend the night. The Miners had left the company that morning with one K ration each, so they expected

to be real hungry by the time they returned. But as it turned out, after hitting into a bake shop and dairy store, they had eggs for breakfast, eggs for dinner, and eggs for supper, with bread and jam, coffee, and even cherry pie. They not only brought back the one K ration, but also brought a load of bread and eggs besides.

At 0915 the next morning, 16 April, we reassembled the convoy and proceeded to Pegau, Division reorganization point. While we waited alongside the road, orders were received to abandon all civilian cars we had picked up. So Arfa and a couple of other boys put on a daredevil show for us out in the fields. It looked like a tryout for a berth with Jimmy Lynch and his Daredevil Riders. Lt. Morris turned his car over to the Military Government.

Anti Tank Company received orders to proceed to Rotha, where the gun platoons were to be attached to their respective battalions. The whole division was on the road that day, and it was a traffic cop's nightmare. Time and time again our convoy was split up by other units. Once we even had to get off the road altogether to straighten out the mess, when the head of the column was held up by enemy fire. But we finally got to Rotha at 1830, and found billets in an apartment house at the edge of town. Second Platoon joined Second Battalion that night, but first and Third made contact with theirs and spent the night with the company. There was a great deal of firing that night, and the artillery rocked the house. The guards were all a bit uneasy, to put it mildly. It was decided the next morning to move the Mine Platoon and HQ further down in town, and we took over a nice dentist's home there.

That morning First Platoon joined First Battalion at Espenhain, and went into position there to protect the northern approaches to that town. Later in the day Third Platoon, enroute to join its battalion at Zwenkau, was pinned down by a terrific enemy artillery barrage just outside of Bohlen. They sweated it out for half an hour in an air raid shelter, and were about to start for Zwenkau again when they discovered a German radio and two operators in another room of the bunker. The boys made quick work of that, and were again on their way. They finally arrived in Zwenkau, only to be ordered back to the company the next day. When they got back

to Rotha they really gave the civilians a hard time. The Platoon had picked a house the morning before and the civilians had moved out. When they left for Zwenkau the Germans moved back in. Now they were back from their work, so the civilians were kicked out again. And then the Third Platoon got orders to move out, so the house was vacant once more. If this description has you a little confused, just picture what those civilians went through.

On the evening of 17 April Capt. Datnoff took over command of Bohlen for Second Battalion, with the mission of reorganizing "F" Company. Second Battalion's AT Platoon and our Second Platoon were to hold Bohlen, and fire their guns into Zwenkau, 4000 yards away, in order to neutralize enemy fire and to divert their attention while Third Battalion continued its assault from the South and Second Battalion started a flanking move to assist Third Battalion. The AT Platoon of Second Battalion did the firing, with Lt. Deaton and our men doing the observing and fire control from tall buildings in town. Using ball ammo for range finding, and HE for destructive effect, they really threw it into Zwenkau. The next day Lt. Deaton found that this fire had knocked out an enemy OP, killing the observer. The indirect fire had proved its worth, and the 57 had demonstrated another use for itself.

We had a bit of excitement in Rotha on the morning of the 18th. The Regimental I & R Platoon had moved NE of the town to counter a supposed enemy thrust, after Capt. Chiz and his driver were ambushed. Lt. Braun alerted the Mine Platoon to defend Rotha, and then followed the I & R Platoon. When the platoon was pinned down, Lt. Braun withdrew to report on the situation and to request reinforcements. The Miners were deployed outside of town, and Lts. Braun and Whalen, and Nelson Clark went forward again to fire at the enemy riflemen. The jeep's MG was kept hot that day. At this time Regimental HQ was removed from town, and Capt. Datnoff was put in charge of the defense of Rotha. Three I & R men returned and reported that some of their men were wounded and needed medical care. So a rescue party was organized, and under cover of a smoke screen, Lt. Braun and Clark led the party to the wounded men. The rescuers brought back

five wounded, two dead, and four others from the scene, and Clark towed in a disabled jeep. For their work in that encounter, Lt. Braun and Clark were awarded the Silver Star, and well-deserved it was!

While all this was going on, Company HQ had moved to Zwenkau, and since the Mine Platoon had been called out in a hurry to defend the town and had left all their stuff at the house, HQ packed it all up for the Miners and loaded it in their trucks and trailers. And what a mess it was. They had time only to throw things in a heap, wrap it in a blanket, and heave it on to the trucks, so you can imagine what a mess it was. It took weeks for the boys to straighten out their personal belongings. And to this day, there is still a package in Rotha that Levin had all ready to send home--six bottles of perfume for his wife. Oh well!

That evening men of the colored platoon of "K" Company relieved the Mine Platoon which then proceeded to join the company at Zwenkau. No sooner had they taken their bedrolls up to their rooms, than they were again ordered out to clear the roads for the march on Leipzig. Sgt. Shepherd and half the platoon joined Third Battalion in Bohlen, and Sgt. Carlson took the other half to Second Battalion. In all the rush, Oney fell off a truck and suffered a broken leg.

Shepherd's party went out on foot with Third Battalion when it jumped off at 2330 hours, and marched all night. At Grossdeuben the next morning, they removed two roadblocks in their path. Hermans and Levin, who had come up in the battalion's motor convoy, hauled up rations from Bohlen for the men. Third Platoon, which had also come up in the convoy, took advantage of the lull during the day, and caught some rest in civilian homes there. Acheson's squad even had a dinner cooked for them, while Glenn Miller's band entertained over the radio. By late that afternoon a sizable bag of prisoners had been taken, including a Colonel and his complete staff. Beers' squad was told of a gun position in the woods nearby, so a six man patrol was sent out, led by Ehlinger. They captured eleven Germans and the 88 they had been manning. There were 90 rounds of ammunition in the gun pit, but they lacked fuses. Returning with their prisoners, the boys met a Pole slave laborer, who directed them to where an SS Colonel was hiding out. So

Ehlinger and Fowler took him prisoner, and his three pistols made a valuable prize for the squad.

When all resistance had ceased, the Mine Platoon was released by Third Battalion, and they started back for the company. It took an hour to find Emerson though, and they were all set to leave without him, when he slowly walked out of a house and said he had just been taking a bath. When they got to Zwenkau, they found that the company had moved, presumably to Leipzig. So off they went in pursuit. Luckily, Levin spied the company convoy down a side street in East Markkleeburg, and the Mine Platoon was whole again.

Third Platoon men were put in charge of the 350 PW's and herded them into Leipzig that evening. They bedded down for the night in an apartment house there and were awakened in the morning by feminine voices. Were they surprised! Or were they??

In the successful attack on Leipzig from the East, our First Platoon was with First Battalion, which was attached to the 273rd for that action. The 273 bypassed the resistance at the Battle of Nations Monument, and it was First Battalion's show from there on in. In the five story solid granite monument erected to commemorate Napoleon's defeat in 1813, 300 Nazi soldiers, led by an SS Colonel, had holed up for a last ditch fight. Our men watched as artillery shells just bounced off its walls and the men of First Battalion closed in on it in the face of severe fire from the Germans. Finally on the morning of 20 April, the enemy surrendered to Col. Dunlop and First Battalion. The <sup>57's</sup>~~75's~~ couldn't have done any damage, but had our First Platoon fired at the monument, they might well have gone down in History.

The company was united once again in Taucha on April 20th. We had four good houses, and it afforded a well-earned rest. The company took over the shower rooms of a school across the street, so the load on the trucks was appreciably lightened as the dirt and dust and grime went down the drain. The gun platoons even had time to take apart the 57's and clean them. Second Platoon was deeply saddened by the death of Gegg's pet rabbit. Gegg erected a marker over the little

grave, but some truck driver ran right over it soon after. The fellow apologized, thus avoiding a lynching.

It was at Taucha that we got great news from the Captain. In the preceding few days we had been so busy with our own sector that we had lost sight of the big picture. So it was a surprise to hear that our job in Germany was almost over. The American forces had only to reach the Elbe River and their job was done, for the Russians were approaching from the East. At that time, ten days was the longest anyone gave the Jerries to hold out. It certainly was good news for us, but the war wasn't quite over for us yet.

On the 21st the company left Taucha and moved North to Gallen, with the mission of supporting Second Battalion along the Mulde River. First Platoon took up positions in Wolpern, overlooking Eilenburg, third set up in Zscheffgau with "F" Company, to protect the extreme left flank, and Second remained in reserve in Gallen. It was quiet that night until the cooks decided we ought to have fried eggs for breakfast. So two searching parties were organized, and with the aid of two Russian slave laborers who knew exactly who had how many chickens and where, they made quite a haul. Those two got the biggest thrill of their lives that night, routing people out of bed and demanding eggs for the Americans. And they got results too - for if they didn't get eggs, they threatened to take the chickens. So while the former slaves got their revenge, our baskets kept filling up, and we did have fried eggs for breakfast.

A change in plans was made the next day, and it was decided that First Battalion would pass through Second Battalion, and attack the city of Eilenburg. Just prior to this attack, First Platoon opened fire on possible OP's and strong points in Eilenburg. Range was about 3000 yards, and our men did some swell indirect firing. They used about 100 rounds and really had a good time. But just before the shooting, Buckner sweated a bit. His truck got stuck in an open field with plenty of enemy shell coming in, so Buck ran for Figlin's truck which had a winch - only to find it wasn't working. They finally towed the truck to safety, but not before Buck had aged a few years.

Eilenburg really was a headache. The Germans seemed to have underground passages and secret doors and walls. One squad of a rifle company would clear a house and file on down the street. Another squad, walking by later, would get fired on from that very same house. As soon as our troops went by, the Germans appeared behind them out of thin air. When the situation got too bad, all of our troops were withdrawn, and the city was given a severe pasting by the artillery. Our gun squads had ringside seats for the show, since they were on a hill overlooking the city. Fires blazed all night long.

Back in Gallen, the company had a pleasant surprise. Sgt. Pitts and Joe Ferrell had finally gotten back from the hospital, and a great reunion it was. Joe had spent but a week in the hospital, and five weeks in Repple Depples making his way back. They each had a load of mail waiting for them, and two days later, they were still reading it. Sgt. Pitts wasn't fully treated yet and was going back, but it was swell to see him again, if even for a short time.

