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HEADQUARTERS, 142D INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

WAE/JAS/haa

30 September 1943

SUBJECT: Transfer of Historical Record of Avalanche Operation.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington (25) D. C. (Thru Channels)

Transmitted herewith is the Historical Record of the 142d Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, on the operation "Avalanche" from 9 September 1943 through 21 September 1943.

For the Commanding Officer:

William A. Beasley
WILLIAM A. BEASLEY
Captain, 142d Inf.
Adjutant

Incl: Historical Record of
Avalanche Operation.

(18) (18)

(30 Sept. 43)

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DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, Section 3.3, NND 735017
By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

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HEADQUARTERS 142d INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

RECORD OF EVENTS, 142d INF., 36th DIVISION
September 3d to September 20th, 1943

The 142nd RCT, 36th Infantry Division, commanded by Col. John D. Forsythe, arrived at Oran on April 13, 1943. Almost immediately the regiment was placed under 5th Army Control and was used for various patrols and training missions. About the 1st of August the entire regiment (less 3rd Bn) was ordered to the 5th Army Leadership & Battle Training Center to gain further training. However, very soon after the regiment's arrival, it was alerted for combat duty, and consequently, the regiment moved by motor to Arzew on the 7th of August to join the Division there.

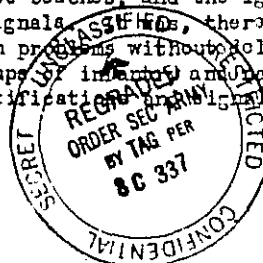
On the 8th of August, Col. Forsythe, Maj. Sorenson (S-3) and Maj. Hensley (S-4) left to join the Training Board, 36th Division Headquarters. They worked constantly day and night to perfect loading plans, orient themselves on the situation to be encountered, and formulated the plans to be used in the actual operation.

On the 11th of August the regiment left Arzew for Mers El Kebir and boarded the USS Dickman, Barnett, and Stanton. The boats left the port at 1300 and dropped anchor at 1620 in vicinity of Les Andoules. Amphibious training followed on the 12, 13 and 14th of August with practice landings on the beach. On the 15th of August a night landing exercise was held. The regiment returned to Arzew at 1130, August 16th. On August 22nd, having completed the complicated loading plans, Col. Forsythe and the S-3 and S-4 returned to the regiment to make further plans for the operation, Lt. Col. Ainsworth having been in command during this period.

On August 26th, "Cowpuncher" operation (one similar to the actual operation) started. Again the regiment moved to Oran to board the boats which departed from Mers El Kebir at 0900 August 27th and arrived at the beach near St Lew that night. At 0330 August 28th, the regiment started landing on the St Lew beach and continued moving in toward their objectives until 1145 when the problem was called off.

On Sunday afternoon, August 29, a critique of the "Cowpuncher" operation was held at VI Corps Headquarters. Present were Lt. Gen. Clark, Adm. Hall, Maj. Gen. Walker, Maj. Gen. Dawley, and all RCT commanders. Lt. Col. O'Mahundro, 5th Army Invasion Training Center, conducted the critique and pointed out several errors in the operation. It developed, finally, that most of the confusion was caused by a large number of boats landing on incorrect beaches, and the ignorance of the landing craft crews to understand the beach signals, therefore, directed by Lt. Gen. Clark and Adm. Hall that all such problems without delay be corrected. As a result during the next few days groups of infantry and Naval personnel worked together constantly to perfect identification signals.

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In the meantime feverish preparations were going on for the "Avalanche" operation (the actual landing). Everything was being packed for combat loading and all vehicles were being waterproofed which, incidentally, caused a serious transportation shortage.

On the afternoon of August 31st, Gen. Eisenhower arrived to review the troops of the regiment. Lt. Gen. Clark and Maj. Gen. Walker accompanied him. His presence there just prior to our embarkation had a profound effect on all members of the command. Later that evening "Avalanche" operation program was delivered to the battalion commanders and the commanders of attached units.

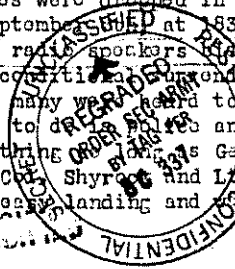
On the 3rd of September the regiment moved by motor to Mers El Kebir to board the ships, USS Barnett, Dickman, Lyon, Marnix and Oboron and LST Bruiser. The routine of assignments, mess arrangements, etc. were carried on during the day and evening. On the 5th of August at 1620 the convoy began sailing out majestically from the port. The size of the convoy and the protecting ships alongside were an impressive sight. As the boats pulled out of the bay a thought occurred to many aboard the ships - they tried to visualize the problems encountered by the original invasion of Oran only a few months ago and compared it with the problems confronting this invasion. After the first day out attractive and informative booklets on Italy were generally distributed and for the first time the troops knew where they were actually to land. Maps were opened and distributed and once again conferences began, including the company commanders and platoon leaders, orienting them, and making plans to the last detail. The ships were very poorly ventilated and crowded, consequently, most of the passengers stayed on deck as long as possible. The food was excellent and much appreciated after all the "C" rations heretofore. Picture shows were given in the officer's mess and coffee was served at all hours. Ice cream and soft drinks were also distributed. The Navy personnel tried in every way to make the trip as congenial, comfortable, and enjoyable as possible.

A wave of enthusiasm began to sweep through one ship, then another, until the whole convoy was elated at the realization that this was the first American Division to land on European territory proper and that our mission was important to the whole United Nations strategy. So it can be said that the morale was very high and that calm confidence was secure in the ability of each individual and group to perform his assigned mission.

The convoy proceeded generally along the African coast until it reached Bizerte which was overflowing with ships. After picking up several groups by lighter the convoy proceeded along the coast in sight of peaceful mountains which such a short time ago were bitterly contested. Wrecked German landing craft and boats were strewn all along the beach. Later over the horizon Sicily began to take shape with its steep lonely peaks in view. Generally life on board ship now was divided between conferences and viewing the interesting panorama before us. That night a large air raid was made on the British X Corps convoy barely visible on the horizon to our left. Great explosions were heard and the antiaircraft tracers resembled a 4th of July celebration. Fortunately our convoy was not attacked although flares were dropped in our general vicinity. Very suddenly the next evening, September 8th, 1942 excitement once again swept through the convoy as the radio speakers blared forth the news that Marshal Badoglio had signed an unconditional surrender for Italy. Immediately, there was a general let-down and many were heard to say that "another dry-run is coming up. All we will have to do is go to another area". Realizing quickly that the surrender meant nothing to the Germans were present in Italy, Gen. O'Daniel, Col. Forsythe, Col. Shroyer and Lt. Col. McDonald set about to dispel any such thoughts of an easy landing and

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all men that it would now probably be even harder to deal with the Germans taking over completely. In spite of every effort, however, to overcome the effects of the announcement, the men began underestimating the enemy. Fires were burning brilliantly along the coast and huge explosions could be seen in the distance. That was immediately interpreted by many of the men that Italians were fighting the Germans. Finally at 2315 the landing nets were lowered and at 2400 the first wave debarked.

The 142d RCT (reinforced) was to land at Red and Green beaches at H-Hour, D-Day with 2nd and 3rd battalion combat teams abreast. 2nd BCT on right, 1st BCT in reserve.

- 141st RCT (reinforced) on our right flank.
- British X Corps on our left flank.
- 143rd RCT (reinforced) in division reserve.

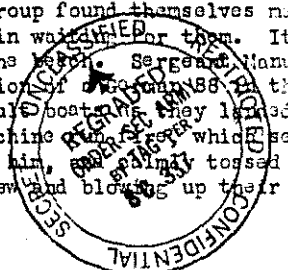
Mission of 36th Division - To protect right flank of British X Corps and to seize and hold the beachhead between Sele River and Agropoli.

Mission of 142nd RCT:

- a. Without delay capture and defend the high ground in the vicinity of Roccadaspide, Albanella, Altavilla, prepare selected localities for defense and mop up area west thereof.
- b. Seize and hold all crossings over the Calore River, north of Felitto inclusive, prepare bridges for destruction. Repel any advance of the enemy west of the Calore River.
- c. Gain and maintain contact with RCT 141 on right at Mt Vesale and Magliano, and British X Corps on left at the crossing over Solo River, three miles southeast of Eboli.

On D-Day at 0140 the regimental commander was informed that in view of the Italian Armistice no Naval shore bombardment would be undertaken unless it developed that the landings were being opposed.

Let us follow the first waves in: They went down the long landing nets descending into the boats with cheerfulness and confidence. At 2400 the landing craft left the ship and thus the historic invasion had begun. It was a long ride in (approximately two hours) and explosions could be seen in the distance. Some of the men became seasick as the boat went on and on toward the beach. The only immediate sound was that of all the motors in the boat wave. Finally the boat, along with others, came up closely to the shore at 0330, let the ramp fall, and the first wave started in through the water. Suddenly flares went up from the beach, machine guns started opening up all along the beach, artillery started falling, mines were encountered and the wave group found themselves met by a very stubborn enemy defense system which was dug in waiting for them. It was not until 0345 that our heavy weapons arrived on the beach. Sergeant Manuel Gonzales, Company F, upon landing discovered the position of the machine gun on the sand dunes near the beach which was firing on the assault boats as they landed. Sergeant Gonzales crept around the position under machine gun fire, which set his pack afire, in addition to hand grenades thrown at him, and calmly tossed several hand grenades into the position killing the crew and blowing up their ammunition.



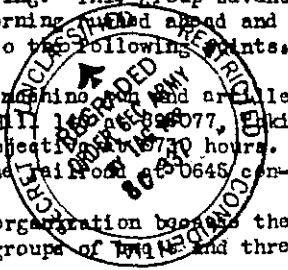
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1st and 2nd squads of the mine platoon, artillery company, landed with the 1st wave of the assault troops to clear the beaches of mines and wire. This was accomplished under heavy enemy machine gun and artillery fire. Two particularly obnoxious machine guns were knocked out of action by Privates Van Haute and Lombardi. A mine detector was smashed by machine gun fire and had to be abandoned. These squads completed cutting the wire and then moved inland advancing as riflemen.

Staff Sergeant Quillian H. McMitchen (KIA) was shot in the chest and shoulder even before his assault boat landed. Upon reaching the beach the ramp stuck and would not drop. Sergeant McMitchen, in spite of his wounds, kicked and pounded the ramp until it dropped and then led his section from the craft to the beach where he received a fatal shot from enemy gunfire.

Our men steadfastly moved ahead in the face of the intense fire and got off the beach as soon as possible. Lt. Carey, soon after reaching the shore, was sighted and fired upon by three Germans armed with machine pistols. He returned the fire with his carbine killing one when his weapon jammed. He then grasped his carbine as a club and advanced in the face of their fire toward the second whom he clubbed, and then physically tackled, subdued and disarmed the third German who was taken prisoner. The assault companies began to move ahead but were pinned down by machine gun fire until they could work around the positions and knock them out. Sergeant Glen O. Hiller, Company E, was painfully injured on the beach but continued leading his squad under enemy heavy machine gun and artillery fire for seven hours until the objective had been reached when he was forced to relinquish command of his squad through exhaustion. It was lighter now, and enemy artillery (previously prepared for the beach) became more accurate. Many of these batteries were observed up in the hills to our front. In the meantime other boat groups were coming in, some at the correct beaches, others a few miles north or south. Many radios were lost in the landing and communication from shore to ship was extremely difficult or completely lacking. At some beaches the fire was so heavy that the pilots turned the boats around heading back toward ships. These were quickly turned back and landed the men, but this action caused a break in the intricate time schedules set up and from then on waves were not landed properly as to time or place. The beachmaster arrived and the Shore Engineers quickly set about clearing the beach, laying road nets and moving the troops off the beach quickly. They performed their duties in an excellent manner. Mines had to be cleared in the areas selected for the roads, then bulldozers went to work, followed by the engineers laying the wire mesh. All of this was done under intense enemy artillery and plane strafing. As more landing craft approached, more were hit directly by accurate 88 gunfire and some struck floating mines. Hostile planes managed to slip through our fighters and bomb and harass the beach and the ships lying in the bay. Equipment from these destroyed crafts were floating everywhere. At about 0400 that morning Private J. C. Jones, Company E, gathered together about fifty men from various companies who were badly disorganized and without a leader. He led his men vigorously under heavy machine gun, artillery and mortar fire toward the objective he had understood before landing. This group advanced and knocked out several enemy gun positions. As the morning pulled ahead and it became lighter, the assault units had pushed ahead to the following points:

- The 3rd Battalion (on left) advanced inland under machine gun and artillery fire, turned north on highway 18 and thence to Hill 166, making a defensive position on the initial battalion objective by 0730 hours.
- The 2nd Battalion (on right) advanced inland to the railroad continuing to the creek at 0715.
- The 1st Battalion (reserve) landed at 0630 in disorganization because the boats were landed on incorrect beaches, and in groups of twos and threes.



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2nd Bn CT was on its objective - generally the high ground in squares 8806 and 8905.

1st Bn CT, in reserve, (less Co B whose mission to destroy enemy beach installations between Green beach and Sole River) dug in at hill 140, after encountering small arms fire, artillery fire and tanks on its advance.

During the night several large air raids were made on the beachhead.

D plus 1 10 < 7

Naval and artillery fire registered in on the southwest slope of Mt Soprano in the early morning. At 1000 hours Company L rejoined the 3rd battalion, and at 1300 hours the battalion was ordered to take and occupy Albarella 945092. This was accomplished under moderate machine gun fire along the advance, and the battalion dug in at 1930 hours under intermittent shell fire, requesting reinforcements and artillery support in case needed for a possible enemy counter-attack in the morning.

The 2nd Battalion advanced during the day with Company E first at 885085, then proceeded to 968057. Company G occupied the high ground of Mt Soprano. Companies F, H and Hq Co occupied a defensive position at 955035. There was no communication with the battalion by regiment. The 1st battalion, less Co B, arrived at 934128 at 2300 and dug in for the night. Company B had reached the river crossing at 862112, contacted the British and reported the bridge already blown. The Germans were occupying Altavilla to their front.

Thus the general line of the RCT at the end of D plus 1 was generally eight miles inland from the junction of the Calore and Sole Rivers, then almost due east to the rising ground east of Mt Chirico, south to Albarella, and just east of Mt Soprano. It had been a rather slow advance during the day through difficult terrain which was favorable to the defender. Artillery and mortar fire as well as snipers were encountered generally during the day with tank attacks at various points. At 1200 hours the regimental commander issued the following order to all personnel:

"We have landed successfully against heavy odds. We have lost several good and brave men, but your conduct has been marvelous. Your initiative and ingenuity in a difficult situation has only increased my faith in you.

Remember your communications and your security.

Remember your concealment.

The worst is over. Collect your company or battalion, your platoons and squads, and we are more than a match for all that can meet us."

"Incomplete reports indicate our casualties as two (2) officers killed and eleven (11) wounded; Approximately eleven (11) enlisted men killed and twenty-three (23) wounded".

The 132nd FA Bn and the 151st FA Bn fired on Altavilla during the night. Communications with the battalions were generally poor.

D plus 2: 11 Sep

The 3rd Bn reported at 0900 that it was one mile west of Albarella and requested the location of the 2nd Bn. Division headquarters about the same time notified the commanding officer that the 45th Div was on the left flank and on the British X Corps' right flank. Also it was stated that air support was now available within one hour's notice. A landing strip had just been completed

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None of the b...s landed on schedule due to flanking mines, artillery fire and faulty navigation. After hasty reorganization the battalion moved forward.

Several tank attacks occurred and the infantry fought these off with the bazookas with which they were equipped, and the Navy came to their support, steaming in close and pouring the shells at the tanks. This coordination the Navy was effected through radio ship to shore communication. The USS Philadelphia fired two separate requests by the 3rd battalion on the southwest slope of Hill 140 which destroyed some tanks in both concentrations and routed them. Near Paestum Sergeant John Y. McGill, Company H, of Amarillo, Texas jumped on an enemy tank and dropped a hand grenade into the open turret, killing all the crew.

The Navy continued firing on every possible enemy position in the hills to our front. Our fighters, now that daylight had arrived, were attacking the enemy on the ground and in the air. If the general picture of the beach area appears to be in utter confusion, that would be quite truthful, because the enemy had prepared for our landing at this beach. Every gun had been sited, complete surveys made for the artillery and, naturally, the enemy was intimately acquainted with every inch of the area to be defended. One interesting fact later learned from the prisoners of war was that the Panzer Division at our bridgehead had been moved here from Taranto about ten days previously. The Italian surrender became known to the Germans two days before our landing, and the Germans immediately rounded up every Italian soldier and disarmed him unless he was willing to fight with the Germans. This, it was later learned, caused some confusion in the German plan of defense because Germans had to man the beach defenses and definitely resulted in the lack of infantry operating with the German tanks which may account for the rather clumsy tank attacks by the enemy. Our communications were poor at best, exaggerated reports of enemy strength and our losses were to be heard on every hand. Also there is no doubt that the surrender news of Italy had caused the men definitely to underestimate the enemy.

In the meantime at 0530 without any messages from our first waves ashore, the commanding officer and staff debarked in two separate craft. They landed at 0748, more than two hours behind schedule, under heavy artillery fire. A command post was set up at Sta. Di-Cappacio and the regimental commander arrived at 0842.

At 1020 very near the CP, 12 - 15 enemy tanks attacked. It so happened that a 105mm howitzer pulled by a 2 1/2 ton DUKW suddenly appeared from the beach area. Quickly the gun was put into position without cover, concealment or protection and it proceeded to knock out five tanks, one after another. The attack was repulsed and seven prisoners of war, badly burned, were taken. This one gun broke up the entire attack. As tank attacks continued, it became apparent to all that the bazooka is a really great defensive weapon. In one day alone seven enemy tanks were completely destroyed by this infantry weapon. The rifle grenade did not seem as effective against tanks but is effective against machine gun nests, pillboxes and strong points.

As the end of this eventful D-Day approached, the following points had been taken and defensive positions prepared for the night;

3rd Bn CT (less Co L whose mission was to secure the crossing on the River at 860111) was at objective, hill 140 at 892077. Company L, in a separate mission, was dug in for the night near the junction of the railroad and highway, and had sent out patrols.



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east of the beach on Highway 18. At 1045 the location of the 3rd Bn was one mile southwest of Altavilla. During the day the 3rd Bn sent out patrols from its position near Albanella and was receiving intermittent artillery fire. The 2nd Bn occupied the high ground east of Mt Tempalia and south to Roccadaspide. This battalion reported that seven tanks had been destroyed by bazookas, and one by artillery fire. At 1000 the 1st Bn commander issued orders to attack Altavilla. The 1st and 2nd platoons, Cannon Co were in support. Company A was to occupy the high ground above Altavilla with Company B occupying hill 424. At 1500 this mission was completed, defensive positions were taken and patrols were sent out from all companies to the Calore river. Enemy reconnaissance patrols infiltrated throughout the battalion lines during the night, but all positions were held without difficulty. In the meantime during the day several reports came in of enemy tank attacks on the regiment to our left flank. All were repulsed, and in one attack of twenty-eight tanks the 45th Division reported it had knocked out eleven and disabled three. Early in the evening twelve tanks were reported to have crossed the river east of Roccadaspide turning north. The regimental commander requested artillery fire on them, but they were out of range. The 3rd Bn was notified and alerted. A few minutes later three enemy tanks were reported in the town of Roccadaspide, but the 2nd Bn had secured a road block there. The 132nd FA Bn reported Roccadaspide out of range. At 2045 communications were established to the 2nd and 3rd battalions, and at the same time the RCT was ordered into defensive position at the points held and small night patrols were ordered. Enemy artillery fire was falling on our front lines, but no casualties were received. Division Hq reported that enemy parachute landings might be made during the night to retake the beach area and destroy the landing strip.

D plus 3; 17 Sep

At 0400 the enemy made an air attack on the beach installations. At 0900 the 1st battalion reported no change in its disposition and that contact had been made with the adjacent unit on its left. The 2nd Bn remained in the Roccadaspide area during the entire day. The 3rd Bn sent a platoon from Company K to occupy hill 422 as an artillery observation post. At 1100 the 1st Bn sector was subjected to two hours and thirty minutes enemy artillery fire. Communication lines forward and to the rear were often broken. At 1230 Company C on forward slope of hill 424 reported it was pinned down by a hostile counterattack. Private Clayton I. Tallman, Company B, of Johnstown, Pa., on hill 424, observed that the enemy was attempting an envelopment of the company on the left, immediately stood up on a rock wall, fired three carefully aimed shots and killed an enemy machine gun crew. In a few minutes he repeated the same action when another enemy machine gun crew appeared. He alone protected the left flank of the company until the remainder of the platoon arrived. Private Paul C. Gerlich, (MIA), Company B, of Chicago, Ill., on hill 424 observed an enemy machine gun position being set up in a house about twenty yards to the front which threatened destruction to the forces on the left. Private Gerlich in the face of enemy fire and his own fire ran to the building and threw two hand grenades which destroyed the gun and crew. Private Burrell B. Roitch, Company A, of Copperas Cave, Texas, a member of the kitchen crew, was assigned to assist in carrying ammunition for the 3rd platoon of Company A. As the enemy counterattacked Private Roitch discovered group of five men and himself came off from the company. He immediately organized them into a defensive position on a small hill and repulsed three rushes by the enemy who were attempting to establish machine gun positions on their flanks. Private Roitch was completely in command of the situation, giving fire orders and shouting encouragements.

At 1240 Company A (which was filling a gap between Company B on the un-numbered hill above Altavilla and Company C) was ordered by the battalion commander to pull back and around the right flank of Company C to meet the enemy.

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counterattack. This was not accomplished although the battalion commander did not know it, and he also ordered Company B to withdraw from its position to support Company C. This also failed, because as the leading units were almost clear of Altavilla, the rear of Company B was hit by a counterattack. At 1300 the battalion commander went forward to direct operations in the area which had been assigned to Company A. He has been missing since. At 1515 the enemy broke through in the area formerly occupied by Company A, and skirmishes occurred with snipers and machine gunners in and about Altavilla. This action cut the battalion sector in half. At 1530 the battalion executive, Maj. Mcbley, gave the order for the battalion CP and Company D to withdraw. All communications were cut and runners could not get through due to the envelopment tactics of the enemy. The battalion CP moved to the rear under fire. Captain Sprague the S-3 was reported missing. Company D was able to withdraw its mortar platoon and some machine gun sections to the low ground southwest of Altavilla. At 1930 Company D contacted one platoon of Company A and fifteen stragglers from various companies. These men were organized and started an advance back up the high ground toward Altavilla. At 20140 these troops were ordered to dig in and hold that position. At 2100 Company B rejoined the elements holding this high ground and also dug in for the night. The battalion executive and elements of the staff rejoined this group and assumed command. Company C plus elements of Company A, badly disorganized, withdrew throughout the night from Altavilla and the high ground to its right. These men were gathered together in groups throughout the regimental sector.

At the regimental command post reports came in at 1245 of the enemy infantry attack of considerable strength on the 1st battalion. The regimental commander requested air support, and artillery support was being prepared. About this time friendly planes attacked a group of tanks in the vicinity of the CP. The regimental commander inquired of the 3rd Bn commander for information on the situation at Altavilla, as communication with them was out. At 1543 the 1st Bn requested infantry support. Immediately the regimental commander attempted to get some trucks from the 132d FA to take one company from the 3rd battalion toward Altavilla, but this was not possible, so the company was ordered to march north to support the 1st battalion. At this time Division Headquarters alerted the RCT for enemy gas. There was no communication with the 1st Bn, so Lt. Col. Donholm, at 1710, went to get the situation personally, and upon his return at 2000 reported that Company D held a road block south of Altavilla, and that the town at least was partially held by 1st battalion. Major Sorenson, S-3, left the CP for the 3rd Bn to inform Lt. Col. McDonald to move his battalion to attack hill 424 at dawn and that it was under control of the 143 RCT. In the meantime various reports had reached the CP of tank concentration in Castel Civita and across the Colore river to our front. It seemed from all indications that the enemy was preparing shortly to make a major counterattack in force. Rumors and reports of huge losses poured into the regimental CP all during the night. One company of the 2nd Bn took over the position previously held by the 3rd battalion. Lt. Col. Ainsworth arrived at the 1st Bn. to canvas the situation and to aid in making further defense plans.

D-plus 4: 12/1/48

At 0320 Lt. Col. Donholm and Maj. Sorenson, S-3, returned from 1st Bn CP. At 0600 our counterattack began on hill 424 by the 3rd Bn as follows: At 0730 Companies I and K overran the unnumbered hill southeast of the CP. Companies L and M were unable to keep up with the assault companies due to artillery fire just in rear of companies I and K and infiltration of enemy fire and machine guns. A counterattack by about two battalions of German infantry drove the assault companies off of the unnumbered hill. They joined Companies L and M and were organized in a defensive position on the reverse slope of the unnumbered hill. This position was maintained until ordered to withdraw by the commanding officer, 143d Infantry to which the battalion was now attached, casualties: Company K, all officers; Company I, two officers. Battalion executive officer missing in action. Twenty-five prisoners of war taken.

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The 1st battalion executive officer, at 1030, received orders to report to the 3rd Bn command, 142d Infantry on hill 424 (which placed 1st battalion, 142d under command of 143d Infantry). At 1100 the battalion was moved to join the 3rd Bn using the draw to the south of Altavilla. The battalion was in a column of companies when at 1715 it received artillery fire the length of the column, completely cutting the columns apart and disorganizing the entire battalion. The fire was friendly artillery. The lower portion of the battalion withdrew in confusion and moved back to the high ground previously vacated. The remainder of the battalion (approximately sixty men) remained on the high ground at the head of the draw. Contact was made with the 3rd Bn and the 1st Bn was ordered to reorganize on the high ground which was accomplished prior to midnight.

Meanwhile word was received at the regimental CP that the 141st Infantry Regiment (less one reinforced battalion) was moving north of the Sele river to close the gap between VI Corps and British 56th Division. The remaining battalion, 141st Infantry will hold present line. The 2nd Bn, 142d Infantry, reported no change in their situation, but were ordered to patrol the ground east of Albanella. The artillery reported at 1700 enemy troops and armored vehicles moving across the river at 9417 and troops crossing at 9617. The Division liaison officer reported that reconnaissance fifty miles south revealed no enemy there. The regimental command post was moved. All units were notified of the situation and that the commanding general had ordered a withdrawal to a line generally along the west banks of the La Cosa river, all positions to be dug in, wired in and mined. The situation was serious, and when at 2300, a combat team of the 82nd Airborne began to parachute to the ground in the moonlight near the beachhead it was good to know that reinforcements were arriving. The Navy put a large concentration on the enemy during the night.

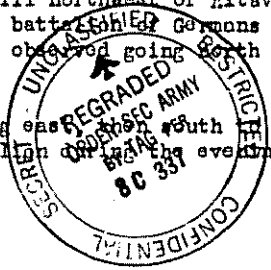
D plus 5: 14 Sep

At 0230 a new command post was established at 911068 and dug in for the night. The 1st and 3rd battalions were withdrawn (under 143rd regimental control) to the southwest slope to Mt Chirico and placed in reserve. Between 0900 and 1300 the 3rd battalion was committed to assist in repulsing a combined tank and infantry attack near hill 145. The 1st Bn had no resistance in its area near Mt Chirico. The 2nd Bn, CP of Albanella, reported no activity during the morning until about 1100 when it reported a tank battle in the vicinity of its left flank. VI Corps reported no enemy tank concentration at Persano and south of Persano, and that Naval bombardment and planes were concentrating on this area. At 1230 eighteen tanks were reported west of Albanella. At 1445 the 504th Parachute Battalion arrived on the 2nd battalion's left flank. The regiment had an open right flank. At 1530 Lt. Hankins, liaison officer, reported that the 3rd Bn, 143rd Infantry was in Altavilla and had a good defensive position. At 1600 the eighteen tanks, previously reported, were found to be friendly. More Airborne troops were due to land tonight and the 180th Infantry occupied Mt Soprano and high ground south of Mt Soprano. The situation now seemed to be in hand.