First Battalion jumped off again into Eilenburg on the morning of the 23rd. What was left of the Mine Platoon, after Weber's squad went to guard the water point in Taucha, was given the mission of removing a roadblock that was holding up the tanks in the city. As they were making their way cautiously down the street, a burp gun opened up, so they all ducked into an alley. Lt. Whalen took Carlson, Shepherd, and Silverstein with him, and left the rest behind. The roadblock turned out to be a humdinger. Thick logs were firmly emplaced across the road and securely fastened together. The foundations were imbedded in concrete. And on either side was a house, so it was impossible for the tanks to go around the obstacle. While attempting to pull some of the logs out by hooking a chain to one of the tanks, Lt. Whalen was on one end of the chain, and Carlson on the other. Just then something hit right between them, and they were both wounded in the legs. With the same blast, Col. Dunlop and an artillery observer also got hit. But their wounds were only superficial and were treated on the spot. In fact, the Colonel insisted on staying to direct the fight. Since Lt. Whalen and Sgt. Carlson were unable to walk, Sgt. Shepherd and Silverstein carried them from



the scene, taking a series of detours to avoid the hot spots in town. As soon as the men were evacuated, Sgt. Shepherd, now in command of the platoon, took his remaining men back to Battalion HQ to report on the roadblock and await further orders. It was decided then that the Engineers would remove it.

To counteract the omnipresence of the Germans, Col. Dunlop came up with a plan. Instead of cleaning out a house and then going on, he wanted to leave a few men in each house to make sure that no one got back in. Since this would take a large number of men, reinforcements were brought in from Second Battalion, and the men of our Second and Third Platoons, sans 57's, were also employed as riflemen. And they had countless stories of their adventures to relate when they returned to the company the next morning. When they first got to the city, they were harassed by our own artillery dropping short. Lt. Deaton's Order of the Day is classic - "Sgt. Kagan, advance your men down the street and clean out those houses!" So Kagan turned to his squad and said, "Men, you are riflemen as of now!" Wessel kept saying he was glad those were our own shells, and then one would drop in the backyard. In one house, Two Gun Shipman and Buckingham decided to fry some potatoes for lunch, so they went down into the cellar to get some kartoffeln. But instead of potatoes they found a Jerry in hiding, and a little more hunting brought forth a second one. The boys lost their appetite right there. Gegg found himself a new white rabbit, which almost proved his undoing. He was playing with it when "ping" went a sniper's rifle, and "zing" went Gegg. The rabbit searched for him for hours, but he had just disappeared from sight.

When the Engineers let go with the explosives to blow up the roadblock, Danny Coss and his squad were just rounding the corner of a house. And to a man, that squad would have sworn the blast came from the pile of Panzerfausts they had just climbed over. Who's excited? My hands always shake that way.

Third Platoon rounded up all the civilians they could find and took them to PW cages, to make sure they wouldn't be doing any sniping. While Schedeler was busy disarming Panzerfausts, one went off, but luckily, Dutch was unhurt. That's luck!

The Miners took over a house next to the First Battalion CP to await more developments, and the boys were lounging around. Miller told Levin to move over on the couch, and then pulled a pack out from underneath it, and right on top was lying a Luger. That house was searched from roof to cellar in the next five minutes, but unfortunately, there were no more Lugers to be found.

When the Mine Platoon returned to Gallen, the CP moved to Wolpern and the First Platoon moved from there to positions along the Mulde at Groitzsch. On the 24th, Eilenburg was all cleared, and the regiment took a breathing spell, strung out along the Mulde River.

The next day a patrol of the 273rd established the first contact with elements of the 173rd Regiment, 58th Guards Division, XXXIV Corps. of the Fifth Russian Army at Torgau. The radio and newspaper headlines proclaimed this news to the world, but very few people knew that the patrol that met the Russians crossed a bridge that the 271st had just captured, the only one over the Mulde still intact. But no matter where the credit is due, the Fighting 69th became famous overnight as a result of the meeting. It was soon nicknamed the "Contact Division". And so, our efforts in Europe ended in a blaze of glory. In our very last bit of action we had hit the jackpot, and we weren't the favorites either. Other units along the Mulde were waiting to make contact, some even having whole corps of correspondents on hand, and it was both a surprise and disappointment to them to hear that the 69th had run off with the prize. Professional jealousy - that's what it is!

After the meeting with the Russians, our mission was to keep the Germans retreating from the Russians from coming over to our side of the river. On the 27th, Third Platoon went out to Groitzsch to relieve the First. The rest of the company took life easy in the little farm village at Wolpern. Our road guards were kept quite busy saluting all the dignitaries passing through on the way to Torgau to see the Russians. There was a steady stream - first, Division officers, then Corps, then Army, Army Group, and even higher. Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Hodges, Collins, Huebner, Reinhardt, and hosts of others passed through us in a colorful caravan.

Besides all the visitors, the roads were clogged with people running from the Russians, and the Orderly Room was always full of civilians and soldiers with some sort of problem. Capt. Datnoff began to feel like Mr. Anthony. One German soldier really was a funny case. He had an-American pass to work freely in Eilenburg, treating the wounded, he being a medic. But asked what he was doing on the road, he answered that he was on his way home to Cologne. He told the Captain that he had been in the Army for six years, was tired of it all, and was heading home. The Captain wrote a note to S-2 explaining the case, and at the bottom, added, "Recommend ten day furlough be arranged for this man". And off he went to the PW cage.

Bit by bit, life became a quiet routine in Wolpern. There were movies a few times, and one day we saw our first USO show in the ETO. Erickson and Budden set up a darkroom, and started developing pictures for the company. After a week we had grown used to the smell of the barnyard where we lined up for chow, but it still didn't remind one of Chanel Number 5. Twice during our stay there we got emergency calls to go out and quell riots in nearby towns - but the riots turned out to be non-existent. Once it was to rescue a Field Artillery outfit in Plaussig, the second time to stop rioting DP's in Portitz.

Weber's squad of the Mine Platoon spent a pleasant week in Taucha guarding the water point. While there, they helped break up a real riot between some Germans and Poles. Hammons also rounded up six Hitler Jugend boys and turned them in to Service Company. He didn't like their looks, the Kid from Oklahoma said.

At 0700 on 2 May, our convoy left Wolpern, and proceeded to Puchau, where we loaded on "L" Company. The company got to Colditz, its destination, at 1010, with another addition to our kitchen crew, Roman Elojan of Moscow, our third Russian KP and as full of the devil as they come. We had a pretty nice set-up in Colditz - the gun platoons had some nice houses at the edge of town, the CP was in a richly furnished home, and the Miners had a couple of rooms down in the office of the Stone Factory. The Kitchen and mess hall were down there too, and

it wasn't long before the Mine Platoon had built a movie theatre in the plant. Levin made some contacts, and got the manager of the local electric works to restore the electricity. And every day the factory help fired the boilers so that we could have hot showers there. At the rear of the plant, Sgt. Frost had the maintenance shop, and Wetzel did a good job of spraying all our vehicles with a new coat of OD.

*Part V    Sweating It Out, After V-E Day*



At Colditz we watched and waited as the end of the war came ever closer. First to throw in the sponge were the German forces in Italy, followed by the capitulation of the enemy in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Northern Germany. And finally came the news of V-E Day-8 May 1945. We had been out of action for over two weeks, so it didn't exactly come as a surprise. There was no dramatic "Cease Fire" as in World War I, but it still was History. "Two down, One to go" took on meaning.

Lt Braun and Nelson Clark were presented with their Silver Stars by General Reinhardt on V-E Day. It was a colorful ceremony. And that night we celebrated in gala style-the USO put on a bang-up show in our factory "theatre", "Fiesta time" and we all had a swell time.

On 10 May we again packed our bags, and moved out to make room for the Russians who were to occupy the town. And one of our Russian trio. Jacob, stayed behind to join them. At first, we were to be billeted in Querfurt, but the area given us was in a very poor section of town, so the company moved back to Freyburg to stay. The quartering party picked some good billets, but met a new attitude on the part of the civilians. Now that the war was over, they didn't think we had a right to evict them. So we showed them we had the right, and they left. (Pardon the pun!) But not before trying to take half the furniture with them. We finally got them straightened out. No one was in a very tender mood for the Germans at that time, for the papers were full of stories about the newly-unearthed horrors of places like Buchenwald, Nordhausen, and Dachau.

We only stayed in Freyburg for two days, but it was worth while, for it was there that the company acquired its big radio-phonograph combination, and a complete set of recordings. It's good the grand piano was too large for our trucks, or Buckner would have taken that along too.

When we moved into Mucheln on the 12th we didn't know it, but it was to be for a long stay, our longest since England. And undoubtedly, our best sojourn on the Continent. The company was comfortably billeted, and it was a nice town to be in. Sgt Roth did much towards getting our beer hall, the ATCO ~~DA~~ <sup>2A</sup> RON<sub>A</sub> VOO, fixed

up, and many a pleasant evening was spent there. The gun platoons fired up a lot of their excess ammo in a nearby stone quarry, and the Mine Platoon blew up some demolitions there too. And we'll all remember the guard duty at the oil refinery in Krumpa, with Willy doing the interpreting. He was so proud of having been in the States, and always boast<sup>ed</sup> of his good job in Hartford and the 9,000 dollars he had in a Connecticut bank account. All the Germans who could speak English spoke it literally, using the ultra-formal as far as grammar and pronunciation went. But not Willy he spoke it as if he had learned it in Greepernt<sup>or</sup> on Toity-Toid Street!

We started training in Mucheln too; hikes, close order drill, military courtesy, and all the rest, including Reveille and Retreat. But there was always the brighter side too. The [ping pong and badminton, the park at night, the movies, and the easy-to-look-at frauleins.

There was a lot done for the company welfare there. The whole outfit had portraits taken, film was easy to develop, the beer, cognac, and champagne flowed freely, and even sightseeing tours were arranged. The CP itself was a thriving business<sup>establishment</sup>-well run by that industrious band of Italian DP's. You could get your hair cut in the mail room, then step downstairs to the basement tailor shop, where you could have your OD's tailored to the latest Bond Street fashion. Or the one-day service washing shop down there-you might not get your own clothes back, but you'd get something in a day. We even acquired an Italian KP here to help Roman and Nicolai-Giovanni Aguzzi, "Johnny" for short, who hails from Pavia, just south of Milan.

The sightseeing tours afforded us a good chance to see Germany as we never could<sup>see</sup> it before. V-E Day had come and gone, and when we rode down a highway we could admire the beauties of Nature without wondering what action lay ahead for us in the next town. There was a peace of mind and a physical relaxation that we had newly<sup>acquired</sup>. The trips to Leipzig, Magdeburg, Weimar and even Czechoslovakia, were a great success. On one trip to Leipzig, Buckner took a liking to a baby lynx in the Zoo, and, with Levin as interpreter, went to arrange about buying him. But the Zoologist said a lynx would be too hard to raise, and would probably



die on our hands. He suggested a lion cub instead, so Buckner and Levin looked over the stock, and picked out a nice four week old model that was the cutest thing. But then came the rub; the price was 600 marks, and there wasn't that much money in the crowd. So Buck departed with a sad heart, and without the lion. But as soon as we were back in the company area the money was raised, and the next day Wessel was sent to buy the lion. All day long the anticipation rose, but it was short-lived. Wessel had bought the wrong animal. Instead of one four weeks old, he had gotten one four months old. And this one was well on his way to being a full fledged lion. His diet consisted of only three or four pounds of fresh meat a day. And from the look of his teeth whenever he opened his mouth, he looked perfectly capable of getting his meat himself, from any old arm or leg in the vicinity. His well developed roar could chill you at thirty paces. The anticipation had changed to apprehension. The next day Buck took his pet out on the lawn for his Orientation class. It took two men to handle him with a long clothesline around his neck. The venture was definitely not working out, so the lion was handed over to Lt King and his Special Service Crew, who shortly thereafter handed him right back to the Leipzig Zoo. But the whole affair got so much publicity that Wessel received a clipping about the "Pet Situation in AT Co.", from nothing less than the Philadelphia Bulletin. It's just a matter of having your sister work on the paper.

The Regimental Honor Guard made up of be-medalled men, our Nelson Clark among them, stayed and trained in our area for a week, and on Memorial Day they formed a Guard of Honor at the First Army Cemetery at Eisenach.

It was at Mucheln that we all saw the Army film on demobilization and redeployment, "Two Down, One to Go", explaining the point system, and it was shortly afterwards that our first men left. Kagan and Acheson, each with 109 points, left on June 2nd. Whitey Hassler was next to go, leaving June 14th, and from his subsequent letters, he was flying home by C 54, and expected to be playing golf in civilian clothes by July 4th. Elias and Jones left on 20 June, and Lichtenstein got in just under the wire on 2 July. The remaining 85 pointers will probably have to wait and return in a large unit.

On 15 June "Cecil B. De" Buckner of Hollywood, Paris (KY), and AT Company, presented "57 Varieties", a takeoff on our officers and men, which proved to be a rollicking success. After a week of sweat and worry, of rehearsals where one of the stars would always be absent; of changes and more changes in the script, the curtains parted and the show was on. And with the last curtain came a tremendous sigh of relief from Buckner. It was a success. He didn't have to go back to a gun squad—he reigned supreme as Information, Education, and Orientation NCO. Members of the cast were: Weston as Capt Hatsoff, Wahnburn as Lt O'Stand, Hamm as Hilea, Levin as M.C., McDonald, Duda and Potashnick as "Characters", George West as Lt Norris, Mebane as Lt Eaton, Swette as Pfc Shipmate, Yeagley as Lt Sacker, Roth as T/Sgt Abie last but not least, Hatzopoulos as Atco, the dog. The play really ribbed the officers, but they took it good-naturedly (Thank the Lord), and a good time was had by all.

But since all good things must come to an end sooner or later, we got orders to move from Mucheln. It was a sad day for some men in the company, for they had made good friends there (under five years of age, of course), but at any rate, we left there on 22 June, and travelled about 150 miles West to Asmushausen. There isn't much to the little farm town, where these final words are being written. It consists of about 50 houses, each with its barn attached, and its manure pile in the yard. A fragrant little village nested cozily in a picturesque valley. To the civilian population of 350, we added 250 soldiers of AT and Cannon Companies, so it became a bit too cozy. Through a change in orders, the rest of the regiment didn't follow us here for another week, which meant a daily round trip of 300 miles for rations and mail. We had left our Italian KP behind at Mucheln, but he met some of the boys who had come back for rations, and returned to the company with them, to round out our culinary staff. Those three KP's looked like any other GI in their OD's and all, and we all got a great kick out of Roman's encounter with a Major in the movie one day. He was smoking a cigarette when this Major came over to him and said, "Don't you see those No Smoking signs, soldier?" To which Roman smiled and said, "Nicht Versthe." The Major almost threw a fit, until one of our

boys explained that Roman was a Russian, and not a GI.

This History should rightfully end on 28 June, for on that day 25 of our men were transferred to the 29th Division, and a like number of new men joined the company from there. It looked like the Fighting 69th was being split up. Those who left were: Lts Morris, Braun, and Backer, and Hermans, McCurdy, Savage, Nicoll, Garris, Queen, Rachwal, Bell, Hall, Barela Arfa, Cohen, Carroll, Bendall, Kachelmeier, Swette, Berry, Rossochassy, Goodman, Bradford, Gryzwacz, and Martin. A few days later, Silverstein went to the 7th Armored Division. We had come a long way together, but had reached a parting of the ways. It was with regret and sorrow that we saw them go.

Two things of interest must be added, though, to complete this chronicle. On July 4th an ambulance passing through Asmushausen hit and killed the Mine Platoon's mascot, Atco, and the faithful brown dog that had come all the way from our first day of action with us was laid to rest in the Motor Pool.

And on the 14th, Sgt Carlson, who we all thought was discharged by that time, returned from the hospital. His records had not been forwarded, so he had to return to the company before he could be discharged. His point score was the highest in the Division, totalling 145, for 51 months of service, 30 for overseas credit, 35 for seven battle stars, 5 for his Purple Heart, and 24 for his two sons. It was good seeing him again, but we were all glad when he left on the 20th to fly home on the first leg of his journey to civilian life.

So with some of our men already home, with many others at the 29th in Bremen and Bremerhaven, and with many more changes coming in the not too distant future, the scene has changed. Trespass Anti Tank will never be the same.



## *APPENDIX*



AWARDS AND DECORATIONS





Silver Star

Lt Julius A. Braun

T/5 Nelson C. Clark

Bronze Star

(Heroic Achievement)

Capt Arthur R. Datnoff

Lt Benjamin H. Backer

Lt James E. Deaton

Lt James H Hope

Cpl. Melvin A. Farnham

S/Sgt Jack Figlin

Pfc Donald W. Celotto

S/Sgt Walter Kagan

S/Sgt. Cornelius W. Acheson

S/Sgt Claude J. Barnes

S/Sgt. LeRoy F. Hassler

Pfc Albert R. Lord

Pfc Ralph O. May

T/Sgt John C. Shepherd

Pfc Gasper Tranquillo

(Meritorious Service)

Capt Arthur R. Datnoff

T/5 Nelson C. Clark

Lt Julius A. Braun

Lt John A. Morris

S/Sgt Ellis C. Smith

T/5 William E. Coveleski

Purple Heart

Capt Curtis L. Trudell (PH)

Lt Francis E. Gearon

Lt Michael T. O'Neal Jr

Lt James N. Whalen

T/4 George W. H. Weston

Cpl Melvin A. Farnham

T/Sgt Clarence G. Bothe

T/5 Alfred H. Lorenz

S/Sgt Earl Schoonover

Cpl Joseph M. Ferrell Jr

1st Sgt Harold J. Pitts

T/4 Percy H. Whritenour

T/Sgt Douglas H. Carlson

T/5 Kenneth J. Bauman

Pfc Kenneth A. Stroud

Pfc LeRoy A. Pastore

Pfc Delbert B. Cochran

Certificate of Merit

1st Sgt Alvin H. Fine

S/Sgt Edwin W. Beers

Sgt Joseph J. Weber

Pfc Corbett S. Landers

Pfc George T. Buckingham

Pfc Robert S. Martynowski

Pfc Urban F. Zeck

Cpl Bernard L. Lawry

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OF  
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Pvt	Daniel Alschuler	Pvt	Charles Runkin
Cpl	Carlton G. Alsheimer	Sgt	Raymond F. Cannon
Pvt	Anthony J. Altier	T/5	Louis Cantor
Pvt	Charles Assal	Pvt	Duane K. Carlson
Pfc	Vito M. Attolino	Pfc	James Carney
Pfc	Walter F. Baldwin	Pvt	Herbert V. Carroll
Sgt	William J. Baribeau	T/5	Donald W. Carter
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Pvt	Leslie F. Beamish	Pvt	Ralph F. Ciancio
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Lt	Robert M. Benjamin	Pfc	Louis Cohen
Pfc	Irving A. Berkowitz	Pvt	James L. Collins
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Pfc	Arnold Brown	Pfc	Lonnie G. Curtner
Pfc	Leo A. Boyd	Pfc	James Daniel
Pfc	Ernest Brewer	Pvt	Joseph H. Davis
Pfc	John Brock	T/4	Andy E. Dawson
Cpl	Robert L. Brown	Pfc	Harry T. Dayhoff
S/Sgt	Denzil A. Bryant	Pvt	Alfred DeAngelis
S/Sgt	George B. Brogdon	Pfc	Frank J. DeFilippo
Pvt	George C. Bumann	Lt	George M. Diggs

Pvt	Warren W. Dorminy	Pfc	Philop S. Giles
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Pvt	Glen Fields	Pvt	Emilie A. Guliciello
Pvt	Harvey H. Fisher	Pfc	Eness D. Guidry
Pfc	Samuel I. Fondiler	Pvt	James H. Hadden
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Pvt	Frank T. Franco	Pfc	Donald E. Harford
Pvt	Joseph M. Frankiewicz	S/Sgt	Eugene L. Hartman
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Pfc	Anthony C. Iuliano	Pvt	Howard Y. Liggan
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Pvt	Walter B. Jenezewski	Pvt	Dave L. Litvik
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Pfc	Peter J. Talanca	Pvt	Oliver C. Woodring
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Lt	Cyril D. Tansey	Pvt	Bruno Yammarino
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Pvt George J. Zielinski