D plus 6: 15 Sep

The enemy was heavily shelled during the night. An enemy tank attack was broken up near Persano. The division G-2 reported, "26th Panzer Division has withdrawn north as far as Polla. Snipers reported on hill northwest of Altavilla. Enemy tank activity north of Persano. It is believed a battalion of Germans are dug in west of Altavilla. Three German scout cars were observed going south from Altavilla at 1130".

The 2nd battalion reported a motorized patrol going east. The 1st Battalion reported that the 1st Battalion had contacted no enemy, and that the battalion occupied a defensive position south of Mt Chirico.



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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91
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The 3rd battalion maintained its previous position as did the 1st battalion, with both receiving only long range artillery fire. Air patrols encountered no resistance.

Lt. Col. Denholm in attempting to contact the 180th Infantry on Mt Soprano reported several Germans there (probably stragglers), and that he could not find the 180th Infantry.

Italian civilians reported about 3,000 German and three batteries artillery between Postaglione and Auletta. The following units were now under control of the regiment with the mission of holding the line at the south end of Mt Chirico to Mt Soprano.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3rd Bn 504th Infantry | Service Company, 142d Infantry |
| 132nd FA Battalion | Regt Hq Company, 142d Infantry |
| 1 Company 636th TD Battalion | Company U, 761st Tank Battalion |
| Antitank Company, 142d Infantry | 1 Company, 191st Tank Battalion |
| Cannon Company, 142d Infantry | 1 Bn, 39th Engineers |

D plus 7: 16 Sep

155 Division headquarters reported forty German tanks dug in at 972132 and that artillery, navy and aircraft were bombing them. At 1300 enemy artillery began falling 600 yards from the CP which was now located at 910087. At 1410 Col. Forsythe reported no activity along the outpost line. Lt. Crocker reported at 1930 that the Parachute battalion had moved from Albanella east to the high ground in square 9711 and were being shelled there. Lt. Col. Denholm coordinated the defense line with the sector commander on the left. Maj. Sorenson, S-3, informed all units that the 39th Engineers were replacing the 1st Bn, 504th Parachute battalion on the left sector, and that the 3rd Bn, 504th Parachute battalion and 191st Tank battalion have moved northwest of Albanella to support the 504th attack on Altavilla.

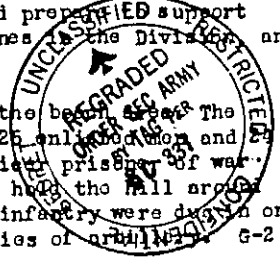
Our sector (south) now known as RUFFLES - Commanded by Col. Forsythe.
Center sector now known as COWPUNCHER - Commanded by Gen. O'Daniel.
Left sector now known as ROYAL - Commanded by Gen. Wilbur.

In this sector there was little activity during the entire day. The counter-attack to regain the high ground around Altavilla by the 504th Infantry was the main action.

D-plus 8: 17 Sep

Shortly after midnight the RCT was alerted by Division headquarters for a possible enemy counterattack at 0400. This information had been obtained from a prisoner of war. The counterattack did not develop, and there was no change in our situation during the day. At 0730 hours the 505th Parachute battalion reported the 1st battalion occupied Altavilla. From the 56th Division came the report that the Germans are withdrawing slowly, heading back with a force of a company at a time. At 1030 the 132nd FA 155th FA fired on an enemy counterattack at Altavilla. The 1st battalion, 504th Infantry regiment requested help and Division was notified. The commanding general ordered Maj. Sorenson to instruct the 3rd Bn, 504th AP regiment to move up to Albanella and prepare support and all units were alerted to be careful of conversations.

Another Parachute group landing was due tonight on the beach. The strength of the 3rd Bn, 142d Infantry was reported as 423 and 424 and 425 officers. At 2330 the Division G-2 reported that an official prisoner of war from 29th Arty Regiment stated that their mission was to hold the hill around Altavilla at all costs, and that 2 battalions of German infantry were dug in on the southeast slope of this hill supported by two batteries of artillery. G-2 requested that we notify the 504th AB-battalion.



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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

D plus 9: 18 Sep

No activity during the day in our sector. At 1030 the disposition of the 504th Infantry was reported as follows: 1st battalion, 965151; 2nd battalion, 975127; 3rd battalion, 962127. Friendly patrols in Altavilla in the afternoon captured three prisoners. Several long range artillery shells fell in the early evening on the reverse slope northwest of Albanella. At 2000 the 3rd battalion (under 143 RCT) was ordered to advance toward Altavilla and occupy positions as follows:

- Company K - Hill at 954143.
- Company L - Hill at 950141.
- Company M - Hill at 943136.
- Company N - General support from 945138.

D plus 10: 19 Sep

No activity in our sector. Outposts were instructed to come in during the morning per division order. At noon Sergeant Friston, Cannon Company, reported from a motorized patrol at Altavilla that the town was all clear of Germans, and that there were many dead on both sides. No fire had been received from the enemy since the afternoon of 18th September. The 1st battalion, 141st Infantry, was on its objective R31193 (northwest of Altavilla between Calore and Sele rivers). The 3rd battalion marched into Altavilla during the day on mopping up operations and searched for our dead and wounded.

D plus 11: 20 Sep

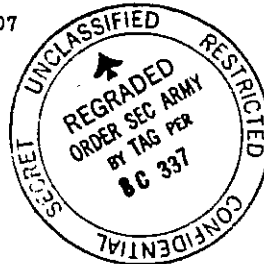
The Division had been ordered into 5th Army Reserve, and the first phase of "Aviazione" operation was now closed for the RCT. The program now was to police the area of vehicles and the dead and to reorganize during an expected seven day period with intensive training to be held on the very ground where weak points had been observed. The Division and RCT had accomplished its original mission: To seize and hold the bridgehead. During the period September 9th (D-Day) through September 19th (D plus 10), The S-2 estimated the following enemy casualties inflicted by the RCT:

- Enemy tanks knocked out - 18.
- Enemy tanks probably destroyed - 1.
- Self propelled cannon destroyed - 2.
- Other vehicles destroyed - 7

Casualties:

- Enemy Personnel - Estimated killed and wounded - 507
- Captured - 48.

Attached: Journals
Field Orders
Overlays
Casualty Reports



Summary prepared by

JOHN A. STEEL
Capt., 142d Inf.

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BY RB/C.C. MARA, Date 9/21/91

Let us review generally, now, the complete operation from the time of landing to the day that the RCT was relieved for reorganization.

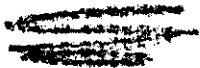
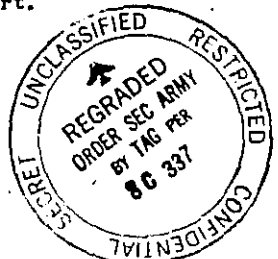
Within the first three days the regiment had seized and held the beach-head and extended its lines into the interior approximately ten miles, holding a line generally extending from the Calore River, south to Altavilla, Albanello, and to Roccosaspide. This had been accomplished quickly in view of the difficult terrain and the stubborn enemy defense of the area due to the dogged determination by the units and individuals to reach the assigned objectives which resulted in an infiltration behind the enemy lines causing their withdrawal. It must not be forgotten that the advance was made without many weapons which are considered essential, because those weapons had to come in on a time schedule which had been upset by the bombings, sinkings and stiff resistance on the beach. It is gratifying to realize that the first American Division to land on European soil proper met the first all-German beach defense, overcame it and pushed on to its objective without delay.

On the fourth day the German defense plan was based on the necessity of regaining and holding the high ground around Altavilla, which commanded the plain and highway 19 to the north. This was necessary to the orderly withdrawal of the enemy troops from the southern sector to prevent them from being cut off between our forces and the rapidly advancing 8th Army to the south. Consequently, the whole weight of the German counterattack was thrown against Altavilla with the order given to hold it at all costs. Because of the enemy's local superiority this was accomplished, but only at a great cost to him in men and equipment. Our troops fought this attack fiercely and with honor but were forced to retire until reinforcements could arrive to push the enemy back once again. During this period for security reasons the Division was ordered into a defense position generally extending from the junction of the Calore and La Cosa Rivers south along the La Cosa. As reinforcements gradually began to arrive, once again the Division went on the offensive regaining lost territory and advancing even farther beyond the original objectives. At this point the Division was withdrawn into 5th Army reserve, having accomplished the mission originally assigned to it even in the face of unexpected stubborn defenses from the moment the invasion had begun.

How did the Italian people themselves accept this invasion of their homeland? Bowed at first the peasants soon became very friendly and were most anxious to help the Allies. They gave much valuable information of the enemy and of important ammunition and supply dumps, as well as enemy locations and gun positions.

It must be said that the Italians cooperated admirably in ousting their German overlords, for whom they retained the most bitter hatred. They gladly accepted and worked with the AMOT officials who followed up every military movement into the newly gained towns. Even during the removal of debris and the burial of the civilian dead those officials were reorganizing the town life, appointing reliable civilians as police, and setting up local governments ready to begin functioning immediately. It appears to be true that the peasants have long yearned for an honest efficient government and felt that Mussolini had robbed them for years, but it is also a fact that any policy directed by a government sanctioned by the King would have their support.

- 4 Annexes
- Overlays
- Field Orders
- Casualty Records
- Journals
- (All annexes attached to the original)



S E C R E T

OPERATIONS IN ITALY, NOVEMBER 1943

142D INFANTRY

The 142d Infantry, after participating in the Salerno operation, was relieved from the line on 21 September 1943 to be re-equipped and to receive needed replacements. During this period, extending from 21 September to 14 November 1943, combat training was intensified. Schools in leadership were held for all new officers and non-commissioned officers, and refresher courses in leadership were given to all remaining officers. Communications training was stressed and tactical walks for the regimental and battalion staffs were conducted on the very ground over which the unit had fought only a short time previously. Many battalion exercises, including river crossings and relief problems, were scheduled, emphasizing control, tactics and discipline. Physical conditioning of the entire unit was stressed. Advantage was taken during this period to provide excellent recreational trips to Naples and Pompeii, this being the first opportunity to provide such trips for the enlisted men since leaving Africa for the invasion. The 36th Division was placed under the II Corps, and that Headquarters made an inspection of all elements of the Regiment on 27 October 1943, pronouncing it ready to resume its place in the line. The Division moved from the Pozzuoli area on 5 November to an assembly area near Villa Voltarno, and the Regiment was alerted to relieve the 7th Infantry, 3rd Division. An advanced party of commanders and staff officers went forward to contact the regiment to be relieved, made an intensive reconnaissance of the area, and conferred with the officers at the positions to be occupied. Supply problems were discussed and, in short, all angles of the relief were coordinated. On the 15th of November under cover of darkness the first elements of the Regiment departed by motor to affect the relief. The heavily-traveled route, the rain and mud, blown bridges and artillery presented an obstacle to the movement, but nevertheless, by 0300 on 15 November, the relief was completed without incident. In this sector the Germans held a "winter line" across Mt. Camino which offered the enemy excellent observation of all the surrounding terrain and, in particular, the important supply routes. The precipitous heights and torturous trails afforded the enemy the advantage of holding off superior forces with small numbers and an opportunity to use his artillery with great effect on all of our positions which he could observe. The Germans were so entrenched that they could be dug out only by intense artillery barrages and by small groups probing their almost inaccessible positions. Under such conditions supply problems were magnified, because rations and ammunitions had to be hand-carried. This was first accomplished by detaching an entire company to transport the supplies and was later aided by a provisional pack train company organized by Division.

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DOD Dir. 5200.9, Sept. 27, 1958

NCWN by date 3-8-71

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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

S E C R E T

In view of the continuous rains which fell from the beginning of the occupation of the Mt. Caminc positions by the Regiment, the Regimental Commander was vitally concerned with the protection of the troops' health and took every precaution to keep sickness to a minimum. He, therefore, ordered hot food, extra socks, gloves and blankets to be provided for those units which were located in the mountains. In this connection it is interesting to note the conditions of the enemy in those same heights. In one day alone - 18 November - six Germans deserted their unit and walked to our front lines. They declared their rations were either very poor or at times not provided at all. They presented a bedraggled appearance in their wet filthy khaki uniforms covered by soggy overcoats. They could stand the conditions no longer.

Because of the difficulty of building up sufficient supplies to launch an effective attack on the enemy lines, our activity of necessity, was at first mainly limited to extensive patrolling and artillery barrages. The results of one platoon mission on 19 November are related as an example: A strong German outpost of approximately twenty-five to thirty men had organized a position to the front of the 2nd Battalion. An operation was conducted to capture this position. Plans were made thoroughly and all concerned were carefully instructed as to their part, and good use was made of fire power. The action took place as follows: First, the position was subjected to continuous mortar fire. Machine guns were placed so as to assist in the preparation and also so that they could take up the fire when the approach of the rifle elements necessitated the cessation of mortar fire. The major part of the rifle elements of two platoons were also placed in position to provide a fixed base of fire. Under cover of the fire of the mortars, four squads were advanced to within seventy-five to one hundred yards of the enemy position. One squad advanced to the right of the Hun position and covered the right flank. One squad advanced to the left and rear of the position while two squads made the direct assault. These two squads were able to approach within seventy-five to one hundred yards of the enemy position under cover of mortar fire. The BAR teams of the assault squads were placed in position to provide a close up base of fire. After the mortar fire ceased, the assault squads executed an assault with the bayonet. The advance was conducted so skillfully, and the enemy position was so covered with fire, that he never had a chance to get out of his holes. The squad which advanced to the left and rear of the position intercepted several Boches that were trying to escape. In addition to those Germans that were killed, twenty-one were captured, our men going right up to their holes and digging them out with bayonets. The most gratifying elements of the operation is the fact that it was done with such cleverness and skill by all American officers and soldiers involved that not a single American officer or soldier was killed or wounded. The 1st Platoon, Company "F", led by 2nd Lt. Charles H. Garnham, conducted this operation and was admirably supported by the Weapons Platoon, Company "F", commanded by 2nd Lt. Frank S. Kula.

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S E C R E T

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S E C R E T

The terrain was such that almost every movement by our forces in daylight was under enemy observation. Visibility was often very poor, however, because of the continued rain. The Germans had registered their artillery on important road junctions and supply trails which limited almost all traffic to nightfall. There was very little air activity because of adverse weather conditions. German patrols were active also, and several times fire fights would ensue. In order that all units of the Regiment would be completely familiar with the surrounding terrain and the tactics of the enemy, the Battalions were rotated in action. This policy also gave each unit relief by reverting to reserve. Attached to the Regimental Combat Team were two Chemical Companies who gave effective support with their 4.2 mortars by firing into observed German observation posts in the heights of the mountain. On 25 November a Company "L" patrol captured 2 of the enemy who were part of new replacements for the 21 men previously captured. Our artillery fire was reported by these prisoners to be very effective.

Communications in this rugged terrain were a constant problem, and every type was utilized. Enemy artillery often tore large gaps in the lines and because of the difficulty of checking along such a route, it would require much greater time to repair the breaks. In addition the almost constant rain affected the wire, causing numerous shorts. Atmospheric conditions interfered with the operation of the radio. Messengers, therefore, were the only really dependable method of communication.

As the end of the month approached, conferences were held constantly to plan future operations and to launch an attack. In these discussions, the British (on our left flank), Special Service Troop (Mt.) Officers, Division, and supporting unit commanders took part. Meanwhile supplies for the offensive were being slowly built up at dumps located high in the mountain.

To summarize the operations between the 15th and 30th of November, it will be noted then that they were, first, to relieve the 7th Infantry Regiment from its long action and then begin the tedious task of transporting supplies and preparing plans for an attack on the well-defended positions of the enemy. During the period the unit secured the positions already gained and became intimately familiar with the high ground to be attacked. Casualties for the period (mainly artillery) were as follows:

KIA - 20 EM
WIA - 104 EM - 2 Officers
MIA - 0
Captured - 0
Enemy Captured - 37
Enemy Killed - 12
Enemy WIA - 7

John A. Steel
JOHN A. STEEL
Captain, 142d Infantry
Adjutant

- 3 -

S E C R E T

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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS, 142D INFANTRY
APO #36, U. S. ARMY

7 December 1943

SUBJECT: "Operations in Italy" - 142d Infantry - November 1943.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the Historical Record of the 142d Infantry Operations in Italy during the month of November 1943.

2. The outstanding factors of the Operation, as related in the narrative, are as follows:

- a. The great difficulty of supply in rough terrain.
- b. The necessity of good physical condition of all members of the command.
- c. Proper precautions to safeguard health of the personnel.
- d. Difficulty of Communication.
- e. The demonstrated quality of the American Infantryman to endure every kind of difficulty, to operate in the worst type of terrain under the most adverse weather conditions with little food, and inadequate clothing, but nevertheless able to advance with a spirit and determination that merits the highest praise.

G. E. Lynch
G. E. LYNCH
Lt. Colonel, 142d Infantry
Commanding

Quartermaster
26/11/43

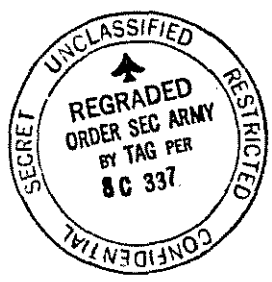
S E C R E T

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION COMPLETE
By Authority of the Secretary of War
By Guy F. Barker, Major, AGO
Current Declassification Authorities, 400
Date: 27 MAR 1967
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1/22/81

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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91.

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OPERATIONS
IN
ITALY
DECEMBER 1943
142D INFANTRY REGIMENT



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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

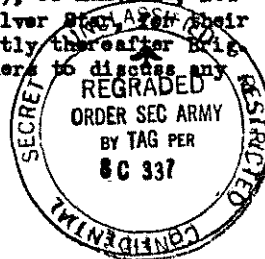
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Hun gets his ears pinned back!" was the thought in everyone's mind, when the sharp crack of a bullet warned of an unseen assailant--another shot, and one of our men was hit. Bullets were coming faster now, and everybody looked vainly for their source. With no alternative, the order was given for the platoon to withdraw. While Sergeant Multon and his squad gave covering fire, the rest of the platoon withdrew, but the exit was discovered by the Germans. His squad could not leave by that route. He looked anxiously for an avenue of escape. One man was grazed with a bullet, and Sergeant Multon caught the expression of pain and panic on his face. Sergeant Multon kept cool and calm and held his squad under his control. One by one he directed them to crawl on their stomachs along a small irrigation ditch. At last, all had reached safety. This was a patrol which like many others, would receive only a line in the day's communique.

It was reported that the 141st Infantry, on our right had been counter-attacked by a force of approximately one hundred Germans east of MT. LUNGO, south of Highway 6. This attack was broken up by artillery. At 1450 Allied planes attacked enemy supply dumps and strafed the front lines (including our positions but no casualties were inflicted on our men).

On the 2nd of December final preparations were made for the advance to be launched on the following day. There was a feeling of excitement, alertness and tenseness which every person experienced who was aware of the coming attack. At 1400 Brigadier General W. H. Wilbur, Assistant Division Commander, Colonel Lynch, Commanding 142d Infantry, Colonel Frederick, Commanding 1st Special Service Forces, and Lieutenant Colonel Green, Artillery Officer, attended a conference at the 142d Infantry Regimental Command Post in which all plans were gone over once again to assure coordination between this Regiment, the British, and the Special Service Forces. At noon Lieutenant General Clark, Army Commander, and Major General Keyes, Corps Commander, arrived at the Command Post to review the situation and plans. For the first time in several days the sun was out, and it seemed as though it was a good omen for the success we expected to follow. In the early afternoon Brig. General W. H. Wilbur, in an impressive ceremony presented Lieutenant Colonel Samuel S. Graham, (0333299), of Huntsville, Texas, Commanding Second Battalion, 142d Infantry, the Distinguished Service Cross; Captain Hollis M. Hughes, (0398175), of Stamford, Texas, Company "I", 142d Infantry, Corporal Earl F. Clinkenbeard, (20805617), of Snyder Texas, Company "G", 142d Infantry, and Private John A. Daku, (32238928), of Manville, New Jersey, Company "I", 142d Infantry, were awarded the Silver Star for their gallantry in action during the Salerno operation. Shortly thereafter Brig. Gen. Wilbur and Colonel Lynch met the Battalion Commanders to discuss any

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final questions of the operation. Company "F", in a defensive position that afternoon, reported heavy enemy mortar fire which killed three enlisted men and wounded 1st Lieutenant Robert K. Carey, (01293548), Platoon Leader and thirteen enlisted men. Allied planes in large numbers bombed and strafed the whole enemy sector to our front and in the vicinity of Cassino. As nightfall began closing in early, the ominous sound of our artillery began; first, a battery opened up, then a Battalion began firing, and increasing numbers of guns joined the rising crescendo of explosions. It was like a giant symphony with its deep, resonant boom as it left the cannon, then reverberating violently as it struck the CAMINO hill mass. The sound was deafening and the explosions seemed to shake the very foundations of the earth. It has been reported that this "serenade" was the largest artillery barrage since the Tunisian campaign.

In order to follow the operations in this sector a descriptive diagram of the route of advance is attached.

The plan for the advance was as follows:

- (1) British 56th Division to attack Mt. Camino and the slopes to the SW.
- (2) 1st Special Service Force to attack Hill 960 (Mt. La Difensa) during darkness the night of D-1, D, so as to have possession of Hill 960 by daylight D-Day, to reach Hill 960 by a route passing through our present positions and advancing to Hill 960 along the front of our present position on Ridge 368, and then to capture Hill 907, occupying and defending both positions.
- (3) 142d Infantry, with Companies A and B, 2nd Chemical Battalion attached, 131st and 132d Field Artillery Battalions and Company B, 111th Engineers in direct support to attack and hold Hill 370, the north slopes of Mt. La Difensa, and Mt. Maggiore on D-Day at H-Hour, column of Battalions, with 3rd Battalion leading, 2nd and 1st Battalions; the attack to be coordinated with that of 1st Special Service Force. This Regiment to be prepared to relieve 1st Special Service Force on Hills 960 and 907.

On D-Day, 3 December 1943, the Special Service Force reported that Hill 960 was taken at 0420, encountering light resistance. The 36th Division reported that a patrol of Rangers had moved to the edge of S. PIETRO under cover of darkness and found no enemy there.

At 0725 the 3rd Battalion Commander reported that Company "X" was on objective "C", Company "I" near its objective in Area "A", Hill 370 not yet cleared and that some enemy artillery shells were falling in the vicinity. Second Lieutenant Charles E. Duell, (01297174), of Oriskany Falls, New York,

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DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, Section 3.3, NND 735017
By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

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3rd Platoon Leader, Company "I", 142d Infantry, was leading his platoon in an attack on the western edge of Hill 370. As his platoon attacked the left edge of the Hill, Lieutenant Duell observed a German sniper in a dug out preparing to throw a hand grenade. The enemy had perfect observation of his platoon. Without a moments hesitation, Lieutenant Duell attacked the sniper but was struck by the grenade and fatally wounded.

At 0945 the Special Service Force reported its immediate objective and Hill 907 had been taken with some sniper fire encountered on Hill 907. At 1030 the 2nd Battalion was on Hill 596. At 1045 Company "A" had mopped up objective "B" and had contacted the 2nd Battalion. At 1100 the British reported that they had taken MT. CAMINO. At 1120, because the advance had continued so successfully, the Regimental Commander ordered the 1st Battalion to occupy the present 2nd Battalion objectives, picking up Company "A" from objective "B", and the 2nd Battalion to push on to the previously assigned 1st Battalion objectives. At 1300 the 3rd Battalion received heavy artillery shelling but there were no casualties. At the same time, the 2nd Battalion had reorganized for the push to the final objectives. At 1600 the 2nd Battalion Commander reported that he was sending two companies to take Hill 630.

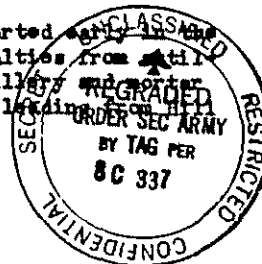
An enemy artillery shell landed in the 2nd Battalion Aid Station during the afternoon, injuring several medical men. Staff Sergeant Ernest S. Prange, (20800958), of San Antonio, Texas, Medical Detachment, in spite of a severe injury of the back, assisted the Medical Officer in the aid of the wounded and worked with the injured men all night. He refused personal evacuation and helped to carry the wounded back the next morning, then continued forward to help set up the Battalion Aid Station. Realizing the importance of his work, he assisted in the Aid Station for five days until the surgeon ordered him evacuated. It was the actions of such men as Staff Sergeant Prange which assured the success of the attack.

The advance had gone well, and casualties were relatively light despite stubborn resistance from the well entrenched positions held by the Germans. Four enlisted men had been killed and twenty-seven men were wounded during the day. In view of an expected enemy counterattack the men were kept alerted during the night and listening posts were established. Thirty-five enemy prisoners had been taken during the day.

On the 4th of December the Special Service Force reported early in the morning that its reserve Battalion had suffered many casualties from artillery fire. Due to the rugged terrain and heavy enemy artillery fire, it was extremely difficult to lay wire on the trail leading to the

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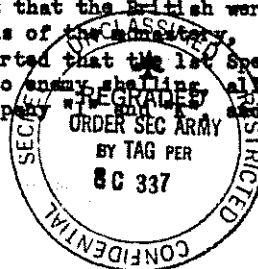
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368 to Hill 370, but Private First Class Antonio A. Hernandez, (38028454), of San Antonio, Texas, Private Vernon D. McCasland, (20804418), of Goldthwaite, Texas and Private Ruben Z. Silva, (38026337), of Port Lavaca, Texas, all members of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 142d Infantry, proceeded to lay wire to the 3rd Battalion Command Post over this trail which would afford the only means of communication to higher headquarters. After they had gone 200 yards, Private Silva was killed instantly by enemy artillery fire, but the other two continued on their mission. With communications installed, they returned over the same difficult route and carried Private Silva's body out of the shelled area.

The Regimental Commander directed the 3rd Battalion (less Company "L") to withdraw after darkness to an assembly area west of the Regimental Command Post for the purpose of carrying rations. Company "L" was to remain in its present position and maintain posts on Hill 370. At noon the 1st Battalion reported receiving enemy artillery fire from the west and that Company "A" was occupying objective "D", Company "C" was occupying area "F", and in contact with the 2nd Battalion. The Liaison Officer with the 1st Special Service Force reported that that unit did not jump off to retake Hill 907 due to poor visibility. Because of the inaccessibility of the area occupied by the 2nd Battalion, arrangements were made to have rations dropped by planes the following day on VALLEVONA Plateau. There was no enemy activity reported in the Regimental sector during the night. The casualties for the day were nine killed and twenty-seven wounded in action. Every objective which had been assigned the Regiment was now in our hands and prepared for defense.

On the 5th of December the Special Service Force reported a strong German counterattack early in the morning on their right flank, which was repulsed. At 1800 the 1st and 2nd Battalion Commanders were informed as follows: It is planned to move the 1st Battalion to an assembly area in the vicinity of the southern slope of MT. LA DIFENSA under the cover of darkness tonight with a future mission of relieving the 1st Special Service Force. Company "I" will relieve Company "A". The positions of Company "B" and "C" will be vacated but will be patrolled by the 2nd Battalion.

Information was then received at the Command Post that the British were on Hill 619 and had a company within four hundred yards of the Command Post, but did not have their objective. At 1840 it was reported that the 1st Special Service Force had taken Hill 907. At 2000, due to enemy shelling, all wire lines were out to the 1st and 2nd Battalions, Company "I" and "A".



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to Division. The lines were repaired and functioning at midnight, and within an hour they were again knocked out by shelling. During the night it was estimated that one hundred forty-five rounds of enemy fire fell on the pack trail and was quite heavy in the valley.

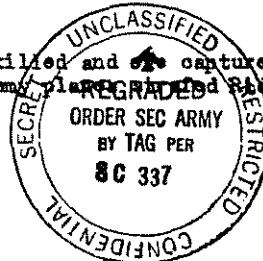
During the night, Company "E" on Hill 610 was counterattacked in force. As the enemy approached, supported by a machine gun crew, Private First Class Charles A. Collet, (55239328) of Logansport, Indiana, crawled forward of his squad in the open, under enemy machine gun and small arms fire and singlehandedly knocked out the entire German machine gun nest with his B.A.R., materially assisting in repulsing the counterattack which was a serious threat to the company's position.