Cpl Nick Zoroy

COMMAND POST LOCATIONS

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PLACE	FROM	TO
Camp Shelby, Miss	15 May 43	1 Nov 44
Camp Kilmer, N. J.	3 Nov 44	14 Nov 44
New York, POE	14 Nov 44	15 Nov 44
MS John Ericcson	15 Nov 44	27 Nov 44
Owslebury, England	27 Nov 44	20 Jan 45
HMS Llangiby Castle	20 Jan 45	22 Jan 45
Enroute by rail	22 Jan 45	23 Jan 45
Bose Roger, France	23 Jan 45	1 Feb 45
Pierrepont, France	1 Feb 45	2 Feb 45
1 mi E. Pierrepont, France	2 Feb 45	7 Feb 45
½ mi NE, Liesse, France	7 Feb 45	8 Feb 45
Faymonville, Belgium	9 Feb 45	11 Feb 45
¼ mi N, Daubenscheid, Gemany	11 Feb 45	4 Mar 45
1 mi NE, Hollerath, Germany	4 Mar 45	8 Mar 45
Blankenheim, Germany (Castle)	8 Mar 45	19 Mar 45
Blankenheim, Germany (Court House)	19 Mar 45	21 Mar 45
Nieder-Breisig, Germany	21 Mar 45	22 Mar 45
Brohl, Germany	22 Mar 45	28 Mar 45
Nassau, Germany	28 Mar 45	30 Mar 45
1 mi E, Schupbach, Germany	30 Mar 45	31 Mar 45
Alten-Buseck, Germany	1 Apr 45	2 Apr 45
Geismar, Germany	3 Apr 45	5 Apr 45
Kassel, Germany	5 Apr 45	8 Apr 45
Witzenhausen, Germany	8 Apr 45	9 Apr 45
Freidland, Germany	9 Apr 45	9 Apr 45
Mengelrode, Germany	9 Apr 45	10 Apr 45
Grossmehlra, Germany	11 Apr 45	11 Apr 45
Alten-Beichlingen, Germany	11 Apr 45	12 Apr 45

Markwerben, Germany	12 Apr 45	14 Apr 45
Weissenfels, Germany	14 Apr 45	16 Apr 45
Rotha, Germany (Apt. House)	16 Apr 45	17 Apr 45
Rotha, Germany (Near Regt'l CP)	17 Apr 45	18 Apr 45
Zwenkau, Germany	18 Apr 45	19 Apr 45
Markkleeburg, Germany	19 Apr 45	20 Apr 45
Taucha, Germany	20 Apr 45	21 Apr 45
Gallen, Germany	21 Apr 45	23 Apr 45
Wolpern, Germany	23 Apr 45	2 May 45
Colditz, Germany	2 May 45	10 May 45
Freyburg, Germany	10 May 45	12 May 45
Mucheln, Germany	12 May 45	22 Jun 45
Asmushausen, Germany	22 Jun 45	Present Date

Misc. WWII Correspondence Follows

350 Powell Rd. Apt#516  
Columbia, SC, 29203-9367  
17 May 2001

Mr. Phillip Linderman  
AMCONSUL Leipzig  
PSC 120, Box 1000  
APO AE 09265

Dear Consul Linderman:

The "Bulletin" of the 69th Infantry Division Association, Vol 54, No. 2 for the first quarter of 2001 carried an item about your interest in those who participated in the battle and capture of Weissenfels during WWII.

My entire Anti-Tank Company of approximately nine officers and one hundred and sixty enlisted men were very involved in that battle. I am enclosing pages 60-65 inclusive from "Story of Anti-Tank Company, 271st Infantry" a 108 page history of the Company, written by Reuben Levin, our Company Clerk, detailing our operations at Weissenfels.

A little clarification:

The principal armament in the Anti-Tank Company was the 57mm Anti-tank Gun, and .50 Caliber Machine Guns. If I remember correctly there were three 57's per platoon. I don't remember how many .50 Caliber Machine Guns we had. There were 3 Gun Platoons in our Company and a Mine Platoon.

On page 61 there is reference to an "old German ferry". It was not a "ferry" as we understand it. It was more like a rickety raft, drawn across the river by ropes. To test its viability my Jeep, being the lightest item, was first across. Next we tried a 57mm Gun, and succeeded. Then a 3/4 Ton Truck with ammunition successfully crossed and everything was on "go".

The references to Company "E" getting on and off our trucks: Until we met resistance at Weissenfels we had been moving easy and relatively long distances. My Company was entirely mobile and we had room, with some over-loading, to carry most of the men of "E" Company, so we did.

In the same issue of the "Bulletin" the "Taps" section listed three more members of ATCO-271 who had recently passed away. I'm afraid there are little more than 50% of us still around for whatever recognition and honors the Mayor has in mind, but thanks for communicating his message.

Arthur R. Datnoff  
Col(then Capt)USA, (Ret)



took a shot in the dark, and hit a Jerry soldier in the leg. After Aid man Biles had fixed him up, they brought him to the CP for questioning, and he said he had come all the way from his outfit to see his wife, who lived in that town. He more or less was taking his own discharge from the Wehrmacht.

We got up for breakfast at about 0330 on the morning of 12 April, and took to the road again with "E" Company at 0630. Little did we know what lay in store for us that day when we first pulled out. It seemed like just another day. Barela took a wrong turn in Freyburg and went blithely on until Lt. Whalen came chasing after him in a jeep. The people of Freyburg really gave us a reception - they even threw flowers at us. But when we got just East of Weissenfels, it was another story. We had hit into resistance ahead. The men of "E" Company dismounted and went ahead on foot, and we knew then that we were in for a fight. The head of our convoy was in Markwerben, the tail in Vichteritz. Sgt. Camara's gun got in the first lick. His squad fired eight rounds across the Saale River at a group of Jerries on the far side, and it wasn't long till the white flags were waving. One soldier jumped off a bicycle and took shelter behind a tree, but De Geyter's next shot was a direct hit - on the tree and the German. While the Mine Platoon searched houses for weapons and snipers, the officers made a reconnaissance forward. Just before they got within sight of the main bridge into Weissenfels, it was blown by the enemy.

First Platoon went into position at the eastern part of Markwerben to protect the approaches to that sector, and Third Platoon furnished protection for the right flank of Second Battalion. Second Platoon moved forward to support the rifle troops in the street fighting in the outskirts of the city. Mine Platoon went forward to inspect the main roads, but found no mines. HQ, Mine and Third Platoons took over a few houses in Markwerben and bedded down for the night.

Friday, the 13th of April, was a Red Letter Day for Anti Tank. At 1100 that morning Second Battalion began its operations to cross the Saale River and take the city. Third Platoon had taken up positions along the river, about 300 yards downstream from the crossing site, and at H-20 two of the 57's and two machine guns opened fire. They succeeded in wiping out sniper nests on the far side, and forced

the enemy to take cover. When "F" Company started crossing in assault boats, they intensified their fire, and then followed the advance of the riflemen on the far side by leapfrogging their guns down the river bank, blasting the houses in front of the rifle troops. As a direct result of this support fire, no assault boats were lost, and "F" Company's casualties were light. This marked the first tactical employment of the 57mm AT gun as an Infantry attack support weapon.

Second Platoon helped here too, by supporting the Third from its position on a hill overlooking the river. One bit of humor injects itself at this point. After firing four rounds, Kagan's gun fell apart when the recoil nut came loose. Buckingham told Wessel to load another round, and turned to find the barrel gone. So they loaded the barrel on the truck, hooked up the gun, and took off for the rear. They were definitely kaput for the moment!

First combat vehicles to cross the Saale River were the trucks and guns of First Platoon. The Engineers had fixed up an old German ferry, and they carried over our men. First came a gun, then its truck, and so on, until the whole platoon was across. Capt. Datnoff and Lt. Backer reported to "F" Company's CP, and found that the outfit was being held up by well-intrenched snipers, and it was waiting for tanks to come up and help out. Since the other companies were advancing in their sectors, our officers advised the CO of "F" Company to get moving and keep abreast of the other line companies. They were going to give the doughboys support with our guns. So Figlin and his squad went with one rifle platoon, Barnes with another, and Buckner's men were split up between the other two squads. And those two squads did plenty of firing. Two medics had been killed by a sniper in a house in Barne's path, so he poured a few 57 rounds into it, and all became quiet. They did the same with other targets, using the bazooka in one squad, and the machine gun in the other, to cover the 57 as it was being by-handed forward. The noise of the 57 in the streets was almost enough to drive the enemy away, even if the shots had no effect at all. But they really did, as Capt. Datnoff found upon later examination. One of the rounds had penetrated four walls-others had wrecked whole floors of houses. And the civilliens said that the firing and noise really had the soldiers running. The riflemen

kept on down the streets, searching all the houses, and our men helped them when they weren't firing. The tanks finally arrived, and to show what encouragement they gave the men, here is what Sgt. Earnes said in his squad's story-"I'm telling you, my boys and I were sure glad to see them!" The tanks and our vehicles formed a convoy, and the Task Force Commander invited Capt. Datnoff and Capt. Gresham of "F" Company to ride the lead tank with him, on a Victory March through Weissenfels. And some march it was, with the riflemen shooting out windows and street lights.

In the meantime parts of the Second Platoon were crossing the river, and just as Sgt. Coss' squad was in the middle of it on the ferry, a Messerschmidt came over to strafe. They really felt naked and helpless out there in the middle of the river. When that got to the far side they took a slight break to change underwear. Sgt. Coss, who was on the shore when the plane came over, found himself racing Col. McCormick for a foxhole. The Colonel must have been a track a man, for he beat Danny to it. But luckily no one was hurt.

The Mine platoon was assigned the task of herding PW's from the ferry site to the regimental PW enclosure. That night most of the resistance in Weissenfels was overcome, after hard fighting by the men of Second Battalion, and the next morning, the rest of our company crossed over into town on a pontoon bridge the Engineers had erected by then. Our convoy formed up just as it was getting light, but we just sat there for hours. But come to think of it, it wasn't exactly idle time. Sgt. Smith gets credit for opening three saloons, countless civilian cars joined the company, and Arfa even bought an old Ford truck from a civilian for 5000 German marks, worthless to us anyway. All day long prisoners came in by the hundreds, many herded in by our own boys. Fowler got the booby prize for bringing in several firemen off duty-"I thought they were at least Generals in those fancy uniforms!" said Fowler. Potashnick took charge of the searching and grilling for a while, and he really had the Germans scared, what with his M-3 pointing in all directions. It was high comedy with a poker face. And the night before the same city had seen plenty of tragedy. There were quite a few empty places on our trucks, where "E" company men had ridden only two days before.

The garrison at Weissenfels really put up a fanatical defense, but toward the end they probably saw the hopelessness of the situation, and the prisoners came in in droves. More than 1500 were taken that day. Horn even took some prisoners with an unloaded rifle. He just didn't notice it till later.

While we were waiting around the civilians staged a run on a dairy store nearby, so Beers and Hassler and some of their men went out to establish order. They made the people get in line, letting all displaced persons, refugees, and Allied PW's take the head of it. And then the butter and margarine really started going. What we didn't find out till later was that the two men behind the counter weren't the owners at all—they had just broken in and started selling the stock. Nice work, if you can get it.

During the time we were all fooling around in the city, Lt. Whalen, Sgt. Carlson, and eight men from the Mine Platoon went ahead with the leading tank column, as a mine clearing detail. But as the tanks flushed the enemy out of the military camp area outside of Weissenfels, those men helped herd in the PW's. In their own line of duty, they removed two roadblocks of Teller mines in the roads. Sgt. Shepherd and Oney blew the mines up later, when they came up with the rest of the convoy. When the blast went off all the civilians ducked inside and hung out some more white flags. In the block nearest the explosion, there weren't many windows left after Shep got through.

When the convoy finally moved out behind the tanks we only got to the edge of the city before we were again held up. The tanks were drawing heavy 88 fire, and one was knocked out. A call came back for "E" Company to load into our first three trucks and get to the head of the convoy. Through a misunderstanding, Figlin took his squad and went ahead with the riflemen. His men mounted the lead tank, all set for action, with their 45's at the ready. But as the folly of their position, naked there on the tanks, dawned on them, they asked what cooked, and were told to get the hell out of there. Which they proceeded to do in record time. The day was saved, for that squad at least.

Since the column couldn't advance due to the 88's, a flanking move was decided

upon-to surround and capture the gun positions. The Second Division had priority on the pontoon bridge at that time, and we couldn't recross the river for the move, so the whole convoy bedded down in Weissenfels for the night. The company had two houses for billets, and although it was crowded and men slept in halls and corners, everyone dropped right off to sleep. It had been a full day.

Early the next morning Sgt. Carlson, Levin, and six men of the Mine Platoon went out with the tanks of Task Force Zweibel in the flanking move. Second Battalion and our Third Platoon were in the convoy following. While the task force recrossed the Saale River and proceeded up the West bank, the rest of the company moved up the other side to complete the encircling move, with the aid of Second Division's 38th Regiment. The Task Force was held up at first by 88 fire; so "E" Company went forward on foot to remedy the situation. In close coordination, Second Platoon fired into the town the riflemen were approaching. Although they were on the far side of the river and the range was 2500 yards, the men did some good firing and succeeded in knocking out the enemy observer in the town's church steeple, and enabling "E" Company to move in.

The Mine Platoon detail, lying beside the road waiting to go ahead with the clearing of it, had box seats for the capture of Kreisan and the 88 positions, which had given us so much trouble. Our men on both sides of the river had some close calls from them that day, and it was good to see them done for. From Markwerben, a hail of fire from the 4.2 mortars of a Chemical Gas Battalion was directed at the gun positions. Then as the riflemen advanced through the fields, the tanks lined up abreast, and threw all they had into the area. Exploding enemy ammo dumps and fires in the barracks around the camp, together with the 500 enemy prisoners taken, showed what teamwork could do. When the score was finally tallied there were more than 30 gun positions overrun. The rifle troops had a great time tying white flags to the gun barrels and then elevating the guns. The tanks then led the convoy in a triumphal parade around the whole captured area. Through fields and ditches, and down the roads had procession sped. And then back to Weissenfels to spend the night. The Miners had left the company that morning with one K ration each, so they expected

to be real hungry by the time they returned. But as it turned out, after hitting into a bake shop and dairy store, they had eggs for breakfast, eggs for dinner, and eggs for supper, with bread and jam, coffee, and even cherry pie. They not only brought back the one K ration, but also brought a load of bread and eggs besides.

At 0915 the next morning, 16 April, we reassembled the convoy and proceeded to Pegau, Division reorganization point. While we waited alongside the road, orders were received to abandon all civilian cars we had picked up. So Arfa and a couple of other boys put on a daredevil show for us out in the fields. It looked like a tryout for a berth with Jimmy Lynch and his Daredevil Riders. Lt. Morris turned his car over to the Military Government.

Anti Tank Company received orders to proceed to Rotha, where the gun platoons were to be attached to their respective battalions. The whole division was on the road that day, and it was a traffic cop's nightmare. Time and time again our convoy was split up by other units. Once we even had to get off the road altogether to straighten out the mess, when the head of the column was held up by enemy fire. But we finally got to Rotha at 1830, and found billets in an apartment house at the edge of town. Second Platoon joined Second Battalion that night, but first and Third made contact with theirs and spent the night with the company. There was a great deal of firing that night, and the artillery rocked the house. The guards were all a bit uneasy, to put it mildly. It was decided the next morning to move the Mine Platoon and HQ further down in town, and we took over a nice dentist's home there.

That morning First Platoon joined First Battalion at Espenhain, and went into position there to protect the northern approaches to that town. Later in the day Third Platoon, enroute to join its battalion at Zwenkau, was pinned down by a terrific enemy artillery barrage just outside of Bohlen. They sweated it out for half an hour in an air raid shelter, and were about to start for Zwenkau again when they discovered a German radio and two operators in another room of the bunker. The boys made quick work of that, and were again on their way. They finally arrived in Zwenkau, only to be ordered back to the company the next day. When they got back



# Trespass Against Them

## History of the 271st Infantry

Submitted By: **Lawrence Verheye**

*Company F, 271st Infantry*

1251 Pierce Road

Wakarusa, Indiana 46573-9616

Written By: **Lt. John F. Higgins, 2nd Battalion**

### Entering Germany

The 10th of February was the day we entered Germany. That morning, we moved out, combat-loaded, and took up the positions occupied by the 395th Infantry of the 99th Division in the vicinity of Hollerath, just inside the first belt of pillboxes of the infamous Siegfried Line. By 1630, all positions had been taken over, and the battle-green 69th was ready to apply the principles learned in all the months of training.

The men were far from comfortable that first night. With only one blanket and a sleeping bag in the below-freezing weather, not to mention the fact that we were subjected to harassing artillery fire, supplemented by "screaming meemies" and considerable use of the flares. Extensive patrol activity, aimed at feeling out the strength and disposition of the enemy, was carried out for the following two weeks, and it was not long before most men had become quite used to life at the front. As someone put it: "You don't have to worry about the ones you can hear!" After a time, you can fairly accurately tell where they will land. Morale of the command was excellent, especially when the kitchens arrived in the area, and it was possible to send up hot food to the men in the line.

During this period, all duffle bags were turned in, so that the units could travel fast and light. Condition of roads in the area was wretched, which seriously accentuated the supply problem. In the 17 days before our first attack, 30 prisoners were taken, of whom 10 were captured by our patrols. In this area too, great emphasis was put on maintaining weapons and equipment as well as much attention to proper sanitation.

### First Attack

After being postponed several times, our first attack was launched at 0600, 27 February. We arose at 0300, had breakfast and spent the remainder of the time in final preparations. The night was very still, and a slight mist hung in the air, an ideal morning for our purpose. It is not boasting to say here that anyone who had come into our area that morning could have accurately predicted that we would measure up to any combat assignment given us. There was no visible nervousness, no confusion, no slackening of morale. Everyone stood ready to perform his assigned tasks as though it were maneuvers at Shelby, secure in the knowledge that whatever exigencies arose, we were ready. To borrow the much-used expression: "This was it!", and every man in the 271st knew it.

The plan of attack was as follows: The 69th Division, two regiments abreast, with the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion, were to seize and hold the high ground between Honningen and Giescheld inclusive, in order to clear the Hellenthal-Hollerath road for use as a supply route.

The 271st Infantry, with 879th Field Artillery, 880th Field Artillery and Company A of the 269th Engineers in support, would seize and hold its portion of the Division objective, after which it would be prepared to assist by fire the 273rd in the capture of Giescheld. The Second Battalion, with the 879th Field Artillery, a platoon of Engineers, a platoon of Company C, 661st Tank Destroyer in support, was on the left; the First Battalion on the right, and the Third Battalion in reserve. The Third was to stand ready to furnish carrying parties to the attacking battalions during the hours of darkness, and also to occupy Dickerscheid with one company, upon call from Second Battalion, when the town was captured.

Cannon Company supported the attack of the regiment, with priority of fire to the Second Battalion. Anti-Tank Company was to provide litter squads, and also have its mine platoon sweep the roads to Dickerscheid and Buschem, after clearing mines in the vicinity of the bridge site. Company A of the 269th Engineers was to construct a bridge in Second Battalion sector, and also clear mines and abatis in the First Battalion area. These were the plans, and with them well in mind, the 271st Infantry Regiment went into action the morning of 27 February 1945.

The First and Second Battalions crossed the line of departure on time and advanced towards their objectives. With a few unavoidable exceptions, the regiment reached and held its objective according to plan.

The First Battalion, in the face of stiff resistance, achieved its objective by 1030, with all companies committed. The remainder of the day they spent digging in and consolidating their positions.

Company G of the Second Battalion attacked Dickerscheid and by noon had taken four houses; by 1700 had nearly completed mopping up the town. Company F, attacking Buschem and Honningen, was able to take half of Buschem before being pinned down by fire from nearby Honningen, and was ordered to hold its present position for the night. One platoon of Company E assisted G in mopping up Dickerscheid and clearing the woods east of the town. Company K was then ordered to occupy Dickerscheid, which was accomplished, releasing G Company to close the gap between themselves and F Company.