Early on the morning of 6 December the line crews were frantically attempting to restore communications. At noon the 2nd Battalion Commander was notified that Company "F" was to vacate its position and return to the assembly area, with the balance of the Battalion to be redispensed during darkness to assure all-around defense of the area. In the early afternoon about twenty rounds of enemy 150mm or 170mm shells fell along the pack trail about 300 yards northeast of the Regimental Command Post. At mid-afternoon Company "E" received a small counterattack on the right flank which was repulsed with no casualties to the Company. It was also reported that only one package of rations was obtained from the three plane drops. At 1750 a report was received that the monastery was in the hands of the British, two companies of Germans having surrendered.

The men endured the constant rain and cold almost with pride. Because of the mud and water several cases of trench-foot developed. There was absolutely no way of keeping feet dry. To see American soldiers overcome these conditions and to carry on with such determination as they displayed was an experience that shall never be forgotten.

On 7 December the following information was obtained from one of the German prisoners: He and his company of one hundred enlisted men were from the 6th Company, 2nd Pz Hermann Goering Division. They had received special training in Berlin and had just left there two weeks previously. They were sent to CASSINO where the main part of the Division was located. A company was to assault the highest peak, Hill 907. They had eighty men, eight light machine guns and two 61mm mortars. The assault was unsuccessful and he deserted.

Company "E" reported that it had inflicted ten killed and one captured on a German patrol early in the morning. At 1500 enemy planes bombed the



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368, and air burst shells fell along the pack trail, followed by forty more rounds of enemy shells on the pack trail thirty minutes later. At 1625 the 2nd Battalion was counterattacked, but within an hour and fifteen minutes it was reported repulsed.

However, at 0700 on the 8th of December the 2nd Battalion was still engaged with the enemy, and a short time later it was reported that a German force was pushing southeast along the draw on the south slope of MT. LUNGO. At 1510 the Special Service Force reported that one of its Battalions on Hill 907 was attacking due west along the ridge, and within the hour the attack was reported to have been a complete success, twenty Germans having been killed and eight captured. At 2125 the 1st Battalion had completed the relief of the Special Service Force. Nebelwerfer fire was falling into the ridge of 368. It was located and silenced by the 132d Field Artillery. Near midnight the British were reported to be holding ROCCA D'EVANIRO.

In the early morning of 9 December the Regimental Commander ordered the 1st Battalion to relieve with one company the positions vacated by the three companies on Hill 960, 907 and the unnumbered Hill. The second company was to be put in a defensive position north of CAMINO to guard the approaches up the draw. The third company was to patrol and make contact with the British on the left near ROCCA D'EVANIRO. The Commanding General ordered the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry, relieved from its mission of carrying supplies. This battalion had performed its duties in a magnificent manner, having carried supplies up the mountain in darkness and in rain, over steep crowded trails. Activity in the sector was now limited to patrols. One such patrol from Company "F" went as far as COLLI. Corporal Boyd D. Dove, (33093227), of Criders, Virginia, was given the mission of leading this patrol to observe and secure information of the enemy movements. He carried out this mission, remaining in the town three nights and four days, securing valuable information which was sent back to the company by runner. On one occasion, his patrol was driven out of the town into the British lines by a German patrol but he returned to COLLI to carry on until relieved. Hostile as well as friendly artillery barrages were encountered by the patrol.

On 10 December at 0230 the Regimental Commander was informed by the Commanding General that the British unit would take over MT. LA DIFENSA. Patrols from all Battalions reported no enemy activity. At 1740 the 1st Battalion reported the British 189th Regiment had accomplished the relief and all companies were on the way down the mountain.

On 11 December at 0930 five German reconnaissance planes were reported over the Regimental area, and at 1503, twenty-six enemy planes strafed the area.



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right of the Regimental sector. In the early evening, patrols from the 2nd Battalion reported back from GIACOMO where they found no enemy but a considerable amount of abandoned equipment. The Regimental Commander ordered a reinforced platoon to occupy GIACOMO during the night and one platoon to attack Hill 72 after daylight the next day.

At 0830 the following morning, 12 December, the 2nd Battalion reported that a reinforced platoon from Company "G" occupied GIACOMO and had met no resistance. At noon the 2nd Battalion reported that a patrol had been forced by the Germans to leave COLLI. Another patrol was sent to make reconnaissance of that area. Meanwhile, the Italians, around Hill 180 to our right, were subjected to a terrific enemy artillery barrage. From a prisoner it was reported that one of the German companies was reduced to 18 men and another had only 38 to 40 men. During the night, the 2nd Battalion was relieved and moved to an assembly area in the deep creek bed in the valley.

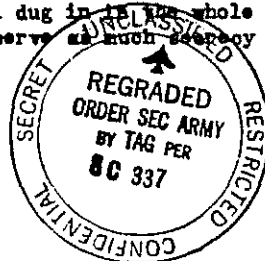
On the morning of 13 December a reinforced platoon of Company "I" was ordered to GIACOMO to occupy a position there as a base for patrolling, day and night, to the north and northwest over the railroad and along the base of MT. LUNGO, with a mission of determining German strength, disposition, and mine fields. The 3rd Battalion was ordered to withdraw at once to an area along the creek bed in the valley, and the 1st Battalion to move to CAS-POLI. At 1900 the Regimental Commander held a conference with Artillery and Battalion Commanders regarding the forthcoming attack on MT. LUNGO by the 142d Infantry. It was quiet during the night in the Regimental sector.

On 14 December the platoon on GIACOMO reported that it had been quiet during the previous night except for a small patrol. A platoon of Company "L" on Hill 141 reported no activity during the night. Division reported hostile reserves in the vicinity of the north end of MT. LUNGO.

On the 15th of December final preparations were made to attack MT. LUNGO in conjunction with the Italian Motorized Brigade while the other elements of the Division were to seize S. VITTORE and S. PIETRO. This was to be a night attack with the units to be on MT. LUNGO by daylight 16 December (a descriptive map of the plan of attack is attached). The 1st Battalion was notified to be prepared to seize Hill 343 on orders from this Headquarters. At darkness the advance began. As the 2nd Battalion progressed, First Sergeant Joe W. Gill, (20805398), of Canyon, Texas, Company "P", 142d Infantry, commanding a platoon, observed a cave covered by a German shelter half near the top of MT. LUNGO. Since the Germans were well dug in in this whole area, and because of darkness, it was necessary to preserve as much secrecy



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and silence during the movement as possible to prevent alerting the enemy. Therefore, First Sergeant Gill pushed the shelter half aside, and then physically jerked one of the Germans outside of the cave. He then forced the prisoner to point out all the enemy gun positions in that area, resulting in the capture of fifteen well-entrenched Germans and saving the lives of many of his comrades.

Private First Class John C. Peralez, (38026300), of Corpus Christi, Texas, and Corporal John C. Waddell, (20804844), of Ballinger, Texas, both of Company "C", 142d Infantry, were in the leading squad of the 1st Battalion during the advance on MT. LUNGO. After crossing a stream, they came upon a heavily mined open field. After notifying the Platoon Leader, Corporal Waddell and Private First Class Peralez went forward without further orders in an effort to clear a route through the mined field. They crawled, clipped wires and removed mines, clearing a route for the advance. During the hazardous operations, Private First Class Peralez came in contact with an "S" mine and was seriously wounded. 2nd Lieutenant David O. Gorgol, (01295478) of Binghamton, New York, Company "A", 142d Infantry, was advancing with his platoon up MT. LUNGO when they came under enemy machine gun and rifle fire. As they advanced in the face of this fire, another enemy machine gun opened persistent cross fire. The platoon was pinned down. 2nd Lieutenant Gorgol, taking one soldier, worked his way around the right flank, threw hand grenades into the enemy position and then walked into the machine gun nest, killing the crew with his Tommy gun. 2nd Lieutenant Gorgol's action left his platoon free to maneuver, and enabled it to wipe out the remaining German machine gun nest.

At 0135 on 16 December a message was received that Company "G" had reached its objective and was mopping up the sector. During the advance of the company, Private Gerald D. Wood's (32771790, of Mt. Clair, New Jersey) platoon was pinned down by intense enemy machine gun fire. Due to the character of the terrain, Private Wood was the only person who could fire upon the enemy, although he had little cover. Without hesitation, he brought fire upon the first machine gun position, using their muzzle blasts as targets. After the first enemy gun had been destroyed, he switched his fire to the second weapon. The third enemy position was destroyed in the same manner. At dawn, Private Joseph S. Boilek, (35160817), of East Chicago, Indiana, Company "H", 142d Infantry, Number One machine gunner of a heavy weapons squad attached to Company "F" for the attack on MT. LUNGO, was with the crew at their machine gun position awaiting an imminent counterattack. Private Boilek observed a German machine gun nest about 400 yards in front, and immediately alerted the company. Then the enemy began firing at his emplacement, but Private Boilek returned the fire, killing the German lieutenant in

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command and forcing the others to retire to another position. Shortly after this action, another enemy machine gun opened up a withering fire on his position, but with calmness and determination, he continued to fire, knocking out this hostile weapon also, and pinning down seven Germans, enabling a patrol from Company "F" to capture them.

At 0400 the enemy shelled the south end of Mt. LUNGO with artillery and at the same time directed Nebelwerfer fire on the northern slope. At 0500 the 2nd Battalion seized its objective, capturing seventeen prisoners. At 0700 one company, 1st Battalion, was reported to have already passed the first ridge and was continuing on to the second ridge. Opposition was fairly heavy, and the 1st Battalion Commander believed that his Battalion had suffered many casualties. Mortar fire was coming in on the top of MT. LUNGO. At 0800 an enemy troop concentration was reported by the 2nd Battalion which was promptly fired on by the 132d Field Artillery and broken up. Six direct hits on the trucks were observed and troops ran for cover. Between 0800 - 0930, Private First Class Gordon R. Bondurant, (16054127), of Laocenter, Kentucky, a sniper of Company "A", 142d Infantry, kept constant rifle fire on forty entrenched Germans. While under constant enemy machine gun fire, he moved over open terrain from one place to another, keeping his fire upon any Germans that disclosed their positions, until they could be surrounded and captured. Private First Class Bondurant personally killed five Germans and wounded three others in addition to giving encouragement to his comrades. At 0655 the 1st Battalion reported that Company "A" was on its objective, and Companies "B" and "C" over the highest ridge. A report from Division stated that the attacks by the other units on S. PIETRO and S. VITTORE were bogged down. At 0910 the 2nd Battalion reported that sixteen more German trucks on the road to S. PIETRO were fired on by the 132d Field Artillery, scoring eleven direct hits. At 1000 the 2nd Battalion reported eleven prisoners captured, and a counterattack by about fifty men was repulsed by artillery. The 1st Battalion reported Companies "B" and "C" areas completely cleared of the enemy, and patrols were out to contact the 2nd Battalion. Twenty-five prisoners were captured by Company "B". At 1515 the Regimental Commander reported to the Commanding General: Area entirely cleared of living Germans, sixty captured. At 1740 the 2nd Battalion reported a small counterattack on Company "G". Division reported that flares would be dropped every 45 minutes from 2100 to 2400 over roads leading from CASSINO to aid Bean Fighters in strafing. At 2000 Division reported a counterattack on the right flank of the 143rd Infantry. At 2315 the following situation existed: The north and northwest slopes of MT. LUNGO were mopped up, the northeast slopes were being mopped up to Highway 6; 142d Infantry and 1st Motorized Italian Brigade were consolidated on MT. LUNGO, the Italians were moving to occupy Hill 170. The Regimental sector was quiet during the night but there was occasional machine gun fire from S.PIETRO

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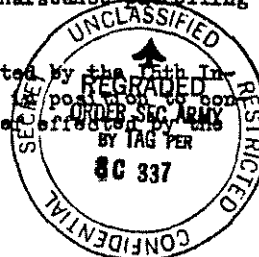
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During the early morning of 17 December there was intermittent enemy shelling between MT. MAGGIORE and MT. LUNGO. At 0900 the Regimental Commander gave the following instructions: The 1st Battalion to patrol to Highway 6; 2nd Battalion patrol to base of Hill and short distance northwest in the valley, investigate digging last night at northwest nose of MT. LUNGO, establish contact with 3rd Battalion on the left; 3rd Battalion contact Anti-Tank Company bazooka team, set up Observation Post at PECCIA CREEK and patrol to the northwest. The 1st Battalion patrol reported observing two destroyed German vehicles on Highway 6, but there were no enemy present. At 1510 the Commanding General directed a patrol be sent to S. VITTORE and one west along the general route of Highway 6. The 1st Battalion was then directed to patrol to S. VITTORE; 2nd Battalion to TAVERNA; and the 3rd Battalion to STATZ D'ROCCO. At 1530 the Division reported that the 143rd Infantry was occupying its objective, and that the 141st Infantry was sending a strong patrol to S. PISTRO. At 1700 Division notified the Regimental Commander to meet a group of officers from the 15th Infantry the following morning, at which time arrangements would be made to effect the relief of the 142d Infantry. At 2200 enemy tanks were reported at ROAD JUNCTION 69. The Regimental Commander ordered bazooka teams to that point to fire upon any tracked vehicles. About the same time the 3rd Battalion reported harassing artillery fire of a large caliber. The 3rd Battalion reported that a patrol had gone to STATZ D'ROCCO and had observed two tanks and two trucks moving toward Highway 6.

Two congratulatory messages on the Regiment's successful advance on MT. LUNGO were received during the day; one from Major General Keyes, Corps Commander and one from Major General Walker, Division Commander.

On 18 December at 0330 the 1st Battalion patrol reported that it had been to the edge of S. VITTORE and had observed no gun emplacements. It appeared to be a ghost town. At 1000 the 2nd Battalion was instructed to send a patrol northeast along the railroad, not beyond STATZ D'ROCCO, until contact was made to find out enemy strength and positions. The Battalions were ordered to leave one officer per Battalion staff and one non-commissioned officer per company to stay on the positions for twenty-four hours after the relief was completed by the 15th Infantry. At 1335 a 2nd Battalion patrol reported that it had killed one German and captured three others, just east of STATZ D'ROCCO. Division ordered day and night reconnaissance patrolling to the front, until further orders.

On 19 December relief of the Battalions was completed by the 15th Infantry. Patrols from this Regiment, however, were left in position to contact the enemy in order to preserve secrecy of the relief effected by the



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15th Infantry. The Regiment remained in assembly areas along the deep creek bed south of MIGNANO until the 22nd of December when the Regiment moved to a new area in the vicinity of VENAFRO.

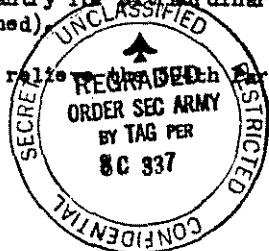
On 23 December Division ordered one Company to relieve a Battalion of the 504th Paratroop Regiment, on top of MT. SAMMUCRO. This was completed at 1900 on 24 December by Company "B".

After supper on Christmas Eve as it became dark, the thoughts of every man turned to the recollection of family and happier years, not with self-pity, but with a determination to restore those pleasant occasions and wipe out for all time the tyrannical methods and policies of those who sought to enslave our people. Although it was strange, it was not surprising that night in the assembly area, to hear voices rising in the distance, singing carols, competing not too well with the ever-present roar of artillery.

At 0930 Christmas morning, Major General Fred L. Walker, Division Commander, Brigadier General W. H. Wilbur, and Colonel G. E. Lynch presented Silver Stars in an impressive ceremony to the following named enlisted men for actions previously described within this narrative: Private First Class Gordon R. Bondurant, (16054127), Company "A", of Lacombe, Kentucky; First Sergeant Joe W. Gill (20805398), Company "F", of Canyon, Texas; Private Stuart G. Crossman, (31260551), Company "G", of Westboro, Massachusetts and Private Gerald D. Wood, (32771790), Company "G", of Mt. Clair, New Jersey; Sergeant Okla B. Robbins, (20805866), Company "H", of Amarillo, Texas; Private Vernon D. McCasland, (20804418), Headquarters Company 3rd Battalion, of Goldthwaite, Texas, and Private First Class Edward D. McGiff, (33201569), Medical Detachment, 142d Infantry, of Baltimore, Maryland.

At noon a turkey dinner was served to every man in the Regiment, and at 1400 Christmas services were held in strange surroundings at the base of a steep rocky hill with the occasional interruption of roaring artillery. That afternoon was also memorable, because Lieutenant General Clark, Army Commander, personally pinned the new eagles on our Regimental Commander, Colonel G. E. Lynch, as well as presenting First Lieutenant's bars to Lieutenant Evan J. McIlraith, Company "F", 142d Infantry of Chicago, Illinois, and awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to Sergeant Manuel S. Gonzalez, (38066072), of Ft. Davis, Texas, Company "F", 142d Infantry for extraordinary heroism in action at Salerno. (Copy of citation attached)

On 26 December, Division ordered this Regiment to relieve the 504th Parachute Regiment in the MT. SAMMUCRO sector.



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By ~~0800~~ the 29th of December the Regiment had completed the relief of the 504th Parachute Regiment. At 1240 the 3rd Battalion reported six rounds of enemy mortar fire had fallen in Company "I" Command Post area, wounding the Company Commander, his Executive Officer and three enlisted men.

On 30 December action consisted mainly of patrols to maintain contact with the enemy. Outpost lines were extended to the creek in vicinity of GIUSTA.

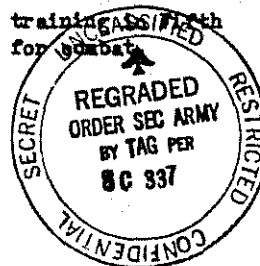
31 December: The Battalions continued to hold defensive positions. The weather was fiercely uncomfortable with snow and gales of wind.

As the year 1945 closed, the 142d Infantry could recount a year of memorable service and many experiences. A monthly journal of activities would show the following:

- JANUARY - 142d Infantry as a separate Regimental Combat Team alerted for overseas movement.
- FEBRUARY - Movement cancelled. 142d Regimental Combat Team moved to Virginia for mountain training.
- MARCH - 142d Regimental Combat Team moved to A. P. Hill Military Reservation, thence to Ft. Dix, New Jersey, staging area for overseas duty.
- APRIL - 142d Regimental Combat Team embarked with 36th Infantry Division on 2 April 1945 for overseas duty. Landed 13 April 1945 at Oran, Algeria.
- MAY - Moved from assembly area near Magenta, Algeria to Tlemcen, Algeria. 142d Infantry Regiment placed under Fifth Army control to guard roads and apprehend escaped German prisoners of war.
- JUNE - Regiment moved to Arzew, Algeria for amphibious training.
- JULY - Under Fifth Army Training Center control, the Regiment gave training to various organizations.
- AUGUST - 142d Regimental Combat Team received training at Fifth Army Battle training Center; alerted for combat.

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- SEPTEMBER - Regiment invaded Italy near Paestum.
- OCTOBER - Reorganization and training.
- NOVEMBER - Regiment took its place under II Corps in the line near Mignano, Italy.
- DECEMBER - 142d Infantry successfully attacked various important heights in Mt. Camino Hill mass, and seized Mt. Lungo.

To review briefly the month's operation, it was a period in which the Regiment advanced against a stubborn enemy over mountainous heights, overcoming the greatest difficulties of adverse weather conditions and unfavorable terrain. The American soldier demonstrated that he could withstand real hardships and fight on with a determination that deserves great praise. The 142d Infantry in seizing the heights around MT. MAGGIORE and MT. LUNGO assisted the tedious, slow push against the Germans.

In reviewing operations in mountainous terrain, some observations of numerous problems encountered are as follows:

(a) It has been definitely proved that the best physical conditioning of all personnel is necessary to combat the hardships endured in the mountains.

(b) In the matter of supplies, which in most instances were hand-carried, the sizes of all containers were excellent with exception of rifle ammunition, which if it were packed in fifty pound cases instead of 100 pound boxes, would facilitate handling. Combat suits are excellent.

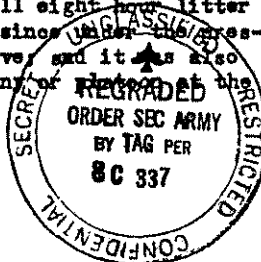
(c) In many cases, officers were saved from complete exhaustion and resultant sickness by their admittance to Fifth Army Rest Centers.

Medical Officers have made the following observations:

(a) Company Aid Man: It has been found that one Company Aid Man per rifle platoon has been adequate and has rendered excellent First Aid. He is the backbone of medical care in the Infantry Regiment. By assigning the Aid Men to their respective companies for months prior to action, close cooperation has been developed.

(b) Litter Bearers: Evacuation has been the biggest problem encountered. In many instances, litter carry from the place where a patient is wounded to the Battalion Aid Station has been a full eight hour litter haul. There was a real need for more litter bearers since under the present Table of Organization the battalion has only twelve, and it was also found that unless the litter squad was with the company of ~~infantry~~ at the

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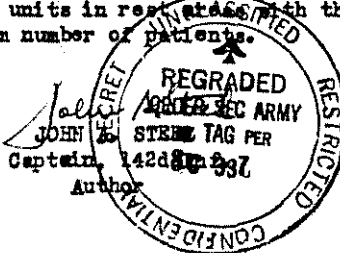
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time of injury, the casualty could not be found because of the difficult terrain. It was also learned that one squad was not sufficient to evacuate a wounded man over such difficult terrain. The solution found in this Regiment was as follows:

Two litter squads with two litters and four blankets were assigned per company to follow the Company Command Post, from where they could be sent to the platoon which needed them. If great distances were involved, one squad was assigned to each platoon in order that casualties could be located. To increase the number of litter bearers, sixteen additional men from the Collecting Company were assigned to the battalions which provided one squad per rifle company and one squad to remain at Battalion Aid Station. From the men at the Battalion Aid Station, a litter squad was formed to assist the men from the Collecting Company in evacuating casualties from the Battalion Command Posts. Since the Collecting Company was short of men, replacements came from Corps Medical Battalions. These men generally were unsatisfactory because they could never be located and would not have the physical stamina nor the fortitude to follow a company. In view of the poor results of these replacements, it is recommended that a Medical Administrative Officer be assigned to each Battalion Aid Station to take charge of the litter bearers. It was so difficult to move casualties over the crowded single trails on six to eight hour journeys that it was deemed better not to try night evacuation. In line with medical teachings, the Battalion Aid Stations were located as close as possible to the troops. Our Aid Stations and our doctors were in locations without defilade and without shelter, and it now appears necessary that a house, tent, cave or some type of shelter be located where light can be used during blackout, where plasma can be given and where patients are not exposed to the elements. The Medical Officer personnel problem has been critical, this unit being short one-half of its Medical Officer strength. Replacements have not been available. The age of Medical Officer replacements is one of vital concern. Experience has proved that any man over 35 years of age has difficulty in covering mountainous terrain.

Dental: Since the percentage of dental emergency cases is extremely small, it is recommended that one Dental Officer be placed at the Division Clearing Station and the balance of the Dental Officers be pooled with those of other units in combat areas to provide those units in rear areas with the maximum amount of dental service for the maximum number of patients.



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HEADQUARTERS, 142D INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

12 January 1944

SUBJECT: Operations in Italy, December 1943.

TO : Commanding General
36th Infantry Division
APO #36, U. S. Army

1. Transmitted herewith Historical Record - Operations in Italy -
for the month of December 1943.

2. The operations for the month of December were successful.

G. E. Lynch
G. E. LYNCH
Colonel, 142d Inf.
Commanding

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DEC 29 1944

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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91

HEADQUARTERS 115th AIRBORNE DIVISION
APO #58, F. S. ARMY



UNCLASSIFIED

18 February 1944

SUBJECT: Operations in Italy, January 1944.

TO : Commanding General, 20th Inf. Div., APO #58, U.S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith historical record of "Operations in Italy, January 1944".
2. Copy file for this record is successful.

G. P. D. [Signature]
 Lt. Col. [Rank]
 20th Inf.,
 Commanding

~~[Signature]~~
 [Signature] Col. 26 July

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M. [Signature]

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OPERATIONS IN ITALY, JANUARY, 1944

At the close of 1943 a determinedly resisting enemy occupied positions running generally SOUTHWEST - NORTHEAST, WEST of the line STAZ di ROCCA d'EVANDRO - TAVERNA - SAN VITTORE - and creek running NORTHEAST therefrom, with elements of the 15th PGR having been identified in the 142d RCT sector.

II Corps, to which the 142d RCT was attached, continued its attack in coordination with VI Corps on its right and the British 10 Corps on its left, to capture MT CIAIA, MT PORCHIA, and attack NORTHWEST to capture the high ground in the vicinity of CERVARO preparatory to operation against MT TROCCHIO and clearing area to the RAPIDO RIVER in vicinity of MT TROCCHIO. The 142d RCT, operating in the First Special Service Force zone of action, was holding MT SAMUCRO with OPLR along Hill 954 - Hill 610, SOUTHWEST along creek to SAN VITTORE.

The new year was heralded by sleet, snow, and bitter cold, inflicting numerous cases of trench feet. Snow was deep in positions occupied by the Regiment. Harassing artillery fire on enemy positions continued. By 1435 1 January 1944, elements of the Third Battalion were in position, and at 1705 Company "G" of the Second Battalion was instructed to reconnoiter the stream for subsequent crossing. On this, the first day of the new year, the 6th Armored Group was relieved of assignment with the 142d RCT, and the relief of the 751st Tank Battalion on the right was begun by the 645th TD Battalion, to be accomplished the morning of 2-3 January.

The dawn of 2 January broke clear but continued cold. Companies "G", "K", and "L" had completed the occupation of the OPL, and extensive patrolling was maintained throughout the day by all three Battalions. Although no enemy patrols were reported enemy mortar and artillery activity had increased in intensity. Company "G" sent out a six (6) man patrol from the Third Platoon to reconnoiter a large draw at the creek at the base of MT SAMUCRO for possible crossing. As the patrol advanced through the First Platoon area, Sergeant HUGH H. MERRITT, 20805611, of SNYDER, TEXAS, who had a thorough knowledge of this area having previously patrolled it, obtained permission to join the group on its mission. The patrol, after working its way down a trail under intense enemy artillery and mortar fire, advanced cautiously into the draw and suddenly found itself within five (5) yards of a hidden German machine gun nest. Having been surprised by the patrol, one of the enemy crew attempted to fire the machine gun, but Sergeant

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MERRITT opened fire upon the German gunner, killing him, then charged the remaining four (4) Germans who had opened fire with machine pistols. He engaged the Commander of the enemy crew and shot him down, but was unable to prevent the escape of the remainder because another enemy machine gun nearby opened fire on the patrol. The patrol accomplished its mission, but on its return Sergeant MERRITT was fatally wounded by enemy mortar fire. Other Company "G" patrols were also successful in locating suitable creek crossings free of mines, for foot troops, pack trains, and vehicles, while Company "E" patrolled to RADICOSA, finding the town unoccupied by the enemy, but drew enemy small arms fire from the slopes NORTHWEST of the town.

3 January continued clear and extremely cold, with intermittent enemy mortar and artillery fire falling throughout the day on defensive positions being held by the 142d Infantry on the WESTERN slopes of MT SAMBUERO. The mission of the Regiment at that time was to hold these positions until further orders and assist in the advance of other elements of the II Corps with fire: the First Battalion to protect the First Special Service Force supply point and continue interior and OPL patrols; the Second Battalion to deliver small arms and weapons fire on Hill 670 in support of the First Special Service Force and furnish guides to forward assembly areas for units of the 34th Division; and the Third Battalion to deliver small arms and weapons fire on areas NORTH of SAN VITTORE in support of the 135th and 168th Infantry and provide guides for those units to advance assembly areas. The 132d Field Artillery, in direct support of the 142d Infantry, to reinforce fire of the 6th Armored Group. At 2400 the attack on Hill 710 by the First Special Force was reported to have progressed as planned, although no contact had been made with the enemy.