The Third Battalion was alerted that night, but not committed until the next day. The next morning, E Company was committed to assist F Company, and the two companies cleared Buschem and went on to take Honningen. Two counterattacks were repulsed in the area.

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## TRESPASS AGAINST THEM

*(Continued from Page 11)*

At 1400, 28 February, Company B led the First Battalion in its attack on Hahnenberg, moving towards the village from the draw southwest of it. Concurrently, plans were made for the Third Battalion, Company I on the right, Company L on the left, to take Oberreifferscheid, following a five-minute artillery preparation. Company L, however, experienced some delay in the assembly area, and did not cross the line of departure until 1450. Nonetheless, the attack was successful, and positions were consolidated.

In all the advances of these two days, enemy artillery, mortar, nebelwerfer, and machine-gun fire were encountered. However, our artillery countered with good results, causing the enemy artillery to cease firing temporarily.

Throughout the attack, morale remained at its high level. Everyone performed his duties, and many far exceeded the call of duty. It was not a pleasant experience, but through close cooperation and teamwork, all missions were accomplished, and each man emerged more mature, wiser, more aware of the task ahead.

Praise must be given the Medical Detachment of the Regiment. Anyone who heard the cry "Hey, Medic!," in the heat of battle, will never forget the manner in which that call was answered. With disregard for personal safety, and themselves suffering casualties, our Medics were outstanding in the performance of their duties. Instances of aid men continuing their ministrations under sniper and mortar fire were common. There is no greater aid to morale than the knowledge to the individual that, if he is hit, there is help close behind. Evacuation of casualties was done expeditiously, to which fact many men today owe their lives.

One hundred and seventy prisoners were taken in those days, most of them by Company G in the Dickerscheid area. Twenty-four machine guns were destroyed, two captured, eight 80-mm mortars and six 50-mm mortars, and one 7.5 Infantry howitzer were destroyed; one anti-tank gun, four 88-mm self-propelled guns were knocked out and one battery of enemy artillery was silenced.

Casualties in the regiment were reasonably light. One officer and 38 men were killed; one man died of wounds, 19 were seriously wounded. Three officers and 117 men were missing in action, and non-battle casualties included four officers and 107 men. Total casualties for the period were nine officers and 305 enlisted men.

The first day of March found the regiment still advancing. Having captured the village of Wahld shortly before midnight on the 28th, Company B went on to occupy Hescheld. Company C sent a platoon to B as reinforcements, while Company A adjusted its positions to tie up with B. Other company positions in

the regiment remained the same; lines were adjusted and straightened, positions consolidated and contact established. Anti-tank weapons were moved well forward and roads were swept of mines. A bridge was erected to provide a continuous road to the First Battalion. Companies G and K changed places, restoring tactical unity to both battalions.

During the first few days of March, our entire front was under sniper and artillery fire. In Buschem, the anti-tank guns had to be moved to new positions after coming under direct fire of 88s. Most of the companies were able to get hot food to their men and to issue them clean, dry clothes, something which had not been seen for many days.

There were several minor skirmishes, which it is believed were aimed at forcing us to disclose the location of our weapons. Occasionally, there were barrages of artillery and mortars, most of which fell in the Third Battalion area. Small-arms fire was limited.

### Schmidtheim

German prisoners taken the morning of 6 March confirmed the fact that the enemy was leaving his positions and pulling back. The obvious reason was the large-scale offensives being launched on both our flanks by the bulk of the First and Third Armies who were close to effecting a function just short of the Rhine. The Krauts were fast deciding that the best way for them to travel was east and fast!

Accordingly, when a large-scale reconnaissance disclosed an almost complete lack of potential resistance in our sector, a plan was formulated whereby we could make a big move to the vicinity of Schmidtheim. This was the plan: At 0800, one reinforced company of the First Battalion would push out on reconnaissance in force to seize and hold the town of Schmidtheim, clearing up any pockets of resistance in its sector. The Second Battalion was to sweep the area in its sector of the regimental zone and leave a guard of not more than one squad in each town until relieved by the Military Government. Upon regimental order, the battalion would move to Schmidtheim. The Third Battalion was to seize the town of Hecken at dawn, and send one reinforced company to conduct reconnaissance in force and to outpost the regimental sector to the north and east of Schmidtheim. Special units were to support the advance as in previous similar movements.

The advance was made swiftly and almost without event. It was apparent that the enemy was withdrawing faster than our troops could keep up with them.

First Battalion arrived in Schmidtheim at 1330 and then moved on to clear the area to the east at 1715. The Second Battalion completed its mission, clearing the pillboxes in the regimental area. Third Battalion moved out at 0900 and after reaching Schmidtheim, Companies K and L went on to the east at 1500. Four

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## TRESPASS AGAINST THEM

*(Continued from Page 12)*

towns and 14 prisoners were taken in this move. When the area east of Schmidtheim was cleared, the regimental Command Post was set up in Blankenheim. Regimental Headquarters Company and Anti-Tank Company set up in Blankenheim, as did the entire Second Battalion. The First and Third Battalions were in Schmidtheim. We learned at this time that we had been pinched out by the junction of the First and Third Armies and must await further developments before being recommitted.

Blankenheim had been dealt heavy blows by our Air Corps, but our stay there was comfortable and gave the men a chance for needed rest, reorganization and servicing of equipment. It was brightened somewhat by the fact that some of our exploring non-coms were able to find and liberate a good supply of wine. A few lucky individuals were able to get passes to Paris. We remained in the Schmidtheim-Blankenheim area for 15 days, during which Special Service provided entertainment, and presentations of awards for heroic achievement and meritorious service were made. Shower facilities were set up, and clean clothes issued.

Our next movement was to an area which had been recently figuring large in the conduct of the war. On the morning of 23 March, we moved out in motor convoy, and after an uneventful trip, arrived at Sinzig, which had, in better times, been a resort town on the Rhine, but which was now the scene of more activity than any sector since the St. Lo breakthrough. Streams of men and equipment were pouring through to cross the Rhine in the area of Remagen. Here we saw the remains of the Ludendorf bridge, which had done so much to facilitate the progress recently made. It was interesting to note the reaction of the German civilians to the tremendous display of men and equipment which was passing in a never-ending stream through their streets. One could see mixed amazement and a hint of resignation to the fact that it could not last much longer.

Regimental Command Post was in Sinzig, as were those of Second Battalion and Service Company. The rest of the regiment were in towns in the immediate vicinity. One of the highlights of our five-day stay was the opportunity for the men to take sulphur baths. Very luxurious for a doughfoot!

### Across the Rhine

On 28 March, we crossed the Rhine on Victor Bridge, the longest tactical pontoon bridge in the world, and a tribute to the Engineers who built it. All along the route to our destination were thousands of recently liberated nationals of conquered countries who were outspoken in their demonstrations of appreciation. The distance covered in the move was approximately 50 miles, and the regimental Command Post was set up in the town of Winden, near Nassau.

As the month of March drew to a close, the Regiment was still advancing rapidly without meeting any resistance from the Heinies, who were withdrawing faster than we could follow them. We were all wondering where they would make a determined stand and were not long in finding out.

Easter Sunday found the Regimental Command Post in Grossen Buseck, after having made several long and uninterrupted jaunts since the Rhine crossing. The day had with it an undertone of optimism on the duration of the European phase of the war. The hint of victory was unmistakably in the air, although everyone realized that much fighting remained to be done.

For the next few days, the regiment made successive moves until, averaging about 35 miles a day, we pulled into the ravaged city of Kassell on 5 April. Remember the feeling you got on entering Kassell? Everyone was in agreement that Germany was a good place for it to happen! What a mess!

Leaving Kassell on 8 April and moving eastward behind a spearhead of the Ninth Armored Division, the regiment again began making contact with the enemy. Each battalion was charged with the responsibility of mopping up the bypassed resistance in the zone of its advance. Orders were to continue a bold and determined advance until sufficient resistance was met to hold up the column. During this period, the First Battalion was attached to the 273rd Regiment and assisted in taking the town of Hann Munden, where stiff resistance was encountered.

### Battle of Weissenfels

The regiment's first large battle began the evening of 12 April. The Second Battalion moved up to take the town of Weissenfels, approximately 25 miles southwest of Leipzig. It was originally believed that the city was not too strongly held, but it turned out to be the major garrison before Leipzig, strongly and bitterly defended.

Entering the city's outskirts, a firefight of considerable intensity developed, and immediately Companies G and E were committed, supported by the weapons of H Company. It was immediately apparent that this was no small delaying force. Anti-tank guns were rushed to the scene and assisted in neutralizing strong points with point-blank fire. By dusk, only the west part of the city had been cleared after heavy fighting, and in the determination of their defense, the Germans blew up all the bridges across the Saale River, after withdrawing to the east bank. The river coursed through the city, and was a natural defensive barrier.

At 1930, the battalion CP was set up in a paper mill in the cleared part of Weissenfels, and patrols were sent out to estimate the strength of the enemy and reconnoiter for possible assault crossing points. Meantime, Companies E and F moved up into position

*(Continued on Page 14)*

## TRESPASS AGAINST THEM

*(Continued from Page 13)*

alongside G Company, poised for the attack in the morning. Assault boats were rushed up and G Company made a bold and costly crossing. In the process, five boats were shot up and sunk, with some casualties, and only two platoons got across. Quickly another crossing point was decided upon, and the remainder of G Company got across under fire from soldiers and civilians alike. Resistance was fanatical. F Company got across at the lower point without too much opposition and were quickly followed by E Company and the attachments of H Company. Fighting of great intensity raged when the bridgehead was made, and the riflemen were able to advance only a few hundred yards into the eastern part of the city. The Engineers had meanwhile started putting in a pontoon bridge, but armored help was urgently and immediately needed. By a round-about route through Naumburg, the aid of medium and light tanks of Task Force Zebra was rushed across the river and sped up to Weissenfels to help the doughboys.

When they arrived, they were immediately split up into three groups, one attached to each rifle company, and the city was likewise divided into three sectors, one per company. The work of clearing the city proceeded amid savage fighting and much interference from civilian snipers, whose special targets seemed to be medical aid men. The riflemen kept plugging ahead until the only Krauts left were dead ones, and the astounding total of 1,500 PWs were taken, among them many SS men and Gestapo agents. Next day, even after the city was considered cleared, there were still fanatical snipers making things uncomfortable for the troops.

One man in the Second Battalion discovered that the telephone lines were still intact; immediately proceeded to call the Weissenfels operator and tell her that if the sniping did not cease, we would withdraw from the town and level it with artillery. It wasn't long afterward that many snipers turned themselves in to the nearest GI. This same man in a previous town had cleverly extracted some choice military information from an operator, telling her in perfect German that he was lost from his outfit and asking where the German soldiers were. She told him and followed the conversation with an enthusiastic "Heil Hitler!"

It was on 13 April that we received the saddening news of the death of our Commander in Chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The only tangible tribute we were able to offer to his memory was the fact that we were helping to bring about the victory for which he had labored and expended his life.

On this same day, the Third Battalion moved into action north of Weissenfels. In attempting to gain a bridgehead, the entire battalion was pinned down by a withering barrage of artillery, mortar, machinegun and flak fire. It was necessary to remain in this position until darkness when it was possible to move out.

Most of the casualties were suffered by Cannon Company, who were caught trying to go into firing position. The next day, the battalion moved south through Weissenfels, east and then north, back into its own sector, picking up a platoon of tanks and tank destroyers on the way. Their next order was to take the town of Lutzen, and this was done successfully. Four other towns were also taken by them the same day.

After clearing Weissenfels, the Second Battalion was ordered on 14 April to advance to Kreisan and clean up some batteries of dual-purpose 88-mm guns which had been giving our Third Battalion and a neighboring division much trouble. Company E moved to the attack, and by 1900 had completed its mission, overrunning and capturing 32 of the deadly weapons and amassing approximately 500 PWs.

Meanwhile, the First Battalion had been working closely behind Ninth Armored units, spearheading the bold regimental advance. Orders were to bypass resistance if possible. With Company A, 661 Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company A, 777 Tank Battalion attached, the battalion left Birkungen and traveled 71 miles, often out ahead of the armor, to the town of Beichlingen, where sharp fighting ensued on the outskirts and in the castle area. Many snipers were flushed out, several big guns neutralized, and one medium tank was lost when it suffered a direct hit from an 88. From here, the battalion moved ahead to Bernsdorf, again in front of the armor, and at one time were the closest Americans to Berlin. On 12 April, they moved out ahead of the armor and advanced until heavy flak fire was encountered in the vicinity of Pulgar, but in accordance with their mission, the battalion broke away, cutting south to get back on the route of the armor. In so doing, a firefight developed with Volkstrum units in the town of Pettstadt, where several PWs were taken. During this fight, the battalion was shelled from its rear by fire which it later learned was being directed by a 17-year-old German girl, supposedly a nurse. First Battalion stayed in Pettstadt that night, moving out next morning through Naumburg and on to the town of Stontzsch. Next day, 15 April, the battalion had the mission of securing a regimental assembly area in the vicinity of Rotha, for the attack on Leipzig, and proceeded to Kiertsch, where a small firefight developed, and 100 PWs were taken.

On 16 April, First Battalion moved on to Rotha, and from there to Espenhain, where they came under severe shelling from AA guns at the head and tail of the long column. Company A was hard hit and incapable of moving, but B Company was able to go back to knock out the guns which were assailing the tail of the column. This was done successfully, and B Company held up in Rotha. C Company meanwhile was sent north to clear up two small towns, which was likewise accomplished. On 18 April, Company A went north and cleaned up the weapons in the vicinity of Magdeborn, which had held up the advance two days earlier. Six batteries of 40mm and three 150mm

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## TRESPASS AGAINST THEM

(Continued from Page 14)

howitzers were captured. First Battalion was then attached to 273d Regiment for the attack on Leipzig.

On 18 April, the Third Battalion pushed off from Pegau, aiming for its final objective, Zwenkau. They got only a mile down the road when heavy resistance was met in the vicinity of Audigast. The battalion was in a column of companies with a platoon of tanks and of tank destroyers attached, when small-arms fire, supported by tank fire, was exchanged for about an hour. K Company, with a platoon of tanks, was ordered to assault and take the town. No artillery fire was met until the town was taken, but after it fell into our hands, the Krauts again cut loose with artillery, anti-tank and flak fire. That night, Company L made a night attack behind a rolling artillery barrage, passed through Audigast and two towns beyond.

In the morning, however, it was discovered that the Krauts had moved back into the two towns which L Company had passed through early that night, and L Company was cut off, in a precarious position. Companies I and K were pinned down by heavy fire and unable to advance to their assistance. The Jerries began moving in from all directions and some got as close as 75 yards before being picked off by our men. Finally, a terrific preparation of our artillery was thrown in, and the Krauts withdrew to the north.

Since the Third Battalion was held up from its original mission of taking Zwenkau, the task was in the meantime given to the Second Battalion. On the morning of the 18th, the Second jumped off from Rotha to hit Zwenkau from the flank. The forward Command Post moved into an observation post at the far edge of Bohlen, where they could have observation of both Zwenkau and the positions on its eastern perimeter. At 0700, Company F moved forward across 3,000 yards of coverless terrain. It received heavy small-arms fire and devastating fire from six-inch guns and 88s. Heavy artillery and our anti-tank guns firing at point-blank range failed to dislodge the enemy from their well-dug-in positions, and F Company was forced to withdraw. Company E, meanwhile, had been sent to clear the small town of Pulgar.

This done, Company G was rushed through east to hit Zwenkau from the south. The attack was successful, and Company E was freed to tackle the 12 six-inch guns which had stopped F Company. In a memorable application of the principle of marching fire, E Company moved boldly across the open fields and overran the guns. Any Kraut who showed his head from his foxhole was a dead one.

Next morning at 0700, Company G moved out to take the town of Eythra. It was necessary to cross a bridge to enter the town, and this was covered by machine guns. However, by a stroke of good fortune, the Germans were caught napping, and before they could deliver and fire, they and their weapons were in our hands. The prisoners were used to clear their own roadblock, so that our tanks might pass through.

Eythra was soon cleared, and Company G posted itself around the perimeter of the town. Less than 500 yards away, the Germans were pouring artillery on the town, and the guns themselves were visible. It was then decided to withdraw and neutralize them with artillery. This was done; the enemy were silenced and the town secured.

Having regrouped the battalion, night attacks were launched against the towns of Gaucha and Zobigker by E and F Companies. The towns were secured without casualties by 0600, 18 April.

It was near the town of Rotha that members of Regimental Headquarters Company met the enemy on 18 April. A staff officer and his driver came under enemy fire just outside the town, and the driver was captured. The officer escaped, ran back to Regimental Headquarters, and summoned aid. The I and R Platoon was immediately sent out to locate the enemy positions, and in so doing came under enemy machine-gun fire. The aid of the Chemical Mortars Platoon was secured, and the I and R were able to withdraw under cover of a protective smokescreen. This pocket of resistance was later cleared up by Company A. The driver who was captured was freed later when the city of Leipzig fell. Two men were killed and several wounded in this action, which for a time had threatened the regimental Command Post.

*(Battle for Leipzig in the next issue of the Bulletin)*

## Photos of German Tanks, Vehicles, etc. Wanted

Lee Archer

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Web Site: [www.panzerwrecks.com](http://www.panzerwrecks.com)

I am a self-publishing author producing a series of books about destroyed, surrendered and abandoned German tanks and vehicles 1944-45 called Panzerwrecks. If possible, see my website at the above address.

If there are any members or families that have photographs of destroyed German tanks, SP guns, halftracks, etc., that you would like to contribute, I would very much appreciate it.

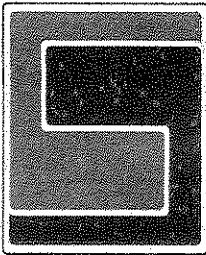
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Thanks you for your time and I look forward to hearing from anyone who can help.



# FIGHTING 69TH INFANTRY DIVISION

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## Disabled Panzer somewhere in Germany



### Men of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 273rd Infantry

Left to right: On top of tank, Snyder, Hunt. Standing at ground: Kajcienski, Stewart

Submitted By: Vern Hunt, 7774 Richard Drive, Lucerne, California 95458



# Trespass Against Them

## History of the 271st Infantry

### Part II

Submitted By: **Lawrence Verhey**

*Company F, 271st Infantry*

1251 Pierce Road

Wakarusa, Indiana 46573-9616

Written By: **Lt. John F. Higgins, 2nd Battalion**

### The Battle for Leipzig

On 18 April, the First Battalion, which had been following the Ninth Armored spearhead, was again attached to the 273d Regiment, which was attacking Leipzig. The 273d had taken the city with the exception of one last strongpoint, the large Napoleon Monument on the outskirts of the city. Unable to neutralize this point, the 273d committed our First Battalion to the task. The Memorial is a huge stone edifice, visible for miles around, with walls estimated from 10 to 20 feet thick, an ideal citadel. The storm trooper lieutenant in charge had orders to hold at all costs, and a two-month supply of food, water, and ammunition were on hand.

Our artillery blasted the monument, but it was futile, since the shells literally bounced off its walls. The afternoon of 19 April, the order was given for an assault, with C Company making the main effort, and B Company assisting from the left flank. Resistance was so heavy from within that the companies were forced to draw back, and more artillery was thrown at the tower. It is believed that the Napoleon Memorial is the smallest target in the war ever to receive so much artillery pounding, since six battalions were used.

At 1800, a truce was declared so that wounded on both sides could be evacuated, and during this truce, a captured German Major General went up into the monument to explain to the defenders the futility of remaining. The reply was that they would leave if they could be guaranteed safe conduct to their own lines, and this was refused. Fighting continued until, at 0100, 20 April, the garrison capitulated. With this gone, the city of Leipzig, Germany's fourth largest, was completely in our hands. Fighting had been bitter and casualties high, but First Battalion had the honor of helping win one of the great victories of the war.

Moving on to the northeast, the Regiment went into temporary defensive positions. First and Second Battalions were in the area of Taucha, while Third Battalion held the area around Puchau, defending the west bank of the Mulde River.