The First Special Service Force reported objective taken at 0200 4 January, pushed NORTH, and at 2230 seized Hill 670, supported by fire from the Second Battalion 142d Infantry. The Second Battalion was ordered to patrol vigorously to the NORTHWEST that day and the following day, making it appear that movement was planned in that direction; the first patrol of one (1) squad from Company "E" left the company area at 2100, proceeded along the stream at the NORTHWEST base of MT SAMBUERO, and returned shortly after midnight. No enemy was encountered.

At 0700 5 January Company "G" sent another patrol to follow the same route of the previous patrol with the mission of deceiving the enemy.

In the meantime the First Battalion 135th Infantry pushed forward

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SOUTH of SAN VITTORE and the Third Battalion 142d Infantry rendered effective support in the advance of the 138th Infantry on MT CHIARA with mortar fire on GIUSTA, NORTH of SAN VITTORE, inflicting an estimated fifteen (15) German dead or wounded.

At 1155 Company "B" 142d Infantry was ordered to occupy positions taken by the First Special Service Force on Hill 670, and Hill 710, and one (1) platoon of Company "C" to occupy Hill 610, the relief to be accomplished prior to darkness. One platoon of Company "C" was ordered back to the forward slope of Hill 687 to provide defense in depth.

Information was received from II Corps, for planning purposes, that the Commanding General planned to permit the relief of troops of the 142d RCT (not to exceed one Battalion) in the vicinity of Hills 687 and 730 on or about January 6 or 7, on II Corps order.

2055 6 January brought the long awaited order for the Third Battalion's withdrawal during the night from Hill 730 to the rest and training area in the vicinity of ALIFE.

7 January at 1615 orders were received for the Second Battalion's withdrawal during the night, and the 1st Battalion to vacate positions prior to 1200 8 January.

At 1035 8 January the entire Regiment had closed into the rest and training area in the vicinity of ALIFE.

The first three days after the Regiment's arrival in the ALIFE area were devoted to the establishment and improvement of bivouac areas, and the processing of all troops through the Fifth Army Sterilization unit where officers and men received hot showers and a complete issue of clean clothing.

A six (6) day training schedule beginning 12 January was prescribed to reestablish a high standard of physical condition and to provide further training in maneuvering in extremely rough and mountainous terrain in darkness. This training included not only physical fitness training and night problems, but also small arms and weapons firing to perfect the combat efficiency of the command.

The training period was concluded with two days of river crossing

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training, terminated by an actual night problem, in preparation for future operations in the RAPIDO RIVER sector.

An extensive recreation program was planned for the battle weary troops during their short rest period. Moving pictures were shown nightly in the Battalion areas -- the Red Cross serviced the Regiment with doughnuts, coffee and entertainment -- and recreational trips to the historic town of CASERTA were provided. Highlights in the entertainment field, provided by the Special Service, were the appearance of Humphrey Bogart and his group of entertainers, and the Fifth Army Swing Band.

On 12 January the Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, in an impressive ceremony, presented the award of the Silver Star to Sergeant CHARLES W. ARMSTRONG, 35164901, of Macon, Georgia, Company "I", 142d Infantry, for his gallant action during the SALERNO operation; Corporal CHARLES L. WADDELL, 20804844, of Ballinger, Texas, Company "C", 142d Infantry; Private First Class CHARLES A. COLLET, 35259328, of Logansport, Indiana, Company "E", 142d Infantry, and Private First Class LAWRENCE T. DOUGLAS, 33233480, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Medical Detachment, 142d Infantry, for gallantry in action during the month of December in the LT DUNGO and MT MAGGIORE sectors as set forth in the record of operations of the Regiment for that month.

This period was also marked with the arrival of two hundred fifty-six (256) enlisted replacements; one hundred (100) on 8 January and one hundred fifty-six (156) on 14 January (report of qualifications attached). These replacements, together with all other replacements received since 15 November 1943, were given twelve (12) hours separate instruction in Basic Battle Drill and a brief course in "crack and thump" in addition to the prescribed training. Twenty-five (25) officer replacements also joined the Regiment after having just completed a two weeks Battle Training Course conducted by Brig. Gen. Wilbur, Assistant Division Commander. These officers were greeted by the Regimental Commander, assigned, and participated in training with their respective units conducted during this period.

On 16 January, the 142d RCT was again committed as II Corps reserve. Movement to an assembly area in the vicinity of MIGNANO was accomplished at 1345, 18 January, with the Regimental Command Post established at the base of MT LUNGO in position vacated by the 143d Regimental Combat Team.

On 19 January the First Battalion, 142d RCT was ordered to move from its assembly area at 1500 the following day and proceed to assembly area

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EAST of MT TROCCEIO, in 36th Division reserve. If not committed by 36th Division, the Battalion would revert to 142d RCT control. The Second and Third Battalions were ordered to move the night of 21-22 January to an assembly area EAST of MT TROCCEIO; the Second Battalion movement beginning at 1800 and the Third Battalion at 1830 21 January.

Three plans of attack based on the premise of successful crossing of the RAPIDO RIVER by the 141st and 143d Infantry Regiments were issued 20 January. Plans of Attack as follows:

Plan "A" - Attack and capture CASSINO. The Regiment to pass through the 36th Division bridgehead NORTH of SAN ANGELO, two Battalions abreast; First Battalion on left, Third Battalion on right; Second Battalion following center at eight hundred (800) yards. First Battalion to seize Hill 594 NORTHWEST of CASSINO and protect left of Regiment. Third Battalion to seize Hill 367 and attack CASSINO from the WEST. Second Battalion, less one (1) rifle company, to attack CASSINO from the NORTH. The one (1) rifle company of the Second Battalion to be placed in all-around defense in Area "D" (stream crossing on Highway 6, one and one-half (1 1/2) miles SOUTHWEST of CASSINO). The Anti-Tank Company to establish all-around tank defense from positions in Area "D", and the Cannon Company to render artillery support also from that area.

Plan "B" - Attack and capture FIEDIMONTE. The Regiment to pass through the 36th Division bridgehead NORTH of SAN ANGELO; the First Battalion leading; the Third Battalion echeloned six hundred (600) yards to the right and six hundred yards to the rear, and the Second Battalion echeloned six hundred (600) yards to the left and six hundred (600) yards to the rear of the First Battalion. The First Battalion to advance and seize Hill 546 NORTHWEST of FIEDIMONTE and the heights NORTH of FIEDIMONTE simultaneously. The Third Battalion seize FIEDIMONTE, with the Second Battalion to organize defenses on the SOUTHERN slopes of Hill 546 WEST of FIEDIMONTE. The Anti-Tank Company to follow the First Battalion in interval between the Second and Third Battalions prepared to meet tank attack enroute; three platoons positioned in the Second Battalion area while one platoon advanced to FIEDIMONTE prepared for tank attack from the SOUTH and WEST. The Cannon Company to follow the Anti-Tank Company in support of the attack of both the First and Third Battalions.

Plan "C" - Attack and capture AQUINO. The Regiment to pass through the 36th Division bridgehead NORTH of SAN ANGELO with the First and Third Battalions abreast -- First Battalion on the right and the Second Battalion to follow the Third Battalion at six hundred (600) yards. The First Battalion

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to seize the SOUTHERN half of AQUINO with the Third Battalion occupying the NORTHERN half, while the Second Battalion organized defenses in vicinity of T S GREGORIO, SOUTH of Highway 6. The Cannon Company, less two platoons, advance between the Second and Third Battalions in support by direct fire on targets NORTH and EAST of AQUINO. The Anti-Tank Company advance between the First and Third Battalions prepared for tank attack from the NORTH, WEST and SOUTH; during the attack on AQUINO, defend against tank attack from SOUTH and EAST.

In the event of the First Battalion's withdrawal from the Regiment, upon committal by the 36th Division, the Second Battalion would assume its mission.

The Anti-Tank Company closed into its new assembly area SOUTHEAST of MT TROCCHIO at 1130 20 January, and the Cannon Company at 1145. The new Regimental Command Post was established at the EASTERN base of MT PORCHIA at 1545, and at 2220 the First Battalion had closed into its new assembly area SOUTHEAST of MT TROCCHIO.

The 36th Division ordered that there would be no firing of any type of weapons on ABBEY LONTECASSINO, atop the 1500 foot height overlooking the enemy held CASSINO. Although it was well established that the enemy was using the Abbey for an observation post, the Allied Forces were faced with the necessity of preserving this historical religious monument and its destruction would not be ordered unless our forces were unnecessarily imperiled.

The Third Battalion, 142d RCT, occupied its new assembly area SOUTHEAST of MT TROCCHIO at 2215, and the Second Battalion at 2334, 22 January 1943.

The Cannon Company closed into its assembly area SOUTHEAST of MT TROCCHIO at 0115 22 January, followed by the Anti-Tank Company at 0300.

At 2315 the Regimental Commander returned from a conference held by the 36th Division Commander, where, due to the unsuccessful attempts of the 141st RCT and the 143d RCT to establish a bridgehead in the RAPIDO RIVER sector, plans of attack previously cited using that route of approach had been cancelled. Orders were issued by the Division Commanding General for the 142d Infantry to effect the bridgehead, but were cancelled prior to execution.

Offsetting the discouraging setbacks in the foregoing operations, the

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surprising news was received of the unopposed amphibious landing at NETTUNO, thirty-five (35) miles SOUTH of ROME, by the American 3d Division and the British 1st Division. This news was received with much rejoicing and speculation as to the importance and success of this and future operations.

Two platoons of Company "C" occupied positions in the 141st RCT sector at 0815 23 January with the mission of patrolling bridge sites to prevent mining by the enemy. Opposition of the enemy continued unabated and the 141st RCT encountered withering small arms and mortar fire on both sides of the river.

On 24 January, the 142d RCT again reverted to II Corps control, to be in reserve initially. However, it would still be available to the 36th Division for patrols and demonstrations and be prepared to take over the mission of the 141st RCT on order.

Shortly after midnight the 36th Division G-2 informed the Regimental Commander that the II Corps expected a counterattack that night, probably in the 34th Division sector NORTH of CASSINO. Although the 34th Division attack was launched as planned, a mine field four thousand (4,000) yards in length and forty (40) to fifty (50) yards in depth was encountered, and its advance was halted.

The First Battalion, 142d RCT was attached to the 141st RCT on the 25th of January, with one (1) company to occupy strong points at the NORTHWEST base of MT TROCCHIO and the balance of the Battalion to occupy positions on the NORTHERN and NORTHWESTERN slopes of the mountain. The two (2) platoons previously sent out to patrol bridge sites in the 141st RCT sector were withdrawn to join the First Battalion.

Meanwhile elements of the 133d Infantry had successfully established a bridgehead NORTH of CASSINO.

At 1415 the Regimental Commander was notified by the Commanding General, 36th Division, that the 142d RCT was attached to the 34th Division immediately, and Colonel LYNCH and his staff proceeded to the 34th Division Command Post for orders. At 1500 Colonel LYNCH issued orders to the Battalion Commanders and their staffs for movement that night, under cover of darkness to assembly areas in the vicinity of SAN ELIA.

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At 0645 27 January, the Regimental Command Post was established in SAN ELIA, with Brig. Gen. BUTLER, Assistant Division Commander of the 34th Division, also establishing his headquarters at that location.

The following day, 28 January, was devoted to coordination with the 34th Division on plans of attack and establishing the mission of the 142d RCT.

At 0530 29 January, the Second Battalion had arrived and established its assembly area on Hill 382, NORTHWEST of SAN ELIA, which was consolidated into a defensive position later in the day in support of the French in their advance toward Hill 915. At 1410, one (1) platoon of Company "E" was sent to reinforce the French Forces, and at 1500 the seizure of Hill 862 by these Forces was reported.

The First Battalion closed into its assembly area on Hill 382 at 0130 30 January.

At 0845 the Second Battalion was ordered to attack Hill 862. The attack was launched at 0930, as planned, but the advance was impeded by a stubbornly resisting enemy.

The 168th Infantry was reported atop Hill 213 at 0915 and were mopping up, and at 1130 its successful occupation of CAIRO was also reported.

At 1354, the First Battalion, 142d RCT, was ordered to move one (1) company to the reverse slopes of Hill 700 to support the French in the event of a counterattack; one (1) platoon of that company to relieve the platoon of the Second Battalion now on the hill. The Heavy Weapons Company of the First Battalion was attached to the French in their attack on LA CAPPELLA HILL.

The last day of this eventful month found Company "C" in successful occupation of Hill 720, accomplishing the capture of twenty-nine (29) Germans situated on this height; and the Second Battalion continuing its advance toward MASS MANNA (Hill 862) over precipitous terrain and against uncompromising opposition. This day also found the Fifth Army Forces occupying vantage points virtually surrounding the coveted CASSINO, the Germans last stronghold guarding ROME, cutting off their routes of supply and escape and assuring its ultimate seizure.

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Casualties in the 141st RCT and the 143d RCT during the unsuccessful operations in the RAPIDO RIVER sector had been tremendous, and the 142d Infantry which had been more fortunate was called upon to furnish experienced Rifle Company personnel to staff these depleted organizations. One (1) officer from each Rifle Company, and one (1) Platoon Sergeant from each Rifle Platoon, together with two (2) officers from each Battalion Headquarters with staff capabilities, were designated to replace these vital vacancies. On 26 January four (4) of these officers were assigned and joined the 143d Infantry, and eleven (11) were assigned and joined the 141st Infantry. The vacancies resulting in this transfer of officer personnel in the 142d Infantry at this crucial time were partially replaced by the arrival of ten (10) officer replacements who were assigned and joined the Regiment 28 January. On 30 January eighteen (18) of the Rifle Platoon Sergeants were assigned and joined each of the stricken Regiments.

A partial supply of winter clothing was issued to the Regiment on 25 January, consisting of the Parka (reversible hooded coat) complete with pile liner, heavy wool stockings, muffler, mittens, kersey lined trousers and sweater. Due to the added weight and bulk of the Parka which had been developed to meet Alaskan weather conditions, its use was not applicable for Infantry use in ITALY. The sweater and muffler were issued to the Rifle Battalions, supply being insufficient for complete Regimental distribution, and the mittens (1,000 pair) were issued to special personnel in Rifle Battalions. The pile lined Parka, together with the kersey lined trousers were issued to Companies not in Rifle Battalions to replace combat suits which were withdrawn from those Companies and issued to Rifle Battalions. The heavy wool socks were not issued due to their bulkiness making it impossible for them to be worn with the normal shoe size.

Robert E. Snyder
ROBERT E. SNYDER
WO (JG), 142d Infantry
Author

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HEADQUARTERS, 142D INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

11 March 1944

SUBJECT: Operations in Italy, February 1944.

TO : Commanding General
36th Infantry Division
APO # 36, U. S. Army

Transmitted herewith Historical Record - Operations in Italy - for
the month of February 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

John A. Steel
JOHN A. STEEL
Captain, 142d Inf.
Adjutant

~~*Adjutant Col. [unclear]*
26 July~~

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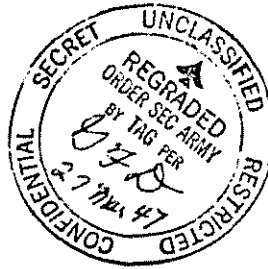
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HEADQUARTERS, 142D INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

10 March 1944

SUBJECT: Regimental Commander's Comments on Operations, 142d Infantry,
February 1944.

TO : The Commanding General
36th Infantry Division
APO # 36, U. S. Army

The regimental move from the TERELLE sector to the MT CASTELLONE area was complicated and difficult. The First Battalion left MT BELVEDERE during daylight and after a half mile move across country, became involved in a fire fight with Germans on the EAST slopes of MT CAIRO. In accordance with his mission, the Battalion Commanding Officer attempted to wipe out this resistance, using one (1) rifle company. The resistance proved too strong, so again, in accordance with his mission the Battalion Commanding Officer bypassed the resistance and continued toward MT CASTELLONE. During the day, Regimental Command Post received word that a battalion of 135th Infantry had succeeded in seizing MT CASTELLONE against quite light resistance, and for one (1) battalion, 142d Infantry to relieve that Battalion and hold MT CASTELLONE. The First Battalion, 142d Infantry carried out these orders.

Meantime, Second Battalion continued its hard fight on MASS MANNA. In a night attack, it reached its final objectives, the peaks of Hills 862 and 875, but, with approaching daylight, diminishing ammunition and no time for the organization of the very bare positions, it withdrew to the bases of these hills, to continue the attack the next night. The Battalion during the day was continuously engaged from both flanks and front. The right flank was of particular nuisance because, while hostile fire was being received from it, it was impossible to neutralize the fire as the French Algerian troops were scattered throughout the area. The French troops seized ground rapidly, patrolled boldly and extensively and lost the same ground with equal facility. Their commanders themselves seldom knew where

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their native troops actually were, and the troops were so weakened by losses, that their tenure of ground was never reliable. For this reason, troops of the 142d Infantry Reserve were constantly in position to meet a German breakthrough on the French front. The TERELLE road was the boundary. Incidentally the French Infantry pay no attention to boundaries and, in working with French Arab troops, it is necessary to become accustomed to finding them to the front, rear and flanks of the position at any time and without prior warning. No clashes resulted however.

Only one (1) officer in the 142d Headquarters spoke a limited amount of French, so that liaison with the French was tenuous. Liaison between the higher headquarters involved in the operation was well-provided for with officer personnel qualified in the languages, but in the echelons where the liaison was really important and where instant understanding of the mutual operations was essential, the matter of the provision of liaison personnel was left to chance or for the units concerned to work out their own salvation, which they did.

During this phase of the operation a German Battalion Aid Station with fifteen (15) wounded and fourteen (14) sound enemy was captured by 142d Infantry. The penetration of the enemy's positions to the depth where Battalion Aid Stations are located was an indication that here the Germans were taken by surprise and that a possibility existed for a good success if the direction of the effort had been maintained and reinforced. The circumstance of this capture was reported to the Assistant Division Commander, 34th Division.

Since MT CASTELLONE was now occupied by the First Battalion, 142d Infantry, and that feature had been our principal objective, I suggested to General Butler that, COLLE S. LUCIA and MT CORNO, both promontories of MT CAIRO, and to my mind necessary ground in the reduction of the CASSINO Corner, be given the Regiment as objectives when we could disengage ourselves from MASS MANNA. General Butler received the approval of II Corps Commanding General on this mission. Third Battalion (less Company "K") was sent to seize COLLE S. LUCIA at 1800 2 February, following a NORTH-SOUTH route along the lower slopes of MT CAIRO. This Battalion, with a new commander, met some resistance en route, became disorganized, reorganized and stopped at 0500 3 February in a position halfway to its objective. There it did nothing for about thirteen (13) hours and because of the commander's deficiencies, no effort was made to carry out the mission. The mission was hazardous and its success depended on German reaction on MT CAIRO and on the Battalion Commander's drive and initiative. The Battalion apparently penetrated the

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German positions on MT CAIRO with surprise to both itself and the Germans. The opportunity existed for a further penetration, but was not seized. After reorganization, two (2) separate German mule trains passed within assault distance of the Battalion, but were not molested. These were trains supplying the troops which were opposing the Second Battalion, 142d Infantry. Their interception by the Third Battalion, 142d Infantry would have lessened the enemy's effectiveness on MASS MANNA. The chance, however, was passed. The Third Battalion during this phase, was of little use to itself or to the Allied effort. A positive commander could have reaped many dividends. This instance, among others, confirms my opinion that, in a Battalion Commanding Officer, the qualities of determination, endurance, initiative and aggressiveness are of greater importance than the many others which are desirable in this commander. Intelligence, education, and military knowledge are secondary in comparison. Battalion Commanders should be selected for the first qualities I have listed, then, the other qualities should be developed to the fullest capability of the individual.

This Battalion was finally recovered and played a reserve role throughout the remainder of the month. A new commander was selected, who should give the Battalion a better opportunity to prove its merit.

Hurried orders from Brig. Gen. Butler, 34th Division, released the 142d Combat Team from the French sector (except Second Battalion plus Company "K" which were to remain), and assigned us the mission of seizing MT CORNO the next day. These orders were received at 1230, 3 February, to be executed at the earliest hour practicable 4 February. All Regimental troops being in position or en route, the Regimental Command Post moved on foot to MT CASTELLONE, the forward elements arriving a couple of hundred yards from the summit at dark 3 February. Reconnaissance at daybreak the next day, was planned, with the intention of attacking at 1100 the same day. I felt that the mission was beyond the capabilities of the forces I had available, but made no comment, since the ordering authority must have arrived at its own estimate and decided it practicable and since previous suggestions and comments had been received by General Butler as being efforts on the regiment's part to avoid or slight hazardous duty. This attack was cancelled during the night, on word from General Butler in the name of the Commanding General, 34th Division. The next seven (7) days were uneventfully spent in improving positions and the regiment reverted to 36th Division.

Another attack on MT CORNO was called for by the Commanding General, 36th Division. Since the whole regiment was available for the mission, I felt it would succeed, provided C.E.F. attacked simultaneously the lower

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slopes of MT CAIRO which dominated our objective from the NORTH. The Commanding General, 36th Division was arranging this coordination when this attack was cancelled.

On 11 February the hastily organized attack on Hill 468 in conjunction with the 141st Infantry attack on Hill 593 jumped off at 1100. The 142d Infantry attack progressed to the objective (one (1) Battalion in assault, one (1) in Reserve) but the objective was not physically seized-- it was neutralized from two (2) sides by our organized fires from distances of two hundred (200) to six hundred (600) yards.

The mission to seize Hill 468, I felt was a faulty one and due to an improper appreciation of the situation in the Hill 593 area. Conversation with the Commanding Officer, 168th Infantry who had been fighting on Hill 593 brought out that his efforts had been continually hampered by fires and small counterattacks from the WEST. He ascribed the source of this harassment to a terrain feature labeled 468. He had apparently persuaded higher headquarters that "Hill" 468 must be taken to relieve pressure from Hill 593. Actually, "Hill" 468, was not a hill at all. It was a cultivated open plateau with Hill 593 on the EAST and Hill 575 on the WEST. Both 593 and 575 dominated 468. Hill 575 was a strongly occupied German position. Hill 593 was shared by 168th Infantry and the Germans, with the Germans holding the SOUTH and WEST parts of it. I believe the German harassment had been coming from Hill 575 and was being delivered through the German held part of Hill 593. My estimate was, that, no force could hold or seize 468 (an open plateau) without holding or seizing Hill 575. Since I did not have sufficient troops (two (2), two hundred and twenty (220) man Battalions) to seize Hill 575, reportedly occupied by one or two German Battalions, my plan was to seize the defensible EAST and NORTH flanks of 468, organize them and neutralize 468 by close Infantry fires. This plan was carried out. An effort was made to seize a walled-in house centered on 468 but was unsuccessful since it was defensively strong and would require breaching for entrance. However, the Germans in this house were incapable of any action with our fires crossing the areas surrounding it. While it was secure defensively it was also a trap. Germans attempting to enter or leave were killed by our troops.

Since the Second Battalion, 142d Infantry had occupied positions on the lower WEST slopes of 593, about two hundred (200) yards from the house mentioned above and had done so with considerable surprise and damage to the enemy (also sustaining serious losses itself), I estimated that the deadlock on Hill 593 could be broken by having my reserve battalion pass

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through Second Battalion and attack Hill 593 from the German rear and flank, while 141st Infantry continued to engage the Germans from the front. This plan met with approval of Commanding General, 36th Division and was prepared to be executed, but was cancelled since my reserve Battalion constituted the only reserves in that sector and there were indications of a pending German counterattack. I believe the maneuver would have been successful.

The weather for the attack on Hill 468 had been successively rainy, snowy, foggy and cold. Battalion and Company Commander's reconnaissance prior to attack was defeated by no visibility, consequently the attack was made without. Considerable troop movement in this weather in regrouping for the attack the day prior, left the troops wet and miserable. Nevertheless, they attacked after a wet sleepless night, with surprising vigor.

141st Infantry supply broke down prior to the attack, so 142d Infantry S-4 supplied 141st Infantry with ammunition with which to launch its attack. This nearly jeopardized 142d Infantry's own later supply, as it had been necessary to have the 142d Infantry mule train do two (2) complete round trips the night before the attack and this extra exhaustion, caused a number of mule and man casualties, and left the remainder in poor shape for their next nightly haul. This circumstance had been anticipated, but the 141st Infantry was making the 36th Division main effort and it had to have the supplies. I did not inquire as to the reasons for the failure of supplies to 141st Infantry the night before the attack.

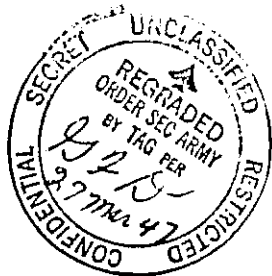
The February 12 attack of the Germans against First Battalion, 142d Infantry (then under command 143rd Infantry) is covered in detail in the month's history. Three factors were responsible for the successful defense of the mountain.

1. Determination of officers and men to hold the mountain.
2. The purposeful presence of plentiful ammunition on the position and at the guns and fighting holes.
3. A satisfactory fire and defense plan.

A strong criticism is, that in usual American style, since the impetus was always forward, no artificial defenses had been erected. No wire, no mines, no obstacles and precious little improvement of individual shelters had been accomplished during the twelve (12) day occupancy of the position. This, I believe, is common with U.S. Troops and must be overcome. Defenses must start immediately with occupancy, and improvement must continue until the position is abandoned.

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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91



OPERATIONS IN ITALY, FEBRUARY, 1944

February was a month of hard uphill fighting and quick action for the 142nd Infantry. Two offensive actions and the staving off of a strong German attack highlighted the month's operations. The scene shifted rapidly. The regiment fought on four sectors in the space of twelve days. The enemy resisted stubbornly. His artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire were the heaviest we had yet experienced. The weather for the most part was free from rain but it was cold and the frost lingered in the mornings. Supply was difficult and taxing. All forward elements had to be serviced by mule train. Battle casualties were heavy. Medics and litter bearers were at a premium. Many brave men were lost and in the end with strength well spent our action was limited to a holding operation until a relief was effected by French units on the night of 25-26 February.

It will be well to follow this narrative with a map at hand. Maps used are: GSGS ITALY 1:50,000, Sheets 160-I, 160-II, and ITALY 1:25,000 (a copy of a captured German map) sheets 160-I S.W., 160-I S.E., and 160-II NW.

The first day of February found us in the midst of heavy fighting in what we shall call the TERELLE sector of the southern Fifth Army front. Our endeavor was to widen the salient made by the French in crossing the RAPIDO RIVER line north of CASSINO, and to continue this flanking movement to turn the German defenses at that strong point. Previous attempts to cross the RAPIDO south of CASSINO into the broad LIRI VALLEY had failed and been costly. CASSINO itself, situated at the base of the mass of mountains leading up to 5,000 foot MT. CAIRO was well fortified and was the central barrier on the German held GUSTAV line, a line of defenses which ran generally along the RAPIDO RIVER through CASSINO and south along the GARI and GARIGLIANO RIVERS.

In the advance on CASSINO during January while American forces had taken MT. TROCCIO, French troops to the north had swept across difficult mountain country to take ACQUAFONDATA, VALLEROTONDA, and in the valley S. ELIA, four miles to the north of CASSINO on the RAPIDO. From there they had pushed on across the river and gained the heights of C. BELVEDERE (G855277). At about the same time elements of the 34th Division had forced their way to the nose of C. LAJOLA (G850248) so that the Allies had succeeded in getting their first hold on the mountains back of CASSINO.

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It was, then, to continue this flanking action that the 142nd Infantry Regiment was, on the 25-26th January suddenly switched from positions near M.T. TROCENICO, placed under control of the 34th Division, and moved by a long circuitous route to the vicinity of S. ELIA to launch an attack in the direction of TERELLE along side the French, then to swing south and seize M.T. CASTELLONE.

In our first attempt to cross the valley to assembly positions in what was supposedly French territory, and with the aid of French guides, on the night of 26-27th January our 3rd Battalion met unexpected enemy fire and our 3rd Battalion commander, Major Wells, was killed. The Battalion executive officer, Captain Brown, was wounded. The 3rd Battalion withdrew and plans for the attack were redrawn.

It must be realized that from vantage points on M.T. CAIRO and its lower slopes, which was to the west and to the front, and from knife-edged M.T. CIPALCO (G875300) to the north and to the flank, and from other snow-capped heights to the northeast virtually to the rear, the enemy was looking down on all our movements and constantly firing effectively with observed artillery fire. Our routes of supply and communication like the road leading down into S. ELIA from the mountains behind it or across the valley from the village of CAIRO to CERVARO and Hwy 6 were uncomfortably in plain view and at many points were registered in targets which the enemy at intervals harassed. Enemy artillery and nebelwerfer fire was most frequent from gun positions near PIEDEMONTE (G792224), VILLA S. LUCIA (G810234), TERELLE (G815277), and BELMONTE-CASTELLO (G842305), but as has been pointed out, his observers were on the high ground still in his possession. Certainly it must have been that his ammunition supply was limited or we could not have operated as openly as we did.

On the night of 28-29th January our 2nd Battalion succeeded in getting to assembly positions on HILL 382 (G857273). The 1st Battalion followed the night of 29-30th January and the 3rd Battalion on the night of 30-31st January while the 2nd Battalion moved into positions around to the left of HILL 700 (G842270). The French were on HILL 700 (G842270). HILLS 720 (G839275) and 771 (G843276) had changed hands several times and at the last were in enemy possession.

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With the French along the road to TERALLE reported to be holding a line through HILLS 700 (G842271) and 771 (G843276), the plan for our advance was:

2nd Battalion initially to secure HILL 862 (PASS ANNA - G828279).

1st Battalion to follow behind and upon the 2nd Battalion reaching HILL 862, to turn south along slopes of HILL 862 and of MT. CAIRO and to proceed on to take MT. CASABELLONE (G829243) (also referred to as HILL 771 as on 1:25,000 map).

3rd Battalion to follow the 2nd and 1st Battalions, to relieve the 2nd Battalion on HILL 862. Upon this relief the 2nd Battalion was also to move south to take COLLI S. DUCIA (G820248, also referred to as HILL 720 as on 1:25,000 map).

General Butler, Assistant Division Commander, 34th Division was in command in this sector and was to coordinate the advance with movements of 34th Division elements in vicinity of village of CAIRO and with the French on our right.

By the morning of the 1st February the 2nd Battalion was on HILL 862, its initial objective. Since the attack had jumped off it had had to fight its way along the TERALLE road and over HILL 720 (G839275) with C company abreast and the French on C company's right. The French had had to retake HILL 771 (G829243) then moved on to take COLLI ABATE, HILL 915 (G835283). But the French were very much weakened in strength after their long series of advances and their depleted forces were subject to counter-attack and unsteadiness. The 2nd Battalion had met stiff resistance. Enemy artillery was quite active but casualties from machine gun and small arms fire were unusually high. The battalion had made good progress. Over a hundred prisoners were captured. Even a German aid station with the wounded still there was taken. Enemy engineer supplies, box mines, cut lumber ready for use in defensive positions, were found in stock piles. It looked like we had broken through where the enemy had only hastily prepared positions. But there were yet hills ahead, bare-faced, rocky, and Germans to defend them.

The road to TERALLE climbs up the mountain from the village of CAIRO (G849248) on the valley floor in a series of eight hair-pin turns. On top it follows the contour line with a steep drop on the left for a way and then goes to a dead end in TERALLE. It is a good road. It was of tactical importance to get tanks and armor up it as soon as possible and it was desired to use it as a route of supply and evacuation. At first the rations, ammunition, etc. were all brought up by mule train on the only route open, the trail leading up on C. BELVIDERE over HILL 582. The wounded were littered down this same long way.

The village of GALA was taken by the 168th Infantry on the 31 January and the TERELLE ROAD up from CAIRO was cleared that afternoon by contact patrols which covered the route. The first tanks came up the evening of the 31 January and the next morning were used to supply the 2nd Battalion. French tanks came up in force the afternoon of 1 February. It was planned to use these in an attack on TERELLE but one of our own tanks going forward struck a mine and sprung a track. There it remained an obstacle on a narrow ledge around which other tanks could not move.

With the 2nd Battalion on HILL 862, the regimental commander ordered the 1st Battalion on its way toward MT. CASTELLONE. C company which was in position on the nose LA CAPELLA (G833276) was to remain there until relieved after dark by French units and was then to follow and join the 1st Battalion in its attack on MT. CASTELLONE.

At 1110 the 1st Battalion, less C company, (Colonel Lynch ordered L company to begin relief of C company on LA CAPELLA at this time. C company was to follow and catch up with 1st Battalion) moved out from positions (G833270) on forward slopes of HILL 700. At the outset a heavy shelling from two directions caught the battalion. Its commander, Major Amick, was wounded but he insisted on going on.

Through a heavy fog the battalion in column formation moved along the southeast slopes of HILL 862. Houses enroute were apparently German bivouacs and the surprised occupants were quickly rounded up and resistance reduced. At a point along the ridge (G830262) enemy machine guns and mortars opened up in force and caused a number of casualties. Major Amick, considering that C company was not with the battalion, decided to by-pass this obstacle and led the battalion down to the lower trail (G830260) where after nightfall positions were organized for all-around defense and bivouac. Company C caught up with the battalion during the night.

In this rather precarious position it was assuredly good news to Major Amick and his men to receive by radio information that a battalion of the 135th Infantry was on MT. CASTELLONE, and orders to continue on their mission and to relieve the 135th Infantry Battalion there. This battalion had climbed the height from the east and had met little or no resistance in doing it.

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Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion held on MASS MAMA was to be strengthened. On the night of 2-3 February G and F companies attacked HILL 375 (1:25,000 map - (G826273) and the knoll southeast of it. These objectives were gained but fierce machine gun and mortar fire plus approaching daylight made withdrawal necessary before the position could be organized. Casualties in these two companies were particularly heavy but positions were held on the reverse slopes of HILL 375.

It was about noon of 3 February when General Butler arrived at our CP with a new plan of action involving a change of sector for our regiment. Our 2nd Battalion, plus K company less one platoon, was to remain in position on MASS MAMA and would assist the 168th Infantry, to whom they were attached, in an attack on TERELLE. Colonel Lynch would move his CP to MT. CASTELLONE and with our 1st and 3rd Battalions would plan an attack on HILL 720 (G817247) from MT. CASTELLONE.

Colonel Lynch ordered a platoon of K company to follow the route of the 3rd Battalion with instructions for the 3rd Battalion to join the 1st on MT. CASTELLONE.

On the 4 February, General Butler warned that he had information that Germans were forming for a counter-attack. The attacks on HILL 720 from MT. CASTELLONE and on TERELLE were to be postponed. We would prepare defensive positions for MT. CASTELLONE.

MT. CASTELLONE is a barren hill that rises evenly from its base near the village of CAIRO. It is dominated by MT. CORNO (G808249) and MT. CAIRO yet it stands by itself as the key to command the bridgehead established by the Allies north of CASSINO, which centered in the village of CAIRO. From MT. CASTELLONE our artillery observers could look down through the draw that leads near VILLA S. LUCIA to German held FIEDELONTE and Hwy 6.

A period of waiting and expectancy followed during 4-10 February. The 3rd Battalion joined the 1st Battalion in defensive positions on MT. CASTELLONE. Our attack to west we knew had only been postponed. During this time there were several changes, frequent shuffling of troops and command setups. The 2nd Battalion of the 155th Infantry was

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This relief was accomplished by noon of the 3 February. As the 1st Battalion went up the slopes of MT. CASTELLONE from the north, enemy machine guns opened fire from the ridge (8818253) that leads up to MT. CAIRO, but our fire in return, with that of the 135th Infantry on MT. CASTELLONE, scattered the Germans and sent them flying further up the mountain.

That this approach march of the 1st Battalion amounted to was a flank movement across the breadth of the enemy front line.

Major Amick was evacuated after the 1st Battalion was established on MT. CASTELLONE. Major Mobley, executive officer, took command of the battalion.

On the morning of the 2 February, the 2nd Battalion on PASS LAMNA-HILL 862 was engaged by enemy small arms fire. They were due to be relieved by the 2nd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion on HILL 720 (8859275) and LA CAPELLA was to be relieved by French units. Because the French were late in the relief of the 3rd Battalion and the 2nd Battalion was engaged by fire, Colonel Lynch ordered the 3rd Battalion to take over the mission of the 2nd Battalion - to move south and seize COLLE S. LUZIA (HILL 720 - 8817247).

Their plan of march was to move south in two columns over the two trails leading along the slopes of MT. CAIRO. They moved out at 1800 and soon ran into trouble. At 2100 an officer from L company returned and said his company had been scattered by enemy machine gun fire to the front and rear. A little later a battalion staff officer returned and said that the whole battalion was pinned down and unable to move because of the baldness of the hill and the bright moonlight. Colonel Lynch gave him a plan to outmaneuver the enemy. At 0200 the battalion commander called Colonel Lynch and said that positions given by the battalion staff officer were in error. Colonel Lynch then ordered the 3rd Battalion commander to by-pass the resistance, to move south toward MT. CASTELLONE and to attack HILL 720 (8817247) after daylight. All communication with the 3rd Battalion then ceased and it was not until the morning of the 4 February that a reckoning could be made.

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attached to us. When the 143rd and 141st Infantry Regiments came into this general area. The 142nd Infantry reverted to 36th Division control. Our 2nd Battalion was relieved from the positions on MASS LAMA in the TERELLE sector, and moved to regimental reserve only to be attached to the 34th Division as division reserve on HILL 213 (G846241 - 1:25,000 map).

An attempt to occupy HILL 720 (G817247) by gradual infiltration was begun but was discontinued when a general attack west to take HILL 720 and MT. CORNO was planned for the night of 10-11 February. HILL 706 (G828231 - 1:25,000 map) was occupied by L company on the night of 8-9 February, relieving one company of the 135th Infantry

Enemy harassing fires were the chief threat to our positions. Mortar fire was frequent on the troops on MT. CASTELLONE. Enemy artillery crashed down into the valley and hit at the supply and CP installations around the village of CAIRO. Four times in two days enemy aircraft raced in to shake things up by dropping a few bombs. Supplies were brought up by mule train after dark from a dump near S. MICHELLE (G891243). Seventy-five mules per battalion were required for a day's supply of rations, ammunition, etc.

Plans for the attack on MT. CORNO scheduled for the night of 10-11 February had been formulated, artillery fires drawn and registered, and the battalions were in readiness when notice was received that this attack had been cancelled and that the 142nd Infantry would assist the 141st Infantry in its attack to the south on HILL 468 (G832215).

After a conference at Division Headquarters the morning of 10 February, Colonel Lynch instructed his own commanders at 1530 as follows:

1st Battalion will remain on present positions on MT. CASTELLONE and will be attached to the 143d Infantry.

This Regiment, less 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion leading, will seize and hold HILL 468 (G832215).

2nd Battalion will move from present positions beginning at 1500 to forward assembly area, center of area coordinates G831225

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3rd Battalion will move at 1800 and go prepared to repel a German counter-attack on 2nd Battalion or to reinforce positions held by 2nd Battalion on HILL 468.

Colonel Lynch was placed in command of 141st and 142nd Infantry Regiments for this operation.

Late that afternoon rain and snow started falling and continued all night. It was wet. It was cold. It was muddy, miserable. Battalion commanders were unable to make reconnaissances because of the low ceiling. But the troops moved out on schedule to assembly areas. That night the regimental commander made arrangements with Lieutenant Colonel Wyatt, Commanding Officer, 141st Infantry, to transport 141st ammunition supply the same night by our mules. White phosphorus grenades, then fragmentation grenades, were considered first priority for the type of battle expected. It was 0500 in the morning before the train did get through but the necessary supply was complete.

The next morning 142d Infantry CP established an advance CP in a house on the hill at 6845230. The 135th Infantry was using this as their CP also.

Rain and sleet continued in the early morning. Captain Simpson, 3rd Battalion Commander, reported a number of cases of frozen feet. Artillery and Cannon Company observers were unable to register in their fires. But before noon the weather cleared. Through this operation it remained cold. A weather forecast threatened winds of gale velocity but these never developed.

468 is not a hill actually but an elevation marked on the map. It is a bowl shaped plain on which stands an ancient abbey, not the ABBEY MONT-CASSIN, but one which bears some relation. The Germans were using this as a bivouac and fortified position.

The attack jumped off on time at 1100. The 2nd Battalion was soon in contact with the enemy. Fighting was intense during the day but by nightfall a report from a company of the 135th Infantry said that they could see friendly troops in and around the ABBEY on 468.

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When the advance of the 141st Infantry appeared to be stalled, Colonel Lynch formed a plan to use the 3rd Battalion to advance from its reserve position through the 2nd Battalion positions and to attack Hill 593 (GR55216) (1:25,000 map) from the west while the 141st Infantry continued to hit from the north and east. This was initially approved but when word that Germans were forming for a counterattack was learned, General Hayes, Commanding General, II Corps, decided not to risk this venture and ordered defensive positions organized and held.

At 0035 a message was received from 2nd Battalion via artillery radio station, "Battalion now on west slopes of HILL 593. Battalion reached within 50 yards of Abbey. Abbey well fortified. Battalion strength 100 officers and men. Request permission to withdraw". Colonel Lynch instructed Captain Armstrong, 2nd Battalion commander, to dig in and hold present positions. General Walker confirmed this decision when informed of Captain Armstrong's message. 3rd Battalion was to remain in reserve.

Now, this night was like most any night on the front - quiet except for occasional rounds of harassing artillery fire. But commencing at 0400 there opened up an enemy barrage, the like of which we had never experienced. Nebelwerfer fire from the German's six-barrelled rocket mortar, came over in volleys of sixes, one after the other. This is the "screaming mimie". Artillery began to be mixed in, too. We called for counter-battery fire. We wanted to know if in the dark we could get a cub up in the air, our own field artillery observation plane. But there was no letup. 2nd and 3rd Battalions were warned by radio to be ready for a counter-attack. All wire communications were knocked out early. It seemed as if our CP was in the center of the target area, but as close as they did come, the buildings were not hit. It was 0630 before the big barrage had noticeably lifted.

We later learned that the heavy barrage had been general on a wide front. What is more the Germans had followed it up with a strong attack and an attempt to seize MT. CASTELLONE. Our 1st Battalion in position there had borne the brunt of the attack and were decisively successful in beating it back, but only after a hard and close-in fight.

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Under cover of the preparation the Germans had come up the slopes of MT. CASTELLONS in amongst our positions. C company was on the right. A platoon of A company in the center. B company on the left. Two platoons of A company were back of the center in reserve and ready to counter-attack. It was about 0630 hours and daybreak when the attack was first realized. Many of our machine guns and rifles were frozen in the cold of the morning. One weapons sergeant actually thawed out his machine gun with lighted matches while the battle raged. The enemy concentration had wiped out all wire and radio communication with our own artillery.

When the platoon of A company in the center began to fall back under pressure, the two platoons of A company in reserve were ordered to counter-attack. C company held on the right and B company held on the left. Finally bold enfilade fire from D company machine guns on forward B company positions across the faltering center cut down the advancing enemy. Our hand grenades were most effective and some claim saved the day. It was nearly noon before the situation was under control and the enemy in retreat faded into the draw that leads to VILLA S. LUCIA. Enemy dead littered the forward slopes of MT. CASTELLONE. Some had to be picked from our own foxholes. Our 1st Battalion commander estimated the number to be 150. Indications from prisoners were that the Germans had attacked in a strength of two full battalions with the mission of seizing MT. CASTELLONE. A letter written as they were about to go forward and found unmailed in the pocket of a dead German sergeant stressed that this was a "must" mission. We must take it (MT. CASTELLONE), he wrote. But they did not.

That afternoon a German medic approached under the Red Cross flag to ask to take off the German wounded. Major Mobley, 1st Battalion commander, denied this privilege since we were providing for their need.

The next afternoon, 13 February, a group of fifteen German medics requested a truce from 0900 to 1200 hours, 14 February, in order to evacuate the dead. This request was referred through channels to the Commanding General, II Corps. He gave his approval but the hours were set as 0800 to 1100.

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At the appointed time in the morning the Germans came forward. To keep them from walking in on our positions our men carried down the German dead to the draw at the base of the hill. In all 143 by actual count were carried down. A German medical officer stood with Captain Middleton, 1st Battalion executive officer, who represented our side, to supervise the operation during the period of the truce. The Germans asked for a similar period for the next day in order to complete the evacuation which was taking longer than expected. The Commanding General, II Corps, refused this request but granted an extension of time to allow the truce to run until 1430.

We left the 2nd Battalion in position on the west slopes of HILL 593 before the ABBEY on 468 on the morning of 12 February. E and G companies were in these positions. F company and I company (attached to 2nd Battalion) were on the slopes leading up to HILL 706 and MT. CASTELLONE. The 2nd Battalion had been so weakened that it was unable to make a further advance. Arrangements for the relief of the 2nd Battalion were made. The relief was to be effected by GERKA troops of the 4th Indian Division (British) on the night of 12-13 February. But finally it was decided to vacate the positions of E and G companies. I and F companies were to be relieved, along with the 3rd Battalion from its reserve position, on the following night, 13-14 February.

The 142d Infantry next took up the mission of the defense of MT. CASTELLONE. Our 1st Battalion already there, and proud of its success in repelling the German attack, remained on position but reverted to regimental control. E company took an outpost position on the knob (6832251) north of MT. CASTELLONE. The rest of the 2nd Battalion and the 3rd Battalion were to be in regimental reserve. The 143rd Infantry occupied HILL 706 on our left and the 141st Infantry took defensive positions on the lower ridge of 706 where I and F companies had been.

Measures were taken to insure the defense of MT. CASTELLONE. Defensive concentrations to cover avenues of approach to be fired on call were planned by supporting artillery, cannon company, and chemical mortars. Missions for harassing fires were assigned daily and coordinated to make the most of this type of target. Patrols went out nightly to

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By RB/C.C. NARA, Date 9/21/91.

determine what the enemy was up to. The 2nd Battalion in reserve was to be prepared to meet any German breakthrough that might come down the draw to the north (French sector). On several occasions there were momentary stirrings of automatic weapons exchanges in that draw but the French always assured us that the situation was well in hand.

During this time those who were in a position to do so prepared special delicacies from five-in-one type rations, which were available, using the handy Coleman gasoline stove. At the last doughnuts and cakes prepared by our kitchen personnel in the rear were being sent up on the night train - mule train, to troops on forward positions. On the morning of the 15 February we watched the historic bombing of the ABBEY DI MONTECASSINO. Flying fortresses came in high from the south and cut a white vapor trail across the blue sky, then circled to the east without opposition. Smoke rose from the ruins of the ABBEY. Bombings continued throughout the day by waves of medium and then light dive-bombers. The British New Zealand Corps came into the line on the 36th Division left about that time. The kitchens and supplies moved up through our areas and we had a great deal of contact with them.

A relief of the entire division from the line was expected as an eventuality. Progress in that direction was apparent when officers of the 88th Division began to look over the area. They kept coming in large groups, asking at the CP for information, and taking the long uphill climb to the 1st Battalion observation post. Arrangements were made for the relief of one regiment, and, as it was General Walker's desire that this regiment be relieved first, we traded positions with the 143rd Infantry on the 19-20 February, to be in the center of the division line. It was purposed to put the untried 88th Division units, who were to make the relief, between experienced American troops. On this night the 2nd Battalion occupied the new front line sector on HILL 706. The 1st Battalion came down from its long stay on the hill to be in regimental reserve. The 3rd Battalion was in back of the 2nd as reserve.

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ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY

OPERATIONS IN ITALY, MAY 1944

Maps: ITALY, 1/50,000, sheets number 150-II, 158-I,II,III, and 184-IV.

The 142d Infantry Regiment went into action against the enemy only on the last two days of May. This was a surprise night infiltration which penetrated deep into the enemy's last line of defense before ROME and in the end opened the way for the great Allied sweep into and beyond that prized objective. Our story here is only the beginning of a series of actions paving the way to the ultimate success of the Italian campaign.

In the early part of May the regiment completed a period of rest and recuperation which had lasted since being withdrawn from the line in the CASSINO sector on the night of 26 - 27 February. Successive bivouacs and training areas had been at or near AILANO, VALLE DI MADDALONI, FORINO and QUALIANO. Replacements in officers and men brought the regiment well over table of organization strength to allow a reserve to be used when needed during engagement. Training was thorough and regular. In the FORINO area a special mountain exercise was conducted by battalions which climbed 5,000 foot MT MAI to "take it" and to test certain aspects of mountain fighting such as man-carry pack loads.

On 3 May the regiment moved by motors to an area near QUALIANO where it was anticipated that we would soon see action again.

The night of 11 - 12 May saw the opening of the all-out allied offensive in southern Italy. Two alternative plans for the use of the regiment (and division) were explained and the development of the situation was watched closely to see how it would affect our engagement.

One plan called for the 36th Division to pass through the 88th Division when its momentum had stalled, to take the height of MT PETRELLA, a great barrier on the German GUSTAV LINE. This was in the II Corps sector in the vicinity of MIGNANO.

The second plan was to use the weight of the Division in exploiting a breakthrough by the Allied beachhead forces at ANZIO who were to attack at a designated time in coordination with the offensive in southern Italy.

As the events unfolded the progress of the American and French forces on the southern front was so successful as to preclude the use of the Division at

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By *RB/VSW* NARA, Date *11/18/92*

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Whatever happened, we can only surmise. But there were more changes to be made. The relief by 88th Division units fell through. However, French troops of the 8th Regiment, 3rd DIA, did effect the relief of our troops on the night of 25-26 February.

Rain had started to fall intermittently. The RAPIDO RIVER was already swollen when we came across the valley at first light of day on the morning of the 26 February. The one road out was still passable but nearly flooded. The last troops infiltrated across the valley in daylight that morning and arrived in the prepared rest area bivouac about forty miles by road to the rear, near ALLAMO (HL74097) that afternoon.

Rain could not dampen the spirits of this returning group of soldiers. What was a little rain in a place where you could get out from under it? There was the bath, and a shave, a clean issue of clothing, a fresh start. And a week promised for pure relaxation, for seeing shows, and writing letters and reading, or doing nothing. Then the process of rebuilding again. Many faces had gone, gallantly, and in reverence we pay them tribute as fellow soldiers and Americans.

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MT PETRELLA. MT PETRELLA was overrun, FORMIA, ITRI and FONDI were taken, and at noon of the 18th May the regiment was ordered to begin the movement to the beachhead. The detailed loading plans were already prepared. The first of the LST's left from POZZUOLI for ANZIO that evening. It was a twelve-hour boat ride without incident. By noon of the 20th the regiment had completed debarkation and gone into bivouac in a sandy, scrub and tree covered area southeast of NEPTUNO.

The roominess of the beachhead area and the apparent quietness of enemy shellfire surprised most of those who had come expecting to find it a very hot place, indeed, but those who had been there said it had been that way for about two weeks, with only repeated night air raids.

In the attack to break out of the steel ring of defenses around the beachhead, two strong thrusts to the northeast, one by the 1st Armored Division on the left, and the other by the 3rd Infantry Division on the right, were to form a pincers on the enemy strong point of CISTERNA. Elaborate minefields in depth hemmed in the Allies in a near circle and it was believed much strength would be expended breaking through. The plan for use of the 36th Division (with the 142nd Infantry Regiment one of two leading regiments) was to pass through the 3rd Division after it had gained about 1,000 yards beyond highway 7, and to attack and seize the town of CORI and the hills around it. Assembly positions for the 142nd Infantry Regiment were planned to be in an area at G-030260.

After a terrific artillery barrage and supported by great numbers of tanks and armored elements, the beachhead offensive began at 0500B the morning of 22 May. Progress was slow but steady.

In the early evening of 23 May this regiment was ordered to move to an area 962205 to be in VI Corps reserve. It was about a five mile march begun at twilight and continuing in the dark past the blazing guns of our own artillery which were still hammering away at the enemy lines. Fighting was still raging around CISTERNA.

On the evening of 24 May, the regiment was ordered to the assembly area from which it was planned to jump off on the attack toward CORI. The news was particularly bright that evening; the Canadians had broken through on the Southern front with their armor in the LIRI VALLEY. Hundreds of enemy vehicles had been smashed by the Air Corps along highway 6. American forces coming up from the south were expected to link with the beachhead by morning. Resistance around CISTERNA was bound to crumble. Our march to the new area covered about seven miles. It was quiet on that sector except for steady

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streams of tracers of machine guns protecting the southern flank and harassing the Germans who were expected to be pulling out.

On the 25th a final pocket of resistance was cleaned out in CISTERNA. Elements of the 3rd Division advanced rapidly to take CORI and hurried on toward ARTENA and VALMONTONE. Our regiment remained in the same area through the day.

Very early on the morning of the 26th orders were received to move to an area about two miles northwest of CISTERNA along Highway 7. Troops began marching at 0730B and walked through the day until 1500B covering about ten miles. The route passed through where some of the heaviest fighting had occurred, a battlefield littered with knocked-out armor and strewn equipment and desolation.

Up Highway 7 from CISTERNA, the town of VELLETRI was under siege. The 36th Division with the 143rd Infantry Regiment and 141st Infantry Regiment leading was forming a tentative line astride Highway 7 about three miles northwest of CISTERNA.

That evening the 142nd Infantry Regiment was ordered to take over the 143rd Infantry Regiment's positions while the 143rd Infantry Regiment moved forward to attack VELLETRI.

It was believed that German resistance before ROME was nearly broken but the enemy resistance in VELLETRI and on a line EAST through VALMONTONE increased as our forces took time to regroup in preparation for the race to ROME.

On the 27th the 142nd Infantry Regiment was in division reserve. The 143rd Infantry Regiment moved forward in front of VELLETRI. The 141st Infantry Regiment on the right of the 143rd Infantry Regiment began to work north with a view of flanking the town on the east.

At this time also the 142nd Infantry Regiment was to be prepared to move on VI Corps order as a motorized unit mounted on 100 trucks furnished by Corps; to follow up and exploit an armored thrust by the 1st Armored Division through the flat ground just west of LAKUVIO and generally along Highway 7 into ROME. The 34th Infantry Division on the left of the 36th Division and the 45th Infantry Division on the left of the 34th Division were in the sector through which the 1st Armored Division was to pass through.

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At midnight of the 27th our 1st Battalion on order of the Commanding General, 36th Division moved to an assembly area directly back of the 141st Infantry Regiment as division reserve.

In the morning of the 28th patrols of the 141st Infantry Regiment and the 143rd Infantry Regiment reached the railroad in front of VELLETRI. The 142nd Infantry Regiment was prepared to move forward to close behind the 141st Infantry Regiment and the 143rd Infantry Regiment.

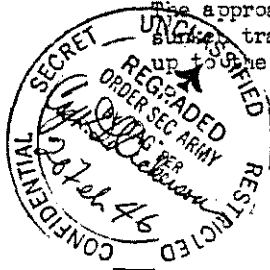
In attempting to push the line forward on the 36th Division's left to the west of VELLETRI, no decisive results could be gained by the 34th Division and 45th Division and the line was still fairly stabilized on the 30th of May. However, the 141st Infantry Regiment had succeeded in getting across both the railroad and the VELLETRI - VALMONTONE highway east of VELLETRI and were swinging well to the north.

At noon of the 30th our regiment moved to an entrucking point expecting to follow up the 1st Armored Division as originally planned. As Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH was giving final instructions to his unit commanders, Captain JOHN A. STEEL, Regimental Liaison Officer to Division, interrupted the meeting to say that Major General FRED L. WALKER, 36th Division Commander wanted to see Colonel Lynch about a complete change of plans.

When Colonel Lynch returned from Division Headquarters he brought with him the General's plan and orders. It was about 1600 hours.