During this period, the men were paid in marks for the first time. There are some interesting and enlightening insights into the reactions and spirit of the men in the following quotations from an article titled "Mark Time," written by one of the men of Company K on payday:

"So they're paying us in marks this time? I wonder what the Krauts think about our printing. Never was there a payday that meant so little. It takes more than dough to pay for this past couple of weeks. I'll bet any GI would sell this whole damn country for two-bits and a ticket home. Yes, we'd sell it that cheap, even though it cost us quite a bit. It wasn't so bad at first. What was the name of that first town? Lutzen, wasn't it? We caught them asleep that time, but still it was rough on the nerves walking across that open field in front of the town, expecting everything to bust loose in your face. Boy, were we glad to have those 'J' platoon boys out in front! They were just attached at first, but it didn't take us long to take those Negro boys to our hearts and make them part of us. They dug those "Sleeping Beauty" Nazis out of their holes like my dog going after a gopher!

"The trouble is that when you take a town so easily, they find another job for you to do. I'll never forget the next job either. K Company was out in front of the battalion, and we were all pretty winded from clearing the first town, when it seemed as though Old Lucifer had blown his top! Sniper fire, flak, 88s and mortars all hit us like a ton of bricks. It got a lot of us before we could hit that narrow ditch alongside the road. I could see the boys digging into the sides of the road bank, and the medics were following a million cries all a once. One was knocked down by flak, but we got up and went on again. I saw two legs sheared off below the hips, and wanted to vomit, but couldn't. We all cried that day, watching our buddies go down, but you couldn't see it in our eyes because there was too much hatred there!

"We got up off our bellies and took that town. We've taken a few more since. I guess old K Company is doing its bit to add emphasis to our division name, the Fighting 69th, but it still feels kind of funny to be paid off in marks, even if we did print them ourselves."

On 21 April, the First Battalion became attached to the Fifth Corps, while the other two battalions were defending the west bank of the Mulde River, and First Battalion moved out to take the city of Eilenberg. This was probably the most difficult battle the battalion had yet been in, since the town was held by some 1,200 Germans, well dug-in. Also, the natural characteristics of the town definitely favored the defenders. With Company B in front, C Company on the left and A on the right, the battalion moved forward, meeting heavy resistance. Company B, heading down the main street, was finally pinned down by sniper and machine-gun fire, and was temporarily stranded there by itself, since A and C were working along the sides of the town. Having pushed as far as the stream in the center of town, Company B was thrown back by a strong enemy counterattack. They withdrew about 500 yards and reorganized. It was not until the next day that they were again able to advance when five battalions

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## TRESPASS AGAINST THEM

(Continued from Page 36)

of light and medium artillery started pounding the city continually, at which time all three companies were able to advance to secure the west bank of the Mulde River in the center of town. Company A was successful in establishing a bridgehead, and the remainder of the city was quickly secured. The battalion remained in Eilenberg for several days before continuing to advance.

### In Appreciation

Like all infantry units, this regiment owes much to its supporting arms. In particular, we are indebted to our comrades-in-arms, the 879th Field Artillery. Without them, our missions would have been costly and often impossible. The close feeling which exists between us has resulted in a well-knit and coordinated team. In our rapid advance from the Rhine to the Mulde, they cooperated to the fullest, even helping to carry our men in their trucks. No one in this regiment can forget the work of our artillery throughout our campaigns, particularly in Eilenberg, where they literally blasted the town into surrender.

We must also voice our appreciation to Company A, 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion, for their splendid support. The praise of all battalion commanders has been lavished upon them for the close-in support they gave us. On one occasion, it was their protective smoke screen which enabled our I and R Platoon to disengage from a heavy firefight in Rotha, and at Eilenberg, their work was outstanding. Third Battalion remembers well the job of Chemical Mortars at Audigast.

Praise also for our own S-4 section. The work they have done in resupply and maintenance of ammunition loads has been in every instance noteworthy. No one but supply personnel themselves can fully appreciate the problems involved in supplying a fast-moving regiment with the thousand-fold necessities of combat. We are proud of the manner in which our supply section has performed these tasks.

Outstanding also was the support rendered by tanks and tank destroyers. In most of our encounters, we were fortunate in having attached Companies A and C, 661 Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company A, 777th Tank Battalion. Each of these units earned the respect of our officers and men, especially for their work in Weissenfels, Beichlingen and Eilenberg. And they in turn were loud in their praise of the aggressive manner in which our men worked with their supporting armor, providing them with close-in protection and enabling the armor to complete their missions of neutralizing strong points and providing defense against enemy armor. Valuable assistance was also given on long moves when our men were carried atop the tanks to help alleviate the transportation problem.

The problems of communication were many and often unorthodox, particularly on our long, rapid moves. These were met in a manner worthy of commendation, by skillful employment of wire, radio and message-center personnel and equipment. Continuous maintenance and service of facilities was accomplished under most trying conditions. Wire and radio personnel were called upon to perform feats which strained ingenuity and resourcefulness, doing so in each instance with distinction.

Our own Anti-Tank Company provided support without which many attacks might have failed and many tactical displacements been impossible. From the very beginning of the campaign, they assisted by clearing mines and roadblocks in the Hellenthal area and furnishing litter-bearers to the Medics. On foot and from leading vehicles, its members sought out mines continuously in the rapid moves from the Rhine to the Mulde.

At Weissenfels, the 57mm anti-tank guns were one of the reasons for success. Supporting Second Battalion, which was attacking without artillery or armored support, the guns were brought forward aggressively and brought down devastating fire on the city's defenders, later protecting a vital crossing of the Saale River by a clever leap-frog system of employment.

At Rotha, it was Anti-Tank men who assisted in defending the threatened Command Post location and helped rescue the I and R platoon which had been pinned down. At Eilenberg, effective fire was delivered on vital targets in the city at the extreme range of 3,000 yards. The value of anti-tanks guns as direct support weapons and the aggressive spirit of the men who manned them, both were proven to the grateful doughboys.

We are proud of the record of our Cannon Company. From the time its first round was fired in support of the regiment at 0920, 11 February, until the end of our campaign, over 30 tons of shells passed through its six cannons onto enemy targets. Although credited with knocking out several mortars and machine guns in the Hellenthal area, the highlight of the company's early activity came when an enemy counterattack against our Third Battalion in Oberreifferscheid was repulsed solely by cannon fire.

A concentrated two-day shelling in the Bohlen area silenced enemy 88s, set an ammunition dump afire, and destroyed several enemy barracks. Next day, their splendid work in shelling enemy gun positions north of Rotha (400 rounds in three hours) inflicted heavy casualties, forcing abandonment of the enemy's positions and enabled our K and L companies to achieve their objective, helping to clear the way to Leipzig.

Cannon Company had its final action in the area of Plagwitz, where it neutralized several targets along the Mulde River, knocking out gun positions and scoring a direct hit on a large building housing

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## TRESPASS AGAINST THEM

(Continued from Page 37)

German troops. Their last combat mission was fired at 1605, 24 April. We salute the skill and courage of our cannoneers, comrades-in-arms whose efforts we deeply appreciate.

Early in the campaign, there became attached to us an officer and enlisted man of the Military Government. Since their attachment, they have aided us immeasurably, playing an increasingly important part in the actions of the regiment. As soon as a town or city was captured, these representatives of Military Government assisted in restoring order, repairing utilities and in many cases helping to obtain billets for our troops. The tasks have been in many cases extremely difficult, and in all instances dispatched with speed and precision. We are indebted to this officer and his assistance for their splendid work during the period of their attachment to the regiment.

The last few days of April were given to maintaining defenses of the Mulde River and extensive patrolling in an effort to contact the Russians who were moving in towards us from the east.

It was on April 26th that a small town in our division zone became famous when a junction was effected there between two of the most powerful armies in history. The 273d made the contact which brought much glory to the division, and told the world that the end of Nazi Germany was close at hand. The Fighting 69th became one of the major topics of conversation and publicity at home, and we became ever more proud of the patch we wear.

## VE Day

May 8, 1945 ... Simultaneously in the capitol of the three major powers, the announcement was made. VE Day! The end of Adolf Hitler's mad dream, and proof to the world that no one nation can be permitted to dominate the world. The treachery and suffering brought about by the Hitler gang will forever remain a tragic and costly memory.

The European phase of the war has ended. Of the vast amount of men, material and events which brought it to close, much will be written. Historians for generations will be digesting and expounding the magnitude of operations.

Whatever is to be our role in future operations against the enemies of our nation, wherever we are sent from here, of this we are certain: This regiment has proven itself under the most trying circumstances, and has never failed to accomplish a mission. We shall continue to perform our assigned tasks with the same courage and tenacity which has thus far characterized our actions. Each man may feel proud and secure in the knowledge that things have been and will continue to be uncomfortable for our enemies with "Trespass against them!"

## 69th Division Members - Register Your Name with the WWII Registry

Submitted By: **Charles Chapman**  
*Headquarters and Headquarters Battery*  
*69th Division Artillery*  
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The National World War II Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. has been completed and was formally dedicated May 29th. Veterans (or their spouses and friends) can register the veteran's name and, if desired, a brief summary of the veteran's activities during WWII. There are several ways to do this - all of them easy and free:

1. Go to [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com); and click on WWII Registry; click on "Register an Honoree" and proceed to submit the information; or
2. Call 1-800-639-4ww2 and press "3" on the menu to speak to a representative about registering. You can then either register over the telephone or ask them to mail you material on which to register; or
3. Write to the National World War II Memorial, 2300 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 501, Arlington, VA 22201 and ask for registration material to be mailed to you.

After you have registered, you will be assigned an Account Number. This will enable you to view your registration on line. They should also assign you an ID number. The purpose of the ID number is to enable you to submit a World War II picture of the veteran if you so desire. Once you get your Account number and ID number, you can send a picture to World War II Memorial Processing Center, P.O. Box 305, Calverton, NY 11932. You must write both the Account number and the ID number on the back of the picture. There is a \$10.00 charge for submitting the picture. You will not get the picture back. Make check payable to World War II Memorial Processing Center.

To see information about a veteran who is already enrolled:

1. Go to [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com)
2. Click on WWII Registry.
3. Click on "Search the Registry."
4. Enter last name, first name and the state the veteran entered the service from.
5. Click on "Submit."

### Have a Mini-Reunion Planned?

Please let us know and we will list it in the Calendar of Events. Also, it gives other members of the 69th from the area the reunion is planned for to come and join in, even if they are not from your unit. We encourage you to welcome all 69ers.