The plan: Essentially the 142nd Infantry Regiment would pass through the 141st Infantry Regiment and infiltrate that night deep into the German line and get up into the hills (MT ARTEMISIO) back of VELLETRI by daylight. There was no time to lose. To get to the assembly area it was necessary to entruck and move by a round-about way through CISTERNA, CORI and the road that runs northwest to connect with the VELLETRI - VALMONTONE highway, a distance of about sixteen miles. The regiment was on the move promptly at 1830 but because of congested roads was unable to close into the assembly area until 2215. It had been intended to move out on the attack at 2200 but the earliest practicable time was at 2255.

The regiment was to infiltrate by column of battalions, 2nd Battalion leading, followed by Regimental Headquarters, 1st Battalion and 3rd Battalion. The approach after passing through the 141st Infantry Regiment followed a sun-dried trail that lead through cultivated flatlands to a deep draw which ran up to the principal objective.



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The new moon that evening shed a faint glow that was not too bright but made it possible to pick out the path and objects ahead. Quietly the regiment in column worked its way forward. Leading elements crossed the highway at 0130 and set out into the unknown. Men were spaced at intervals as much as visibility would allow. Flank security was out on either side. The route followed was off the trail through parallel rows of grape vineyards which afforded good cover. Out to the left toward VELLETRI there was a steady exchange of machine gun fire where we knew the 141st Infantry Regiment was engaged. Occasionally a shot spoke loudly at or near the column and there was a moment of breathless anticipation as to what might follow. Passing by some of the houses enroute dogs howled and even a jackass brayed. But the time of greatest tension happened around 0300 when mass enemy air action hovered overhead. During the night there had been single planes obviously on reconnaissance but at this time the enemy was over in great numbers. Anti-aircraft shot up its sparkling display of defensive fires. The planes hovered threateningly near. Then the inevitable flares were dropped to light up the area as broad daylight. They were not too far off. Or so it seemed. Of course everyone in our foot column hugged the ground and waited. Bombs were bursting and the chatter of strafing action grew louder. But it was soon apparent that we were not the enemy's target that time. In fact, it was very favorable to us as it focused attention away from our sector to over in front of VELLETRI where it was taking place. The flares lasted about a half-hour after which we moved on again while the drone of the planes gradually faded out.

The next concern was the fact that daylight would soon be upon us. The bulk of the mountains were still before us. At 0415 the first gray light of day began to dim out the stars. The head of the column was just starting up the slopes. A broad open field had to be crossed before climbing the hills. But in the early morning haze it would have been difficult to distinguish the moving column. Our pace hurried. There was no one to oppose us. The Infantrymen clambered up the slopes.

The first hill or mountain back of VELLETRI is a long ridge running nearly east to west. Our objective was to take the eastern or right end of the height and then to continue down the length of the ridge to dominate VELLETRI and the roads of retreat leading out of it. When the objectives were gained we would have a noose around the town and the enemy forces there. The 143rd Infantry Regiment was to follow us up as rapidly as we went forward. The 141st Infantry Regiment was to swing in on our left in the flatlands below.

At 0635 the 2nd Battalion reported that it was on its first objectives, HILL 891 (995492) and HILL 931 (982483). The 1st Battalion was at 993480.

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Company "E" on HILL 891 found and captured one officer and two men who were artillery observers.

At 0800 Company "E" was receiving a counterattack of undetermined strength.

At 0840 1st and 2nd Battalions were instructed to move out to attack second objectives on down the ridge. Company "E" with machine guns attached was to remain on HILL 891. The 1st and 2nd Battalions, the 1st Battalion on the left, were to attack abreast. The 3rd Battalion in reserve was to close up as the others moved forward.

By 0930 Company "E" had repulsed its first counterattack but expected another. Ammunition was going to be needed. It was ordered up from the battalion anti-tank platoon train (one platoon of Regimental Anti-Tank Company was attached to each battalion to act as a carrying party in supplying ammunition and rations).

Slowly the 1st and 2nd Battalions advanced. The hill was well covered with foliage and care had to be taken to search it out. At 1500 H. DEI FERRAU was reached without resistance. The 143rd Infantry Regiment had relieved the 3rd Battalion which in turn had earlier taken up the 2nd Battalion positions on HILL 931.

After 1830 the 2nd Battalion found the enemy more alive and ready to fight but by 1930 were on their objective at 955457 while the 1st Battalion was on their objective at 964455. Enemy tanks were beginning to fire direct into our positions. The enemy also fired 20mm anti-aircraft fire with effect.

But at nightfall objectives had been gained and over 3,000 men were firmly entrenched on the height to the enemy's rear. It was the key that opened the lock on the gateway to ROME, as later events proved. That night orders were given to establish road blocks on the road leading out of VELLETRI toward ROME. Supplies were brought up not without difficulty by mule train and by hand-carry. Every effort was directed to consolidate and hold this important ground. It had been gained with a favorable low cost in casualties, achieved through the element of tactical surprise. Enemy tank, mortar, artillery and anti-aircraft fire continued through the night to make the position warm. Orders from Major General Walker directed us to interrupt traffic on the NEMI - VELLETRI road. Armor was coming up in the morning. The 143rd Infantry Regiment was to close the gap behind us while the 141st Infantry Regiment was at 978457.

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And so here the month of May runs out but the story is just beginning. Like a good western serial we shall have to wait until next month's installment to witness the climax of this 142nd Infantry Regiment action.

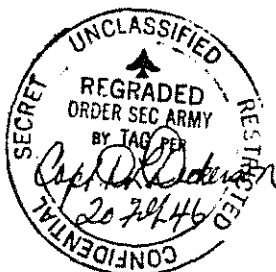
Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

1 July 1944

SUBJECT: Regimental Commander's Comments -- Operations In Italy, May 1944.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Inf Div, APO # 36, U. S. Army.

1. The period 1 May to 28 May inclusive was spent in training, movement to the Anzio Beachhead and in a Corps Reserve role until 29 May and, therefore, included no actual combat operations.

2. On 29 May at 1515 hours the regiment received oral orders to accomplish a night attack on MOUNT ARTEMISIO, behind the town of VELLETRI, the same night. Since the objective was about ten miles to the flank of the regiment's assembly area and required a motor movement to forward assembly areas and since no previous reconnaissances had been accomplished, it was a notable feat that the regiment was able to launch a coordinated attack at 2230 hours that night. This was accomplished by taking every conceivable short cut. Reconnaissance down to include that by platoon commanders was completed as dusk turned to dark. Without this reconnaissance, I feel sure the mission would have failed. Even with reconnaissance, control of units was retained only by continued efforts of all commanders and staffs. The success of the penetration was something of a mystery. Objectives were obtained against no resistance, but upon discovering our presence on the peaks of MOUNT ARTEMISIO, the German counter-attacks furiously throughout the day without success and with heavy losses to himself. After a counterattack on one company position of the regiment, seventy (70) German dead were physically counted in the company position alone. While all counterattacks were launched from the North, considerable harassment was caused by small groups of Germans attempting to withdraw from the VELLETRI positions through the regiment's position.

The tactical reasoning which prompted this attack on MOUNT ARTEMISIO at night was without error, however the regiment was considerably hampered

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by the shortness of time allowed for its preparation, orders, movement to the operational area and the launching of the attack. Less time should have been required for the basic decision and more time allowed for the use of the troops who were to be the instrument of the decision.

3. The Second Battalion day attack of MOUNT CAVO a high (950 meters) walled in fortification, South of ROCCA DI PAPA was a fine example of the coordinated use of all weapons of the battalion. Even though solid, unbroken walls, four to eight feet high, surrounded the objective and the objective was defended by a company of Infantry which included mortars and heavy machine guns, intelligent choosing of the point of attack, the avenue of approach, and the use of all available means in a well coordinated action caused the rapid fall of the fortress.

Initially the fortress was engaged by the Second Battalion with a company on the front and right sides of the objective. A heavily wooded area lead up to the East wall of the objective which was the only wall not wired and which was the lowest wall of the four sides. The wooded approach, the absence of wire and the comparative lowness of the wall combined to make the East side ideal for an assault.

The battalion was too close to the objective to use its artillery support. This support could have been used by withdrawing the units in contact with the fort, but to do so would require the re-scaling of a precipitous mountain side which would have consumed much time and would not provide the desired rapid sequence of preparatory fires followed closely by Infantry assault. Therefore the use of artillery in the plan of attack was omitted.

Tank Destroyers were available and would have been useful in breaching the walls had they been close enough to engage in the action. However, the Tank Destroyers were three miles away, at the foot of the mountain, with an uncertain and un-reconnoitered route to the scene of the planned attack. They were ordered up but the attack was planned so that the non-arrival of the Tank Destroyers would not seriously disturb progress or success.

The plan required a ten (10) minute preparation to be fired by all the mortars, 60 and 81, of the Battalion. Approximately four hundred (400) rounds were fired into the one hundred (100) yard square fortification.

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Immediately following this preparation, the riflemen and machine gunners from positions on three sides of the objective concentrated heavy fires on all embrasures, and firing positions along the walls. At the same time, bazooka and anti-tank grenades were fired at close range from all three sides into the interior of the wall, at unseen targets in an area coverage. Under these fires and through pre-arranged lanes between the fires, one rifle platoon advanced in a rush, over the wooded approach to the low East wall, throwing grenades over the wall as they approached it. Hand grenades, bazooka and anti-tank grenade fire ceased as the platoon scaled the wall and the platoon took up the fires on the area inclosed by the wall. The success of the attack is measured by the results of thirty (30) enemy captured (including three (3) officers), twenty (20) killed, and an unknown number of escaped wounded. During the assault, we had not a single casualty.

It is of value to battalion commanders to realize that, in an attack which progresses successively to objectives over several miles of terrain, there must be times when his unit arrives at obstacles which apparently bog down his attack. Seldom is this impasse as real as it is apparent. The Battalion can usually, by re-grouping, revising the scheme of attack, re-arrangement of fires or by requesting additional aid from the regiment, overcome all but major obstacles. The battalion commander is frequently dismayed when his attack bogs down and his original plans do not bear fruit. At times this feeling causes him to feel he is incapable of further action, that his unit is "pinned down" and that further effort must come from somewhere else. The experienced and imaginative battalion commander learns that his initial scheme of battle is only a starting point, that the fortunes of battle will usually require changes of his plans and that with his own means, properly applied, he can unblock the majority of stoppages which occur. He also learns that as he progresses from objective to objective, he will have to stop, reconnoiter, form new fire plans and schemes of maneuver, to attack successfully objectives whose nature was not fully disclosed at the start of his progressive attack. If he neglects this, he may needlessly expend his battalion in fruitless action.

I have stressed the use of means within the battalion because they are frequently neglected. All other means, attached and supporting should be used to the limit. There are, however, times as in this example, when the nature of the terrain or the inaccessibility of supporting units and the time element involved require the commander to rely solely on the weapons of the battalion. He must realize that with these weapons the task can

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usually be accomplished.

Mule pack of supplies was again necessary. The operation covered terrain which was traversable by motors and also ground negotiable only by mules and men. Mule transport was available and was used in alternation with motor transport. Units contemplating operations over varied terrain must have closely available mule transport if the advance is to continue. The providing of mule transport after the immediate need therefore has been determined is too late and will, until provided, dominate tactical considerations. The use of mule transport over terrain well provided with road nets merits consideration where the enemy is able to exercise his artillery. Roads may be interdicted to the point of blocking trucked supplies, whereas mule trains can operate cross-country at night and be undisturbed by road interdiction fires.

G. E. Lynch
G. E. LYNCH
Colonel, 142d Infantry
Commanding.

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ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY

OPERATIONS IN ITALY, JUNE 1944

Maps: ITALY, 1/50,000, sheets number 150-II,III,IV; 149-I; 143-II,III; 142-I,II,IV; 136-III; 135-I,II; 128-II,III,IV; 127-I,II, and 119-II,III.

Beating down the enemy's desperate last stand before ROME in a series of crushing blows, the 142nd Infantry climactically swept down from the Alban Hills to enter that long-sought-for objective, then, hurrying on, pushed one hundred fifty (150) miles beyond into the rolling coastal region on the road to PISA. This is an episode of swift, blitzkrieg action marked by an unparalleled continuing advance for the Regiment.

Fleeing in disorder across the TIBER, the enemy attempted at successive places of advantage to turn to meet our onrushing forces. His scattered armies were bolstered by strange assortments of foreign troops, hastily thrown into the line. Untried bicycle troops from DENMARK, Russians captured on the Eastern front, all had a sad tale of woe when their units were gobbled up in quick fashion. As each point of resistance was overcome, the enemy dropped back and it was our lot to chase until contact was made. Fighting, marching, riding, marching and fighting again--in an unending cycle of action, ever on the move, pressing the attack, such was the daily pattern of events. Though happy in success, the men were tired and worn, their best energies spent, when a relief from the line was effected on the morning of 26 June.

History will forever record the 4-5 June as the date in which the Allies entered ROME, but our men will remember as well, names and places like MONTE CAVO, the little unnamed town just Northwest of ROME, will associate bicycles with BRACCIANO, will remember the ride to CIVITAVECCHIA, the sharp battles out of CAPALBIO, and at MAGLIANO, the march from GROSSETO to GAVORRANO and on up the long valley beyond.

A most important single factor was the weather current to this operation. No longer did bitter cold and dampness and hopeless seas of mud, commonly experienced in the hard winter campaign, hamper or thwart the spirit and effectiveness of the troops. Italian fair weather at its best favored the advance. Men could march with lighter blanket rolls. Commanders

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awoke with a daily prospect of good weather. Supporting armored elements maneuvered easily on firm ground and the air corps regularly pounded targets from above.

On the 1st day of June the 142d Infantry was proudly established on the western edge of the MOUNT ARTEMISIO ridge North of VELLETRI. By a surprise night infiltration the night of 30-31 May, the Regiment had forced a deep penetration into the German line then centered on VELLETRI and had enclosed the enemy position there. The advance had progressed along to cover the length of the ridge during the day of the 31st. That evening final objectives were reached over-looking routes of escape from VELLETRI. The 143d Infantry Regiment had followed and was on the ridge to our rear. The 141st Infantry Regiment was on the lower slopes to our left, cutting the circle smaller and menacing the town proper.

Slowly realizing, or more probably slow to learn his plight, enemy counterattacks had come mostly from the North and increased in intensity as he was able to muster force. By 1830 he was alive to the peril and resisting strongly. The Second Battalion had a sharp fight for its final objective, the forward slopes of Hill 812 at F955457, and the First Battalion likewise on reaching F964455, also part of Hill 812.

Now in the last hours of daylight and continuing into the night, a desperate steady shelling by the enemy poured onto our important positions, mortars, machine guns, self-propelled artillery, and even anti-aircraft flak guns spent their destruction to make it at the least uncomfortable.

That night was one of anticipation. The men were sorely fatigued after the long all-night and all-day march and steep climb. Many had had to fight on the way, yet good soldiers knew the vigil must be kept. A resupply of ammunition, rations and water was imperative. As twilight shaded into dark a message from Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander, to Major General FRED L. WALKER, Division Commander, tersely stated his plan for action: "We shall hold what we have".

Strengthening of position and resupply continued during the night by tedious mule train and hand-carry, but could not be completed. On the morning of 1 June the radio waves carried frequent messages. These formed generally an assuring picture.

The First Battalion was ordered to establish a road block on the road

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below. Fighting on the Second Battalion position continued. They were to push out onto MOUNT SPINA, farthest point on the ridge. Their ammunition need was urgent. At 0910 the First Battalion was able to report that enemy fire on their positions had slackened. The road blocks were being established.

Colonel Lynch instructed the Commanding Officer of a newly attached tank platoon to make a spoiling raid along the road North and Northwest to NEMI. One platoon of our infantry was to accompany the tanks to furnish protection.

Off to the right, toward VELLETRI, a warm battle raged in the 141st Infantry sector. The trapped enemy in the town were fighting desperately to break out of the ring. During the day various groups of enemy infiltrated across our positions attempting to escape to the North. Considerable sniper activity followed and the Third Battalion in particular wiped out numbers of them.

The First Battalion road block bore fruit almost from the start. By 1340 four enemy motorcyclists had been killed and one captured. The First Battalion, on order, left positions on the slopes of Hill 812, which were taken over by the Third Battalion, and moved down to the vicinity of the road blocks (there were two, one at F961453 and one at F960453).

At 1430 the Second Battalion could report that all companies were in position on Hill 731 - MOUNT SPINA. During the preceding action, the Second Battalion Commanding Officer and his S-3 had been wounded and were evacuated.

From the commanding ground occupied by our troops, enemy movements and attempts to evacuate VELLETRI were clearly observed. The road blocks became ever more profitable. A bazooka caught and destroyed a MK III tank in the afternoon. Enemy attempts to run the blockade were frustrated. The final toll included also an armored car, two cargo trucks, forty prisoners and a equal number killed. By nightfall the situation was favorably in hand. The time to continue the attack North was ripe.

From the MOUNT ARTEMISIO ridge in the direction of ROME there is a lower flat ground running parallel to the ridge, then another rise or

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series of hills topped by the MONTE CAVO ridge. This is half-moon shaped, looks down sharply on ROCCA DI PAPA, and is the last high bluff before ROME.

The broad valley between MOUNT ARTEMISIO and MONTE CAVO is flat and open, unsuited for an infantry advance. But to the right a covered approach with but a short stretch of open ground was found. There the Third Battalion led the Regiment in column of Battalions (Second Battalion followed, then the First) in the attack which began at 0930 on 2 June after an artillery preparation.

From the cover of foliage on the far side of this valley enemy tanks caused some bother with direct fire, however, the attack through the day proceeded with but slight resistance. Fifty prisoners were taken, including a group of German military police, who had come from ROME to set up a defensive position. The march was of long duration that day--the Third Battalion settled on Hill 956 (F947502), the Second Battalion at point 932 (F941498) not far from MONTE CAVO, and the First Battalion on Hill 856 (F950496).

Continuing the attack the next morning, 3 June, the Second Battalion led off at 0500 from point 932--Company "G" on the right, Company "F" on the left, and Company "E" following in reserve. Some scattered sniper activity hindered progress at first. Off to the left, on the lower slopes, the 141st Infantry was engaged in a fire fight.

On the top of MONTE CAVO is a large stone villa or castle which in recent years has been an Italian resort hotel. An ivy-covered stone wall averaging six feet high encloses the group of buildings. The approaches to this are barren except that cover and foliage in some places run up to within fifty feet. The main exit was on the far left side or North-west corner of the square to our troops approaching from the South. This was one last obstacle to overcome. An enemy garrison consisting of probably a reduced company, one which had escaped from CORI after the ANZIO beachhead breakthrough, had been there several days and was well supplied with ammunition, mortars and machine guns in a favorable defensive position, so situated that it became somewhat of a fortress.

Preceding Company "G" in the attack, First Lieutenant STEWART H. LA BARGE with a few men came upon the stone wall first. In scouting it

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out the Lieutenant was wounded by an enemy hand grenade tossed from somewhere in the fort near the Southeast corner. After Captain CARL P. MATNEY, Commanding Company "G", had looked at the situation he placed his First Platoon on a line close to the Southwest corner of the wall and the Second Platoon to the right and rear of the First. The Third Platoon was in reserve to the rear. This was about 1030. At 1130 the Third Platoon under Second Lieutenant J. C. WILLIAMSON was sent around the East side of the square with the mission of watching the route to ROCCA DI PAPA to look for any reinforcements that might be brought in to the fort.

Company "E" drew up on the left (West) side. Together the two companies placed fire into the walled area. An exchange of sniping on either side then continued for several hours while the plan for final assault was determined.

At 1530, Colonel Lynch came forward on a personal reconnaissance and worked his way close to the walled buildings to observe. It was desirable to have tanks or tank destroyers come up to blow a hole in the wall through which the infantry could charge, but that would have required too much time as the trail for this armor was not yet cleared. The Colonel thought that a lavish use of mortars and machine guns coordinated with a scaling of the wall would work and accomplish the mission before dark.

Company "G" was assigned the assault mission as they were in the most favorable position. Captain Matney with Lieutenant Williamson went to reconnoiter an approach beyond the Third Platoon sector on the East side of the wall. His final dispositions were to place the Third Platoon in assaulting position as close to the wall as possible on the East side. A twelve-man squad led by Second Lieutenant ROBERT M. EPSTEEN was placed in line along side the Third Platoon near the Southeast corner. Around the corner on the South side a squad of twelve men led by Staff Sergeant JACK L. LINE was in ready position. The rest of the First and Second Platoons remained on the South side to cover by fire.

As the stage was being set all available mortar ammunition was rounded up for the battalion mortar sections. Mortar observers were together at one control point to the south of the wall where good observation could be had. Here a dramatic scene was enacted during the

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preparation. Second Lieutenant JAMES F. STRADER of Company "H" is credited with a most excellent performance in directing the mortar fire on the target within the walls. Not one round fell without to endanger our own close-in troops. A series of concentrated mortar barrages were interspersed with appealing calls for the enemy to surrender by Private First Class BENJAMIN J. KIMNER, the Second Battalion German Interpreter. But the enemy was adamant--one even mocked in reply.

At the last, mortars and machine guns were laying in a terrific barrage. At H minus 3 this firing ceased, while from Sergeant Lins's squad, numbers of white phosphorus grenades were thrown to bring the Germans from their holes and cover. At 1900, H hour, Lieutenant Williamson's platoon, with war whoops and shouting, raced for the wall, scaled it and kept firing, working their way through to clean out the house on the right. Lieutenant Epsteen's squad and Sergeant Lins's squad quickly followed and covered the area to the left. All told, about sixty men went over the wall. Excitement and tension were high and it was hard to stop the shooting when, after ten minutes, it was evident that all was clear and the battle won. Thirty (30) frightened and dazed Germans were taken prisoner, twenty (20) were counted dead, while some probably escaped out the Northwest corner.

When our own accounting was taken it was discovered with amazement that none in the assaulting group were casualties, aside from a few well-earned bruises and hurts.

Meanwhile the First Battalion on the West slopes of MONTE CAVO was pinned down by steady fire from below. After the fall of the Castle, general resistance collapsed and the First Battalion along with the Second established a firm defensive ring around MONTE CAVO.

The regimental objective 4 June was GROTTAFERRATA, three miles farther up the road from MONTE CAVO, and still about ten miles from ROME. Over the flat plain from there the road ran directly into the city. The First and Third Battalions attacked abreast with the road as an axis, jumping off at 0500. ROCCA DI PAPA at the base of MONTE CAVO was entered without any resistance. Soon troops were streaming down from the hills moving openly up the road. A single enemy self-propelled gun harassed the crossroad at ROCCA DI PAPA. Columns of black smoke, obviously demolitions, rose from the TIBER valley. That was all as far as the eye could see.

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The order to "proceed to ROME" came from Major General Walker. One Battalion was to be motorized as fast as the trucks could get to them. The Second Battalion, reserve, was designated.

A marked feeling of elation swept through the ranks. Where for days the men had been plodding slowly in the face of tough obstacles and firm resistance, suddenly a serious break had come and now they were hurrying up-right down the home stretch. The goal of nine months bitter fighting - the first of the Axis capitals - was this really the day!

Division troops were in GROTTOFERRATA at 0830. Motorized units then took the lead and foot elements followed up as rapidly as possible. Jeeps, trucks and heavy guns moved up between long lines of infantry stretched along both sides of the road. The townspeople enroute were out to urge the soldiers on. Children brought water, offered delicious ripe cherries, tossed pretty red roses. Churchbells rang.

Colonel Lynch conferred with Brigadier General ROBERT I. STACK, Assistant Division Commander, at the public square in GROTTOFERRATA at 1015. The Regiment motorized would proceed through ROME to an objective about five miles North of the city on Highway 2.

During the afternoon the Second Battalion advanced by motors toward ROME. Part of the column helped the 1st Armored Division closing in on Highway 7, a parallel route.

The swift advance left many stranded Germans on the flanks. The enemy sniped from the fields and farmhouses off the road. The numbers of them increased, until, in the shelter of the city suburbs, such action became intense. Two incidents in which Company "L" figured serve to illustrate.

In the afternoon the Third Battalion trucks were stopped along the route of advance. Traffic by this time had now become common though it was known that snipers still lurked nearby. Suddenly the men in the convoy were warned that a group of Germans were active around a house fifty yards from the road. Almost instinctively men from two trucks, jumped to the scene, engaged in a brisk ten minute fight with the Germans, then caught them running and chased them into a closed area. Fifteen (15) were killed, eight (8) wounded and thirteen (13) gave up.

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At a street crossing on the outskirts of ROME, about three miles from the center, the Regiment was forced to hold up until snipers could be cleaned out. Tiger tanks also blocked immediate entry into the city. In the evening the First and Second Platoons of Company "L" were sent out to the right to search houses and pillboxes in the vicinity. After a four hour exchange of fire, Private JEROME MIDDLEMAN, speaking German, convinced a German Captain of his hopeless plight and talked him into giving up with his men. The two platoons brought back thirty-eight (38) including the Captain.

At dark the Regiment bedded down in that vicinity for the night, expecting to continue on and pass through the city early in the morning. But it was to be very, very early in the morning. It appeared that the enemy would evacuate entirely from the city shortly after darkness. Possibly delaying forces would still be left behind. But, from our point of view, it was urgent to get on through and to maintain contact with the retreating foe. Accordingly, plans were developed for a motorized column to begin the march at 0230, pass through the heart of the city and continue to the objective previously designated.

The scheme of a motorized Infantry movement had been made familiar before. A few armored and reconnaissance vehicles would lead, followed by the Battalion mounted on two-and-one-half ton trucks, so organized and prepared as to be able quickly to dismount and go into combat formation upon contact with the enemy. Supporting anti-tank, cannon and artillery weapons were to the rear ready to be unlimbered and brought into action.

After dark a quietness settled over the city. Even enemy planes did not break the stillness of the night. A certain activity stirred, however, the command wrought the plans and conveyed them to subordinates. Captains organized their companies. Tired sergeants roused sleepy privates from deep but short-lived slumbers. At the appointed time the column began to roll. An unfortunate circumstance occurred soon after the start that split the column and weakened its potential power for later action. In the blackness of the night and strangeness of the city the lead elements took the wrong street at a fork in the road. The whole Second Battalion followed and was lost before contact could be regained. When this situation was learned, Colonel Lynch, after conferring with Major General Walker, who was also in the column, determined to go on, hoping to meet the Second Battalion before daylight or at the other end of town. The Third Battalion was riding the artillery trucks, with their gun crews, and thus was a reserve element. They now formed the main infantry body in the column.

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The light of the moon that historic night was not bright. Buildings and trees along the way cast deep shadows making some streets as canyons. The streets were desolate of life through the first parts. Broad avenues and large modern buildings were impressive even in the dim light. Up one wide street with a parkway in the center the first lights appeared. There were three, and as the column passed, were seen to be torches. People were gathered on their balconies, clapping and cheering with torches blazing. Through an archway, past ancient buildings shrouded in an atmosphere of fantasy, past the easily recognized COLLISEUM and on across the TIBER the column freely moved. By then daylight was appearing. Still no enemy.

The column paused awhile beyond the wall of Vatican City on the Northwest side of ROME, then cautiously went on. It was then about 0700. Following the column, as the forward elements advanced, up this same road poured trucks, tanks, guns, jeeps, ambulances, in an unending stream of the materiel of war.

Five miles Northwest of the city, as the lead tank rounded a turn in the road and became a target for enemy gunners, it was struck and disabled. While Colonel Lynch went forward to determine the source and strength of the enemy position, the Third Battalion was hastily called up from the rear.

At the first, a group of about two squads under First Lieutenant RAYMOND J. SCHLODER of Company "I", who were riding on an anti-aircraft vehicle (this truck and trailed weapon were shortly destroyed and left burning by enemy mortars which soon pounded the area), dismounted, going to the left side of the road, and began frontally, under cover, to search out the point of enemy fire. They went down into a broad depression which ran at right angles to the road. From a cluster of buildings on high ground on the far side a hail of machine gun fire rained down on First Lieutenant Schloder's group. They were thus pocketed by fire on all sides and forced to remain there until, as the attack of the battalion progressed, they were able to aid materially by throwing in all the firepower they possessed.

Meanwhile at the head of the column, while the Third Battalion was hurrying forward, enemy mortars peppered the stalled vehicles and snipers pecked away on both sides. A sniper post was located in a large house to the left. This was a wealthy man's estate with considerable grounds.

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When this was cleaned out just before noon, its top-story window became an excellent observation post which our commanders, a party that soon included Major General Walker, Brigadier General Stack, Colonel Lynch, Lieutenant Colonel SAMUEL S. GRAHAM, Regimental Executive Officer, Lieutenant Colonel JOHN N. GREEN, 132d Field Artillery Commander, and a number of artillery observers, used to watch and direct the progress of the attack.

By this time it was apparent that the Germans had a well-organized defensive position. The group of buildings was the central point of the resistance. Many machine guns kept up a sustaining fire from there. Several anti-tank guns covered the road and they were using heavy mortars with telling effect. Approaches to the position were barren and open, affording good fields of fire.

Given the mission of destroying this strongpoint, Lieutenant Colonel MARVIN J. COYLE, Third Battalion Commander, ordered Company "K" on a flanking maneuver far to the right, to be followed by Company "I" echeloned to the right rear, ready to swing wide and strike at the rear. The rest of Company "I", in reserve, was placed to give fire to the front.

Captain EDMUND C. SULLIVAN, Heavy Weapons Commander, placed his mortars in a draw three hundred (300) yards to the rear of the house used as an observation post. His machine guns were off to the left under cover. The machine guns laid a base of fire on the enemy's right while the mortars blanketed the houses on the enemy's left.

Company "K" got away at 1100, working its way around far to the right by a draw. On the turn to flank the enemy, coming out of the draw they were met by withering, grazing machine gun fire. Sensing the attack, enemy mortars dropped down into the draw. An anti-tank gun opened up on the lead platoon. Into the open fields the company became scattered. Several became casualties including Captain JOSEPH F. EDELEN, and Lieutenant Colonel Coyle, who was in the thick of the fire. But determinately the men still inched their way forward.

Three houses, separate from the others and first to be encountered, were a particular sore spot. Seeing this, Company "M" poured down its mortar fire heavily. Artillery was added. Company "K" reached the sheltered side of the first house, only to be driven off by our own crashing artillery and mortar fire. Company "K"'s radio faltered. Communication was out. Only by sight from the observation post, which realized what was happening, was the final assault timed.

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During the attack the machine guns of Company "M" expended Twenty thousand (20,000) rounds and the mortars let loose eight hundred fifty (850) rounds, burning out four (4) mortar tubes. A group of First Lieutenant Schloder's men, still locked in their tight position, reared up and helped the assault with their added fire.

The last barrage was followed by the Second Platoon of Company "K" which raced past an abandoned anti-tank gun and began systematically cleaning out the houses one by one. In this last phase of the fight Company "L" was ordered to pass through Company "K" and continue. Lieutenant Colonel Coyle, who was out in front with Company "K" was wounded by machine gun fire and returned to the Command Post asking for more men. More from Company "I" were sent forward, but before either of these could be accomplished the enemy broke. Company "K" was in the town. Company "L" followed up and cleared the main street.

By 1700 all resistance had been overcome. Seven (7) 77mm Anti-Tank guns, twenty-five (25) machine guns, and a number of mortars were destroyed. Thirty (30) men and three (3) officers were taken prisoner, an estimated fifty (50) were dead. Biggest prize was a truckload of delicious cheeses, anchovies, tuna fish and chocolate of which the victors make a feast.

Thus the Third Battalion with sound technique and skillful coordination of assault and supporting units, and by aggressive action routed the enemy's well situated and strongly defended obstacle. After the fighting ceased our own armored units passed through and beyond making further advances that evening.

At 1930 the First and Second Battalions moved off to attack toward an objective at F848713. This was reached by 2300 without resistance. There the Regiment bivouacked for the night.

The following day, 6 June, the Regiment, in Division reserve, remained in that area prepared to move on an hours notice. That CIVITAVECCHIA, on the coast forty (40) miles Northwest of ROME and principal port of ROME, would be the next Division objective, was explained. The advance was planned along secondary roads to BRACCIANO, MANZIANA, thence on the lateral road to CIVITAVECCHIA. Planned phase lines called for the objective to be reached on 9 June 1944.

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On the 6th, the 143rd Infantry leading the Division advance, reached the shores of Lake ERACCIANO. An armored Regiment of the 1st Armored Division, having come in column along another route, was also there. During the night of 6-7, by foot-march and by motors, our Regiment moved up into assembly positions in the vicinity of F540780, a distance of thirteen (13) miles, closing in at 0430 in the morning. Enemy planes were frequently over the column, and strafed some, without effect.

At 0600 the First Battalion was trucked forward to the area held by the 143rd Infantry at coordinates F520875. Trucks of the Cannon and Anti-Tank Companies brought up the Second and Third Battalions by shuttle movement as rapidly as possible. The armored Regiment moved out at 0600 toward ERACCIANO and along the road due North from there. By 1000, when the First Battalion, 142d Infantry, was ready to pass through the 143rd Infantry and continue the attack, ERACCIANO had been taken with only minor resistance.

The First Battalion dismounted at the road junction West of ERACCIANO at F453911, assembling for an attack cross-country to the junction of the lateral road to CIVITAVECCHIA at F433933. It was known that some enemy was in that area. Gently rolling hills with moderately forested tracts characterized the landscape. Hardly had the lead companies, "A" and "C" started from assembly positions when contact was made with the enemy. The quick-fire of German Spandaus (machine guns) and machine pistols signaled their presence. Both parties, however, were surprised, as apparently they had been in close proximity to each other being aware of it.

The enemy, consisting of three (3) depleted companies of the 39th Luftwaffe Regiment of the 20th Luftwaffe Division (air force ground units), without mortars, without artillery, without anti-tank support, but with plenty of bicycles, was no match for our First Battalion. In a short time the whole of the unit of about two hundred (200) men was destroyed. A German officer stated that the outfit had left DENMARK ten (10) days before and had had the mission of preparing this ground for defensive position, for which he had only completed reconnaissance. Our boys had a field day, taking prisoners and bicycles.

After the objective at the road junction was reached there followed a memorable twenty-three (23) mile motor march to the outlying vicinity of CIVITAVECCHIA. Around 1700 word was received that elements of the 34th Infantry Division (proceeding up Highway 1) were in CIVITAVECCHIA.

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The Third Battalion was then mounted on 132nd Field Artillery trucks, and with reconnaissance vehicles leading, the motorized column, boldly sped over the winding road. There were many places where good defensive positions or an ambush might have been prepared enroute but the enemy had fled. Numerous bridges were left intact. Through the hill towns of TOLFA and ALLUMIERE, the citizens quickly gathered to line the streets and give these first Americans a rousing welcome. The column closed into a deep draw to the North-east of CIVITAVECCHIA at 2100 and contact was made with the 34th Division. During the night the remainder of the Regiment was brought to this area. To demonstrate how swiftly this advance had been, in the early hours of the next morning, our own aircraft attacked the Regiment in its bivouac, suspecting the group to be fleeing Germans. Friendly signals were quickly given and the action ceased. Shortly after, another plane patrol was about to make the same mistake when a timely signal was recognized.

The Regiment now passed to Division reserve and given an opportunity to rest and bathe during the interval.

The 36th Division passed through the 34th Division and pushed on up the coast taking TARQUINIA and MONTALTO. At noon on the 10th the 142nd Infantry closed into an assembly area East of CAPALBIO, off Highway 1 to the North.

The 141st Infantry had been advancing up Highway 1 and were at a point in the vicinity of the road junction at E781271. It was expected that by the morning of the 11th they would be at the road junction of Highway 74 and Highway 1. When that was accomplished it was planned for the 142nd Infantry to proceed in two motor columns, one East of Highway 74 to MANCIANO where it was to make contact with the French coming from PITIGLIANO, the second to go North on the road to MAGLIANO, SCANSANO, POGGIOCAVALLO to GROSSETO, the Division objective.

However in the morning the 141st Infantry was held up in the hills at E770275, miles short of Highway 74. This resistance they were attempting to envelop around the East flank which looked like an all day job. Both the 141st and the French were in contact with a new German division, the 162nd.

A new plan for the Regiment was to attack up the valley through CAPALBIO, thence generally Northwest along the DELLA RADICATA stream bed, across Highway 74 to seize MAGLIANO. A platoon of tank destroyers (four)

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a platoon of tanks (four), and a platoon of engineers were attached for this mission.

As the battalions were in readiness, the attack got off shortly after the Colonel's order was issued. Second Battalion formed the advance guard and moved astride the road to CAPALBIO. Mobile reconnaissance units went into the town without resistance, but beyond it ran into the enemy under cover on the hill to the West of the valley running Northwest from the town.

Excellent observation was had from the town itself, which as an ancient landmark, is a cluster of stone buildings set on the top of a hill. Artillery observers used this to good advantage, looking out over the path of advance.

Company "I" as right flank security had the mission of clearing Hill 425 (E889324) and was on it. When the presence of the enemy to the front was realized Company "I" was told to hold Hill 425 and organize for defense.

Single rounds of enemy artillery began to fall on the town.

Colonel Lynch called for a coordinated attack of the Second and Third Battalions from assembly areas in the vicinity of CAPALBIO. The enemy was expected to be in the woods near the Second Battalion objective, Hill 293 (E832330). The Third Battalion, on the right, was to take Hill 233 (E859358), prepared to swing to the left or West to envelop any opposition in the Second Battalion sector. First Battalion, in reserve, would follow the Third at six hundred (600) yards. The attack jumped off at 1600. The Second Battalion ran into the trouble anticipated. From the cover of woods at the base of the hill enemy machine guns and mortars opened up. An enemy anti-tank gun also fired. From behind a small rise our own tanks and tank destroyers aided the fight.

The action of Second Lieutenant JOSEPH M. D'AVI's platoon (Company "G") highlighted the Second Battalion attack. A ditch marked by a line of trees and dense underbrush was behind the knoll at E863319. In the approaching, the platoon encountered a heavy mortar concentration. Returning, the platoon in line worked its way over open ground by a slight depression to within thirty (30) yards, then charged with bayonet, firing as they ran. The platoon was forced to enter the ditch through a single break in the scrub

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brush fence before it. A great store of enemy weapons including pistols, machine guns, bazookas and rifle grenades littered the ditch. The platoon remained until ordered to withdraw behind the knoll for the night. Second Lieutenant D'Avi watched his men leave one by one at the exit, but around back of the knoll it was discovered that seven (7) were absent. Staff Sergeant ARTHUR PERRAULT, was sent back to check the ditch. Probably the seven had lost contact on the extreme right and had not received the order. In the twilight Staff Sergeant Perrault was amazed to meet Private First Class CLIFTON N. DAVIS, with the other men coming to the rear, a broad grin on his face, leading seventy-nine (79) enemy prisoners. These had approached Private First Class Davis' position from out of the wheat fields to give themselves up just before dark. In the night thirteen (13) more were added and by morning the battalion toll was one hundred twenty-six (126). The fight in the Second Battalion sector was thus a sharp one which lasted until darkness brought a halt.

The next morning, 12 June, the enemy had drawn back. Ours was a long march over the densely covered hills to the edge of the flat ground before Highway 74. That evening a reconnaissance party ran onto several German tanks around a house near Highway 74. Our tanks and tank destroyers went out to engage them, destroying two (2).

Early the 13th the First and Second Battalions moved out across the flatland, and across the ALBEGNA stream. By 1450 they were fighting around MAGLIANO, and the battle stiffened during the late afternoon. The town, strongly defended, was surrounded by a forty (40) foot wall. Company "F", mounted on tanks and tank destroyers, was sent to seize the town. First Lieutenant CHARLES W. GARNHAM's platoon was assigned the mission of forcing an entry into the town and softening up the defenses. Finding the South gate and East wall well guarded he maneuvered to the North wall where he found no entrance but the wall had been left unguarded. Finding a ladder, he fearlessly led his men over the wall and moved across the roofs of the buildings. Hand grenades thrown with effect on two enemy machine gun positions aroused the enemy garrison and a hard ten-hour street fight ensued before the town was finally cleared. Technical Sergeant JESSE W. BEWLEY, Platoon Sergeant, and Staff Sergeant KENNETH W. PATTERSON, Squad Sergeant, distinguished themselves during the fight by locating and dispersing enemy machine gun nests.

The First Battalion held up that night on the hills Northeast of MAGLIANO and placed a road block on the road to SCANSANO. The Second

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Battalion, less Company "F", stopped on the slopes of PADIO BACCINO to the West of the town. The Third Battalion, brought up during the late afternoon, assembled on a wooded knoll South of the town and prepared to pass through and continue the Regimental attack the following morning however, the Germans were still entrenched in the hills to the West and to the North.

Colonel Lynch ordered an attack to seize Hills 153 (E765483) and 202 (E775495) because these overlooked the intended route of advance. Hill 153 was the objective of the Third Battalion on the left. The First Battalion, from positions near the road, was to take Hill 202. A fifteen (15) minute artillery preparation preceding the attack began at 1245. Fierce machine gun fire hit the Third Battalion's left flank which Company "L" was leading. The battalion moved forward in the face of the bitter fire while our own mortars concentrated on the enemy machine gun positions. The day was hot and artillery fire had set the dry grass ablaze in the route of advance.

In the heat of the battle Staff Sergeant HOMER L. WISE, 34150846, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Squad Leader of Company "L", performed heroically with amazing agility and initiative. While his platoon was pinned down by intense fire, he with three (3) others went out into the fire-swept area to bring a wounded buddy to safety. Perceiving a German officer and two (2) men attempting to flank his unit, he worked into position to engage them, killing all three. Later he obtained and fired a rifle grenade launcher upon enemy positions causing them to flee. Other fire from the front and left flank was beyond the range of his tommy gun, so he obtained a BAR, and neutralized the frontal fire, allowing his men to move forward and capture the crew. He boldly climbed on a tank which was in support of the operation, remedied a stoppage in the turret machine gun, and fired seven hundred and fifty (750) rounds into the enemy's positions, inflicting numerous casualties, neutralizing their fire, and allowing the battalion to continue.

The Third Battalion took Hill 153, then went on to Hill 163 further up. There they sat down to a hot supper which the Germans had prepared, prior to their withdrawal. Besides the number of killed and wounded the Third Battalion took sixty-eight (68) prisoners in this engagement; and the First Battalion had reached its objective at 1500.

Enemy resistance around MAGLIANO was now smashed.

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That night the 361st Infantry Regiment, coming into the line and swinging far to the West toward MONTIANO, pinched out the 142d Infantry. Our First Battalion organized on Hill 202 and remained there in reserve until morning. The Second and Third Battalions pulled back for a much needed pause beside the ALBEGNA stream. The First Battalion followed in the morning, 15 June.

On the evening of the 17th the Regiment moved to an area near GROSSETO where Division troops had by this time advanced.

A very special treat was in store for the Regiment the following afternoon. No less a personage than the First Soldier of the Army, General GEORGE C. MARSHALL, Chief of Staff, U. S. Army, paid a visit. General Marshall, with Colonel Lynch, toured the First and Third Battalion areas, talked with the troops and inspected bivouacs. The General was accompanied by Lieutenant General JACOB S. DEVERES, Deputy Commander in Chief, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, Allied Armies; Lieutenant General MARK W. CLARK, Commanding General, Fifth Army; Major General DAVID BARR, NATOUSA; and Major General THOMAS T. HANDY, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, War Department General Staff.

North of GROSSETO Highway 1 follows a broad valley, turns to the West and runs to the coast near FOLLONICA. Several deep canals drain the valley immediately North and bridge sites are numerous. While the 142nd Infantry Regiment was in reserve, Division troops had had slow progress in the hills to the Northeast, but by the 20 June Highway 1 was secured on the right flank up to the junction of Highway 73. On the morning of 20 June the First Battalion, 142nd Infantry moved by motor to assembly areas at the base of the hills at ES76755. From there at 1530, in conjunction with an attack by the Second Battalion, 143rd Infantry on the right (to seize high ground North of Highway 1 at GIUNCARICO - F540822), the First Battalion moved out across the valley to seize high ground just South of Highway 1, proceeding on to objective CALDANA - F4981. Two large canals had to be crossed but it was found that these were not great obstacles except for vehicles, which had to wait until bridges could be installed. The Second and Third Battalions marched from GROSSETO to assembly positions, then followed the advance of the First Battalion; the Second Battalion echeloned to the left rear, and the Third Battalion to the right.

Lead elements of the First Battalion reached CALDANA by 0330, 21 June, without opposition. Italian partisans aided as guides and stated that the enemy was retreating about five (5) miles away. The chase was warming and evidences of the enemy's nearness increased. After a brief pause, the First Battalion pushed on through the hill town of RAVI and

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then North to the ridge near GAVORRANO. Going over the crest of the last hill overlooking GAVORRANO a splendid view of the whole broad valley below was obtained. Here at the Observation Post that was established at 1500, Colonel Lynch sighted enemy infantry moving North on the small roads leading off Highway 1. Horse drawn artillery was also seen Northeast of the troops. Effective artillery was concentrated upon these targets for a period of two hours. That night the Regiment settled in the vicinity of GAVORRANO, the Third Battalion reaching Hill 242 at E487858. The Regimental Command Post occupied Fascist headquarters in GAVORRANO, a fine building in a clean and prosperous town high on the side of the hill.

The plan for the morning called for the 142d Infantry to follow the 143rd Infantry, now at Hill 247 (E483887), West along the ridge to seize objective at E385913. Nearly the whole day was lost as the 143rd failed to get under way, being held up by a few tanks. Major General Walker visited the Command Post at 1400 and directed the 142d Infantry to take over the mission of the 143rd, to move at once.

By evening the Regiment, less the Second Battalion (remaining in reserve near RAVI), crossed Highway 1 onto the hills on the other side, prepared to continue on down the ridge at daylight.

With the Third Battalion working along the ridge line and the First Battalion on the lower slopes to the left, the Regiment swept along toward its objective. Extremely heavy brush made the advance very slow and exhausting for the men. The First Battalion scrapped with the enemy once or twice and drove groups of them headlong in flight.

That evening was climaxed with a crossing of the road net and stream at E4090. A platoon Commanded by First Lieutenant GEORGE D. HOOKER of Company "B", was sent forward to secure two bridges vitally needed to facilitate the crossing. Mortar fire from the hills on the opposite side struck the platoon killing First Lieutenant Hooker. The platoon reached and found the first bridge intact, but the enemy did get the second. However, before morning a ford was found which enabled all types of vehicles to cross. The battalions closed into their objectives in the early hours of the morning.

With little sleep, and after resupply had been made, the chase was again resumed, using the secondary road running Northwest to SUVERETO as axis of advance. The Third Battalion had a brief stiff fight for the

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hills between the road fork at V3885 where on the top the spoil of what had been a German Regimental Command Post was taken. The enemy delayed by blowing another bridge at the road fork, but again, a quick reconnaissance located another crossing. Pushing on up the road, the First Battalion gained final objectives at Hill 162 (V343904) and Hill 186 (V325893) with some opposition encountered there. The men were worn with fatigue at this stage, yet one more operation lay before them. An attack swinging Northwest to BELVEDERE, above SUVERETO, and North to SASSETA began at 1200, 25 June, with the Second Battalion leading. Hill 101A at V335922 and Hill 101B at V327925 were the first and second objectives, respectively. Two successive stream crossings afforded good defensive positions for the enemy. Enemy artillery, firing in battery concentrations, was frequent and enemy tanks were active. One menaced an important bridge at V322925, and just before dark attempted to knock it out by direct fire but failed to do this effectively. By nightfall, after a hard fight, the Second Battalion had taken the second objective.

Our sudden relief from the line by the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was completed at 0600 next morning, 26 June. But it was greatly welcomed, footsore and weary as they were after this long grueling march. GROSSETO, where the march began was now forty (40) miles behind, and it had been a steady, continuous march, over hill and valley, through prickly brush in exhausting heat, with several sharp engagements on the way. But now with eagerness they could look forward to seeing the ROME they had but glimpsed in passing through.

June was thus packed with more action than any previous month of the Regimental History. In respects it was not as hard or bitter because it was more successful. The Regiment played a major role in the final overwhelming assault on the portals of ROME, and from there joined the chase which speedily rolled the enemy forces back and which was still in progress when the relief was effected. New problems of organization, of control and of supply were continually being encountered and dealt with. Human energies were extended to the limit. But now we who have participated may be justly proud, yes, and thankful too, for the unbroken series of victories that attended the way.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author.

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2ND BATTALION, 142ND INFANTRY
A.P.O. #36, U. S. ARMY

12 July 1944

SUBJECT: Commander's Comments for Operations in June, 1944.

TO : Commanding Officer, 142nd Infantry.

1. 31 May the mission was to take the mountain range North of VILLATEMI and the high peak across the saddle on the southern end of the mountain. E Company with a platoon of heavy machine guns from H Company is to take the peak, reorganize and hold the objective until relieved by friendly troops. They ran into heavy enemy resistance, the enemy holds two houses situated on the peak of the rise, after driving the enemy from the houses and the top of the peak, E Company fought off several counterattacks during the day. Direct fire from enemy self propelled guns were used in these counterattacks against Company E. When E Company was relieved at 2100, they started their return to the Battalion.

2. 1 June this Battalion was given the mission to take MT. SPINA and surrounding area. Col. ZIMMER gives Company G the mission of taking MT. SPINA, Company F to take the hill to the right. Company G took their objective without any major difficulty. F Company encountered difficulty in obtaining their objective due to enemy heavy machine gun fire and the density of the underbrush on the steep slope. In order to assist F Company, E Company was moved to F's left flank and gave them assistance in taking the objective. Col. ZIMMER was wounded by flak from an enemy anti-aircraft weapon which was placing harassing fire on this Battalion's position. Major MIDDLETON assumes command of the Battalion.

3. 2 June Battalion received orders that Third Battalion would make an attack at 1145. We were to follow Third Battalion at 600 yards across the valley to the North. After crossing the valley the Second Battalion swung to the left abreast of Third Battalion with MT. MASCHIO DELLE FAETE our objective. Little opposition was encountered throughout the day and the objective was seized at 1740, the position organized and occupied that night.

4. 3 June the mission was to take MT. CAVO, this is a conical shaped peak, a large stone building, which was a hotel prior to the war, and a garden house. The two buildings are located on the highest point with a stone wall approximately eight foot high encircling both. The lower part

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of the mountain is covered with thick bushes up to within about fifty yards of the wall. All adding up to an ideal defensive position. Major MIDDLETON orders F and G Companies as the assaulting companies, E in reserve. As the draw at the foot of the mountain is crossed F Company moves over for flank protection and E Company comes through to a position abreast of G. The assaulting companies fight their way up the slope until they reach the open area around the wall. At this point they were compelled to stop due to intense small arms fire of the enemy, who had an excellent field of fire and the protection of the wall and houses. Our troops were to close to the objective to employ artillery support: Major MIDDLETON sends a radio message to Regiment requesting tanks or tank destroyers be moved up to a position from which they can give assistance and supporting fire to the troops in the final assault. While awaiting an answer a platoon of Company G is sent out on a reconnaissance patrol around to the rear of the objective, they return with the information that the wall at the rear of the building is slightly lower, the approach to the wall at this point is not so steep and the concealment is better. An answer is received from Regiment that it would be impossible to move the tanks forward in time for their use to be practical. The decision is then reached to lay a mortar barrage on the objective and have a platoon of Company G at the rear of the objective to make the assault when the barrage is lifted, with squads on each side of the position hurling hand grenades over the wall to attract the enemys attention while Company G makes the assault with supporting machine gun and rifle fire. This plan was carried out and when the interior was cleared of the enemy and reorganization of the Battalion was completed, it was discovered that not a man of the Battalion was wounded or killed in this final assault. The taking of this high ground broke the last enemy stronghold on the valley that leads to ROME.

5. 4 and 5 June pursuit and mopping up operations were continued against the enemy. On the 5th the Battalion led the advance of the Regiment through ROME arriving in the city about 0400. Moved on through ROME to assembly area near FORCARECCIA.

6. 6 June Battalion received orders to move by marching to an area near CADUTA.

7. 7 June Battalion received orders to be motorized and move along Highway Number 1, behind the First Battalion which was leading the Regiment in a motorized tactical move. It was necessary at one point to dismount trucks and clear an area of enemy small arms fire. When the mission was accomplished the Battalion entrucks and moves along Highway Number 1 to a bivouac area near Civitavecchia. We remain there the 8th and 9th of June.

8. 10 June Battalion received orders to entruck at 1200. Battalion moved up Highway Number 1 and detruck at assembly area near CASETA DI DAPITA where we spend the night.

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9. 11 June the mission of this Battalion was to take the high ground about one mile North of the town of CAPALBIO. During this attack we surprised the enemy in their assembly area. Their mission, as obtained from prisoners, was to recapture the town of CAPALBIO. The forward elements of E Company contacted the enemy and were within one hundred yards of their assembly area before the enemy realized that we had advanced troops that close to them. With a supporting fire of 81mm mortars, 60mm mortars, tanks and tank destroyers one company of the enemy was destroyed. Total prisoners taken 115, and approximately 40 dead and wounded. Due to the accurate fire of supporting weapons very few of the Battalions troops were used in destroying the enemy.

10. 12 June the Battalion continued the attack to the North and very little opposition was encountered throughout the day.

11. 13 June the mission of taking the town of MAGLIANO was given this Battalion. The troops moved up from the south towards the town, through open fields where it was necessary to keep them deployed and cross a stream under fire from enemy tanks. The enemy had delaying groups in strategic spots throughout this area. With the use of tank support the Battalion moved on up to the edge of the town. MAGLIANO is surrounded by a high stone wall with towers located on the wall at intervals. Major MIDDLETON assigned Company F to take the town, E and G Companies the high ground SE of the town. Enemy resistance is extremely stiff inside the town against F Company. The objectives are taken after a day and night of hard fighting. This objective was important due to it furnishing the enemy a well protected and well located observation post.

12. 14 to 17 June was spent in assembly area reorganizing and cleaning equipment. Lt. Col. David P. Faulkner joined the Battalion in this area and assumes command. Movement orders were received and executed the night of the 17th. The Battalion closing into an assembly area one mile South of Grossetto by 2100.

13. 18 and 19 June On alert for movement condition was maintained throughout this period.

14. 20 June movement was made to an assembly area about eight miles North of Grossetto. A night movement was started about 2100 from the new area moving to another assembly area west of Highway Number 1, cord. 547-786, Map 128, Sheet IV.

15. 21 June the Battalion received an order to seize the town of CALDANA and the high ground NW of RAVI. Very little opposition was encountered. At 1300 the Battalion was in possession of CALDANA. Continuing the attack the second objective was seized by Company G. The remainder of the Battalion moved into an assembly area between Company G and the town.

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16. 22 and 23 June the Battalion was alerted for movement and moved the evening of the 23rd to an assembly area vicinity of (89-42) E. From this point the movement was continued under cover of darkness to an assembly area vicinity of (89-38) E.

17. 24 June Battalion as Regimental reserve moved behind the First Battalion and into an assembly area vicinity (387-898), Map 119, Sheet II.

18. 25 June the Battalion passed through the First Battalion and attacked at 1230, as the leading Battalion of the Regiment. The attack was launched from positions in front of the hill mass at (345-889), Map 119, Sheet II. Objectives were the two #101 hills to our west and #111 hill. After these we would sieze the town of Belvedere and the high ground NW of it. Companies F and G with machine gun platoons of Company H attached to each were the assault companies. Company F on the left. Prior to the attack the Battalion O. P. was shelled by hostile artillery. The Battalion Anti Tank platoon which was going into position to the left of the O. P. received a portion of this fire, killing the platoon sergeant, wounding two other men and damaging a truck. After the taking of the first objective this O. P. was vacated and five minutes later two direct hits were placed on it. Company F moved forward about 600 yards when it was stopped by enemy machine gun fire from the South portion of Hill 101. Artillery fire was laid down on this enemy along with accurate mortar fire from Company H. This enabled Company F to reach its objective. Company G encountered no opposition. Continuing the attack to capture the second #101 hill the assault companies moved out at 1715. Both were stopped by enemy machine gun fire after moving forward about 500 yards. While awaiting assisting fires, two enemy tanks appeared and shelled the position that had just been vacated by Company F. Battalion called for artillery fire on the tanks and they withdrew when this fire was received. The attack progressed and the second objective was in our hands by dark. In this operation the action of the Battalion saved one large bridge and succeeded in keeping the enemy from doing any great damage to another. Two tanks and four tank destroyers were attached for this attack but were unable to move forward in time to be of great assistance.

19. 26 June Battalion was relieved by elements of the 34th Division. The Battalion was moved to a rest area.

Conclusion:

During the month the most outstanding lesson derived is to use all supporting weapons to assist the rifle units to perform their job.

It is felt that greater training between Infantry, Tanks and Tank Destroyers is imperative.

David P. Faulkner
DAVID P. FAULKNER
Lt. Col., 142nd Inf.
Commanding 2nd Bn.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 1944

A hundred small craft bobbed up and down in the blue Mediterranean within a thousand yards offshore, waiting. Hundreds of other vessels, large and small, were in the vicinity, each with an assigned job to perform--some laying-to in a specified position, as transports efficiently lowering away their content, or the big gray hulls of naval armor methodically pounding targets on the shoreline, great black clouds of smoke following the flame-sputts and deafening roar of ships' broadsides. Little boats with business to do, moved about on the scene, cutting crisp white wakes in the bright sunlight of early afternoon. Strange and ugly looking craft with countless racks of iron piping on deck edged slowly forward, an important mission resting in their hands. Looking toward shore from the sea, off to both right and left, spectacular white streamers of smoke fanned out in clusters as phosphorus smoke shells burst in the air. Billows of smoke poured from floating pots laid to form a protective screen. Out of this haze a sandy colored glow with patches of green dimly outlined the hills which rose from the sea on the right. A large fire marked the horizon. Faint gray objects indicated the tower of an airport and a sea-side hotel, while a church steeple and a number of buildings marked the site of a town.

The three thousand men in the hundred small craft watched all this with anxious interest. That is, if in their crowded stations they could get to the boat rail to see. Some sat quietly on the floor, keeping their thoughts to themselves. To compare, this was a moment tense with expectation, as when the crowd eyes the opening kickoff to an important football contest back home. But far more was at stake here and what was being enacted would be written in history's pages. Southern FRANCE was being invaded.

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RED BEACH lay straight ahead. The hundred small craft in three groups spaced at intervals formed the Battalion assault teams of the 142d Infantry. The time neared 1400, Z Hour, when the first wave would hit RED BEACH. At precisely two minutes before that hour the ugly craft with the racks of iron piping were due to let loose a last and terrific over-powering preparation, firing 1,000 rockets a boat--14 of them-- within the two minutes time onto the beach defenses. Then on scheduled order, the first wave and the next and so on would surge forward and storm the coastal area.

Z Hour passed with the boats still idly waiting. More time elapsed. Now it was apparent that something was wrong. The Colonel commanding, from his command post in one of the small boats, radioed the leading Battalion to find out the reason for the delay. Soon the word came back that the drone boats, small radio-controlled boats filled with explosives and employed as final detonations to clear a path through the enemy's underwater obstacles, were destroyed or out of control. Some mechanism had failed and the boats were left stranded in the very path the assault units had to come. And so it was that the whole plan for landing was held up.

Soon another message came from the First Battalion, reading, "We are landing on GREEN BEACH". Had there been a mistake in encoding the message? Didn't they mean RED BEACH? The radio was asked to check again. No, the answer repeated, "We are landing on G-R-E-E-N BEACH".

Up front the fleet of small craft were definitely turning to the right. Shortly a naval spokesman came alongside and with megaphone announced, "We are landing on GREEN BEACH".

To most in the landing team the reason for this was not then clear. But to those who knew and realized what the change involved it was a welcome relief.

A landing on GREEN BEACH had been considered in the pre-invasion planning and its possibility was termed an Alternate Plan. Already it had been secured and the barrage balloons hovered overhead. Bounded by a rocky wall which was close-in to the beach proper it had been chosen for its very unlikelihood as the place to force the first beachhead of the Division. Hitting at 0800 in the morning, two Battalions of the 141st Infantry followed by the entire Regiment of the 143rd Infantry with supporting elements had reduced the beach defenses and gained their first objectives with an amazing degree of success and a minimum of casualties.

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RED BEACH was the obvious place to land in this coastal sector and its defenses had been stoutly organized by the enemy. A broad sandy beach was near the small port of ST. RAPHAEL and the town of FREJUS. Access to it was essential for the quick follow-up of supplies and equipment which must accompany any invasion force, and in this particular facilitate the intended drive of the Army Northwest in the ARGENS river valley to cut off the ports of TOULON and MARSEILLES.

The Divisional plan for seizing its assigned position of the beach-head briefly followed this course: The 141st Infantry would land two battalions on GREEN BEACH and one battalion on BLUE BEACH, a small rocky inlet about three (3) miles East of GREEN, simultaneously at H-Hour (which proved to be 0800), these first securing a small initial beach area, then moving North and Northeast to take objectives on the right flank in the direction of CANNES; the 143rd Infantry to follow over GREEN BEACH at H plus 105 minutes striking West initially to seize the high ground near ST. RAPHAEL and the town where likely defenses dominated RED BEACH; the 142nd Infantry to land on RED BEACH at approximately H plus six (6) hours (an indefinite time designated as ZHour and subsequently announced as 1400), reduce the defenses of RED BEACH, seize the town of FREJUS, then proceed West and Northwest up the ARGENS valley, contacting the airborne force dropped in the vicinity of LE MUY. The three regiments would then, as far as the planning went, occupy a beachhead line on the right flank of the CORPS sector to a depth of some twelve (12) to fifteen (15) miles inland.

The alternate plan anticipated the possibility of the 142nd Infantry landing behind the 141st and 143rd on GREEN BEACH. An apparent disadvantage lay in the fact that it hardly seemed feasible to land a whole Division with the necessary armor and vehicles over the one rock-enclosed beach, where enemy artillery, if it was active, could make the proposition a difficult one and probably costly. In executing the alternate plan the 142nd Infantry was to swing in an arc North and then due West seizing FREJUS and reducing the RED BEACH defenses from the rear, then proceeding on its original mission Northwest up the ARGENS river valley. The landing could be effected at about the same time as that planned for RED BEACH, that is, about H plus six (6) hours, but a ten (10) mile march on the route to FREJUS would add to the time element in the taking of that important town. Corps specified that FREJUS be taken by the night of D-Day. Therefore it was more likely that the frontal assault on RED BEACH would be used, and

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on the morning of D - Day, even after the 141st Infantry had landed with reported light resistance, Major General JOHN E. DAHLQUIST, Division Commander, radioed Colonel G. E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander, that the 142d Infantry would land on RED BEACH at 1400.

The circumstances related above changed that order, and so, as the fleet carrying the Regimental Combat Team turned East and sped five (5) miles up the coast toward GREEN BEACH, the word was given to all concerned; "Alternate Plan now in effect."

The turn brought the boats cross-current with the wind, the flatnosed craft throwing the spray high in the air, drenching the troops who huddled low at the approach to shore. A few rounds of enemy artillery shot wide of the mark. That was all that interfered with the landing of the three Battalion teams. The moment the boats ground on the rocky shore, the ramps were lowered and the men hurried out, most without even getting their feet wet. The Regiment was on French soil without one casualty! Each unit quickly climbed the steep, rocky slopes leading from the beach, hastily reorganized and moved on up the road out of the obvious enemy target area.

Now the amphibious aspect of the operation was satisfied. What lay ahead was land fighting, that which the Army is used to doing. Once on the ground with a concentrated force, we were to the advantage against scattered coastal defenses until the enemy could bring up his reserves. Once under way with aggressive hard hitting forces there was little that could stop us, as later developed in the operation.

Here it might be well to trace the course of events leading up to D - Day, for an immense amount of detail and activity was compressed into a short space of time, laying the foundation for the success of the operation, a success which exceeded the most carefully laid planning and expectations of all concerned.

The 142nd Infantry was still engaged in chasing the Germans up the coastal road in Italy from ROME, during the latter part of June, when hints of participating in another large-scale amphibious operation were first heard. On the 20th June 1944, an officer was requested by Division Headquarters to begin work on something the nature of which was confidential and mysterious.

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It was this air of secrecy so vitally important which prevailed in every particular as the most essential element in the planning phases. Starting with only a few trusted and necessary men in on the "know", the great bulk of the planning, training and loading operations were directed to completion by a sort of remote control which readied the force, but allowed no hint of the point of attack or the date.

On the other hand, commanders and their staffs were spared no detail of information available that related to the tactical problem. At Division Headquarters, in a restricted and guarded area surrounded by a barbed wire fencing, enemy intelligence and our own scheme of attack were plotted and the final written orders published. Extensive aerial reconnaissance provided complete photo coverage of the beach areas in minute detail revealing terrain features and enemy defenses, gun positions, pill boxes, wire and tank obstacles and underwater obstacles on the approaches to the beach. A series of oblique photos, greatly enlarged, taken with a sharp lens from a fast flying reconnaissance plane skimming the sea parallel to the beaches recorded remarkably the assault areas and gave commanders an accurate picture of the problem before them. Photo interpreters published their findings of collected information on known enemy defenses, on the map used for the operation. A singular feature of great assistance was a miniature layout of the terrain made to a scale of 1/10,000, previously prepared by intelligence offices of the War and Navy departments, and executed not in plaster or clay but moulded with a light sponge rubber, which made them as rubber mats easily portable. Around these, on which no place names were shown, many orientations were held, and one of these rubber maps was placed on each Battalion's ship for every man to see after sailing.

The loading of the transports carrying the invasion force is a complicated mass of detail which would harry the most patient organizer. The vast amount of invasion materiel must be compactly fitted into the limited space available according to a prescribed priority schedule. And, until the fleet is under way, the best plans are subject to frequent change.

The space allotted to the Regimental Combat Team included a group of twenty-eight (28) vessels whose combined capacity allowed for a lift of eight hundred thirty-nine (839) vehicles. Actually, however, by careful and tight fitting, between nine hundred seventy-five (975) to one

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thousand (1,000) vehicles were accommodated.

Priority was established according to the nature of the mission and the commander's estimated requirements for accomplishing the assigned task. A change in the tactical plan, or a new item of enemy information, may quickly affect priority requirements.

Of the twenty-eight (28) ships in the regimental fleet there were three (3) APA's (large personnel carriers) capable of transporting the basic assault unit, the Battalion Combat Team, with its organic equipment; three (3) MT's (Motor Transports) Liberty ships carrying bulky items of freight; fourteen (14) LCT's (Landing Craft Tank) carrying assault wave and highest priority equipment--tanks and tank destroyers, shore engineer equipment and barrage balloons; and three (3) LST's (Landing Ship Tanks)--a large landing vessel with open-mouthed jaws able quickly to unload vehicles of all types. These carried second priority equipment, about one-third (1/3) for shore engineers, and the rest for anti-aircraft including self-propelled 40mm and 90mm types; one (1) LSI (Landing Ship Infantry) and two-and-one half (2½) LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry), both types personnel carriers. Everything was so loaded that if one ship was sunk the operational efficiency of the team, though reduced, would not be lost.

Finally, after the loading plans were complete on paper, the physical loading on the ships involved first, the water proofing of each vehicle, and then at the appointed time, the assembly in concentration areas preparatory to moving to the docks.

The Regiment was relieved from the line in Northern ITALY 26 June. After a brief stopover in the ROME area, a stay cut short because of the coming operation, the Regiment returned to the same ground it had, in September a year ago, fought for and won on the beaches of SALERNO near PASTUM. Here a nine-day training program at the Invasion Training Center including specialized practice in assault landing, pill box reduction, the use of the flame-thrower, and demolition of obstacles, was completed. The last exercise involved practice landings of Battalion and then Regimental scale. Moving North to the NAPLES area preparations gathered momentum. A dress rehearsal with the full naval complement of ships was held on simulated beaches near the mouth of the GARIGLIANO River on 7 August. Troops

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returned by train afterwards, because by then, most of the transportation was in process of flowing to the ships, for final loading.

Barracks bags were gathered for storage as personal equipment was stripped to the minimum; troops were restricted to bivouac areas for security reasons; loitering civilians were rounded up pending the invasion; Regimental and Battalion orders were issued to unit commanders on the last days. Air activity overhead was intense as swarms of troop carriers and gliders likewise made final maneuvers in preparation for the air-borne operation; groups of paratroopers in their jumping uniform visited the men of the Regiment to acquaint them with the mission of contact that was to be ours.

From the 8th through the 10th the troops came down the winding roads that lead to NAPLES harbor and the embarkation points, viewing with wonder and pride the great invasion fleet--ships without number at anchor in the broad bay. Without ceremony long lines slowly dwindled in the hot sun as rosters were checked and the men boarded and settled on ship. With loading completed, the many vessels moved out from the dock areas to an assembly point several miles down the coast near CASTELLUMARE where the time of waiting lingered until shortly after noon of the 13th. All the while GI Joe acquainted himself with his new surroundings. Navy life appears especially attractive to him on these occasions. The clean quarters and simple conveniences that the sailor enjoys are things he can well wish for as he thinks of the dirt and grime and washless days he has experienced on the battlefield, and contrasts his cold C rations with the Navy steam table. Navy gadgets are fascinating too. But this was not a pleasure cruise in the finest sense. Conditions were crowded and below deck was an almost intolerable summer heat. Time aboard ship for the soldier is mostly his own to do as he likes, to the extent that limited facilities permit.

The flagship of the regimental group, the U. S. S. CARROLL, was honored on the 12th, when the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. James V. Forrestal, and the Invasion Fleet Commander, Vice-Admiral Hewitt, came aboard for a brief visit.

The smaller craft sailed earlier than the larger transport vessels. Some went by way of CORSICA and from staging areas there set out to the

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invasion waters to meet other units. The main body of the assault group lifted anchor at CASTELLEMARE at 1230 hours of the 13th, formed in a column flanked by naval destroyers, and steamed majestically past famed MT VESUVIUS and the sparkling stone villas along the NAPLES shoreline still littered with hundreds of follow-up vessels, and then took a last look at memorable ITALY in passing the lofty, rocky ISLE of ISCHIA going out to sea.

Enroute every measure was taken to familiarize each soldier with the invasion plans. Maps and pictures were posted and officers gathered their men to talk with them and assign definite missions. The explanation of the scheduled naval and air bombardments of the coastal defenses spurred confidence in the success of the assault while the possibilities of the new venture--three (3) veteran divisions hitting a surprise blow to open yet another front on the enemy's weakening positions; and expected help from the active French Forces of the Interior--were thoughts which stirred the imagination.

The morning of "D" Day dawned with the certain rumble of naval gunfire and aerial bombing. Scattered clouds made the scene misty and gray and covered formations of heavy planes droning overhead. The varied types of naval craft stretched out on the horizon on either side as far as the eye could see. The shoreline was still not visible as the convoy continued maneuvering slowly forward into position. An air raid alert sounded and dispersed a lengthy breakfast line. But no enemy planes appeared while our own maintained a veritable defensive umbrella in the air.

While boat crews unshackled the numerous landing craft riding pig-a-back aboard the transport vessel, soldiers gathered their gear and stood by in groups ready to load. The boats were then lifted from their moorings and lowered along the ships sides to loading stations where the soldiers hopped over the rail and took positions within the craft. At 1100 hours the ship's Captain bid "Godspeed and Good Luck" over the public address system and then ordered the lowering away. Simultaneously the ship's booms dropped the craft into the water. The marine engines throttled with a roar, the boats gathered momentum, then slipped away to their rendezvous. Other waves followed in like manner until the transports were emptied. When all was ready the little boats then formed in their assigned groups and sped toward shore to reach the point at which this narrative begins. Thus did the preparations for this one day unfold.

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Thrusting out from the beach after landing at 1532 hours, the First Battalion as lead Battalion moved on up the railroad to AGAY, then turned West astride a secondary road headed toward FREJUS. Flank guards of company strength were out on either side to comb the wooded rolling hills on the flanks while a platoon of four (4) tanks spearheaded the column on the road. The Third and then the Second Battalions followed as the main body upon landing.

General Dahlquist met Colonel Lynch along the road just beyond the beach. His order was to proceed along the planned route of advance and then at 2000 hours to attack FREJUS from the North while the 143rd Infantry cleaned out the coastal area, ST. RAPHAEL, and the defenses of RED BEACH.

But the distance, the necessary slow going of the flank guards, and a few minor brushes with enemy of undetermined strength soon made it apparent that the attack could not be made until sometime after 2000 hours. The late afternoon sun was still very warm and told on the marching men carrying extra loads to meet any critical need. Just before 1800 hours the greatest display of airborne troop carrier planes and gliders filled the air flying parallel to our column in endless formations. Their flight was unopposed by enemy air or anti-aircraft action. They would be landing, we knew, in the valley ahead of us, and we would, as soon as possible, force our advance to make contact with them.

The road was bounded by shady, park-like country, it being in the heart of Southern France's famed resort area. The right was well protected from any immediate enemy counter-action as hills became craggy mountains a short distance away. As twilight dimmed the landscape two (2) groups of enemy occupation troops were cleaned out of rest hotels along the route. Darkness fell before the First Battalion reached its first objective, the high ground overlooking FREJUS. The night was black without moonlight and as the march continued with the Third Battalion passing through the First Battalion to attack FREJUS, the way had to be carefully chosen amongst a maze of little roads which covered the area. An exploding enemy ammunition dump nearby was about the only sound that broke the quietness of the night, that and the weary shuffle of the men pushing on, for there was no halting at this stage of the game.

The Third Battalion entered FREJUS just before daylight. All remained

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silent with the Second Battalion following, until suddenly at 0500, a fire-works of flares, small arms, machine gun and mortar fire opened up from opposite directions in its immediate area. This was at the road junction North of FREJUS. Part of the enemy garrison of CAMP GALLIEN offered this resistance from their position on a ridge looking down on the road at only a hundred yards. Enemy tank fire joined in the flurry an hour later. To quell this excitement the Second Battalion sent a force to clean out CAMP GALLIENI. Tanks were rushed up from the First Battalion while the First Battalion sped its march to close in the vicinity and strengthen our positions. After daylight street-fighting broke out within FREJUS and mopping-up operations occupied the Third Battalion until afternoon.

The flare-up around CAMP GALLIENI was subdued and at 1040B the Second Battalion struck West toward its assigned first objective. Several enemy self-propelled guns delivering ineffective harassing fire were smashed by our artillery as the Second Battalion occupied its objective. The Third Battalion was ordered to prepare to move up the road from FREJUS to PUGET. Only sporadic resistance was encountered by the Second and First Battalions. The Third Battalion entered PUGET and before nightfall ran onto an enemy anti-tank strong point 1200 yards beyond the town. Three (3) of our lead tanks were knocked out by surprise fire. Then strong naval gun fire along with artillery was poured on the enemy positions. An American paratrooper taken prisoner by this group and released during the shelling to come to our lines declared that the shelling had broken the enemy force, which, after destroying its own guns--eight (8) anti-tank weapons, 88mm and 75mm caliber-- fled from the positions. The paratrooper asked medical help for two wounded buddies remaining with the Germans and stated that any of the enemy left would be willing to surrender. A party of medical personnel with an interpreter and an escort of MPs advanced with an ambulance onto the German position, returning with the wounded paratroopers, and a German officer and three men as prisoners. The rest had fled.

Orders received were for the regiment to hold positions for the night, and to send patrols forward along the road to contact the paratroopers. Re-supply and a brief, but much needed rest was thus gained.

During the night a movement of the regiment to DRAGUIGNAN, fifteen (15) miles further on and twenty (20) miles inland, was projected for the morning. At daybreak, the Third Battalion was mounted on transport, and with armor

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in the lead set off on that mission. This type of movement--motorized columns making long gains without opposition--was to characterize the speedy exploitation of the Seventh Army beachhead. Dismounting at TRANS, the Third Battalion marched to DRAGUIGNAN which, upon arrival was already occupied by paratroop units.

A fair-sized town, DRAGUIGNAN served as German 62nd Corps Headquarters and was the center of administrative offices for the surrounding districts. A German general officer had been captured in the hotel where the Regimental Command Post was established and a truck-load of enemy documents were left intact in the building. The German Corps General was known to be in an area to the Northwest of town. He had refused to surrender to paratroop demands and was still holding out in the well-protected grounds of his headquarters with about five hundred (500) troops. The Third Battalion was dispatched on a flanking action, taking the slopes of the high ground above the Corps headquarters then cleaning down through the headquarters itself and across the road leading Northwest to MONTFERRAT. But somehow attempts to locate the general went awry and it remained for a reconnaissance outfit to receive the prize in the morning. Our Third Battalion did capture members of his staff including the Colonel, Chief of Staff.

The First Battalion, on positions East of DRAGUIGNAN patrolled that area without contacting the enemy. Southwest of DRAGUIGNAN the Second Battalion mopped up an enemy force in the hills there. All morning and afternoon of the 18th, prisoners poured into the Prisoner of War cage in DRAGUIGNAN to the great delight of the French populace who lined the city streets and howled jeeringly at each new batch of grey-clad Germans. Over four hundred (400) passed through the hands of our interpreters that day.

While the regiment was thus occupied in the vicinity of DRAGUIGNAN, a provisional armored force organized by CORPS and designated as TASK FORCE BUTLER, passed through to the Northwest during the early morning hours of the 18th. A British Major, dressed in kilts, who had parachuted into FRANCE some three (3) weeks previously to work with the FFI came to the command post declaring he had just driven down from GRENOBLE flying the British flag and had not seen any Germans in that whole country. It was this sector of mountains and gorges that the FFI had actively dominated and wrested from enemy occupation. It was into this area that the armored column moved to exploit.

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The beachhead was now secure and our forces were rapidly fanning out beyond. The invasion success was won with lightning suddenness and meager casualties. The great number of prisoners taken had much to say. As information from the other side is always interesting, let us examine some conclusions drawn by our Prisoner of War interrogators:

Coastal defenses were strong in the immediate sector of our regimental beachhead. The enemy appeared to have some inkling of something about to happen but did not know where or when.

The defenses of GREEN BEACH were almost entirely pulled over to reinforce those of RED BEACH the day before our landing.

A new commanding officer of the 1195 Artillery Battalion supposed to be defending ST RAPHAEL did not even know where his batteries were located and had not taken the trouble to inspect his new battalion positions.

Our naval and air preparation disorganized and scattered the coastal defenders. The airborne operation was highly effective and so disrupted communications in paralyzing the 62nd Corps headquarters (the enemy was forced to destroy his radios the first day) that CORPS lost track of what was happening on the beaches.

Little armor was in the vicinity.

A CORPS staff officer admitted that they had never imagined that we could or would attempt to land a whole division on GREEN BEACH.

The Prisoners of War themselves were mostly elderly or second-rate occupational forces. The majority were German, few non-German, some Poles. It was not unusual for officers to take off and leave the men to man organized defense groups. Prisoners of War had been told they would be killed after capture. They fear the French and are more afraid of the Russians. Our propaganda stating Germany is losing the war is effective as there are many desertions.

Prisoners of War admitted being continually harassed by the French Maquis, a war in which neither side took prisoners, and the civilian populace were not friendly. The French Maquis held the mountains above NICE and controlled most of the area East of the RHONE. Forty-five thousand (45,000) were estimated equipped and armed.

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Of the Luftwaffe, they could only say that it was conspicuous by its absence.

Most of twelve hundred (1200) taken during the first four (4) days were meek and willing prisoners except for an artillery group that were typically arrogant.

The Regiment was sent on a side mission West to CARGES, to be in Corps reserve, backing up the Third and Forty-Fifth Infantry Divisions meeting stiffening resistance around ST. MAXIMUM and BARJOLS.

At 1630 on the 20th, a motor movement began which covered one hundred and sixty-five (165) miles in less than two days, retracing the route back to DRAGUIGNAN and thence North to follow the advance of the Division on the same mountain road Napoleon took returning from ELBA. The road to the first stop-over, CASTELLANE, rose with a steady grade winding through deep mountain gorges and overhanging rocky cliffs. At any number of places a small enemy force or a demolition charge could have made the road impassable for an advancing armored column. But this was controlled by the Maquis and the Germans probably never figured its use would be attempted in a drive to the North. Quick penetration along this route to GRENOBLE enabled the Army to parallel and flank the RHONE valley avenues of retreat to LYON.

Crossing the hump Northwest from CASTELLANE the road descends to DIGNE and then enters the DURANCE RIVER valley at SISTERON. Jeeps, trucks, tanks, and guns rolled on up the valley. The Regiment, supposed to assemble at SISTERON, kept right on going to halt at GAP, thirty (30) miles beyond. And still there was no enemy contact. Here along this route was first experienced the enthusiastic reception of the French citizens. Families gathered by their farms and crowds lined the streets in the town to cheer each vehicle passing and to shower pears, apples, tomatoes, grapes, the fruits in season, and flowers, in grateful acknowledgment and friendly welcome to the Americans. It was far different from Italy and everywhere soldiers could compare the people and country on a more favorable basis with home.

In GAP French patriotism was at its height. The rattle of machine guns the first evening marked the disposal of German terrorists as crowds milled in the streets in celebration.

The Second Battalion was sent East to block enemy entrances through the mountain passes from Italy. Defensive positions were taken up in the vicinity of the road junctions near GUILLESTRE, about forty (40) miles East

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of GAP. The enemy still occupied BREANCON and his intentions were not clear. Reports of large enemy forces heading West from Italy were frequent and varied, some sources stating as much as one to three divisions with armor rapidly approaching our positions. Patrols were sent as far as the Italian border, and an officer was sent to check Maquis road blocks and means of delaying any enemy attempt to come through. A plan to attack and occupy BREANCON was abandoned. However, no contact with the enemy was ever made.

Leaving the Second Battalion, with a battery of field artillery, in position near QUILLESTRE, the Regimental Combat Team was ordered during the night 22-23 August to move West to NYONS where roadblocks were established in anticipation of a large enemy exodus North through the RHONE valley. By this time MARSEILLE and TOULON had been cut off and the remaining enemy elements were trying hard to hastily retreat North. The enemy flank was now threatened all the way North to the lateral valley of the DROME near CREST. But our forces were relatively thin spearheads branching out from the extended beachhead-GRENOBLE axis.

While the 142nd Infantry ^{west} set about to establish a blockade along an arc running to the Northeast from NYONS to MONTERISON and LA BEGUDE, the Butler Task Force assembled in the vicinity of CREST and the 141st Infantry attempted to take the RHONE River town of MONTELLIMAR from the Northeast to cut the main North-South Highway # 7.

In the vicinity of NYONS enemy columns were variously reported. Contact was established at the bridge site near MIRABEL where our artillery was placed upon them. VALREAS was occupied by enemy armored elements enroute to the North who resisted an effort by one of our patrols to enter the town.

During this time the 141st Infantry was kept out of MONTELLIMAR and was beaten off of roadblocks covering Highway # 7 by the enemy intent on getting out to the North.

On the evening of the 24th, before the defensive line from NYONS to LA BEGUDE was complete, the Regimental Combat Team (less three roadblocks of reinforced company strength, one company per battalion) was ordered North to take up defensive positions along the RUBION river line in the vicinity of CLEON. This amounted to a consolidation of the Divisional

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forces on a line above MONTE LIMAR, where it was expected an enemy force including the 11th Panzer Division was gathering for a determined attack to break out of the pocket.

Under cover of darkness the regimental column made its way North through a winding gorge via BOURDEAUX and PUY ST MARTIN onto the broad flat country around CLEON, going into and organizing positions before daylight. Upon arrival engineers made a reconnaissance to locate possible fording sites for an enemy crossing. Mines were laid above the river bed. All bridges were blown. Covering a broad front, battalion defensive positions were organized into company strong points some five to six hundred yards back of the river, the Second Battalion on the right and the Third Battalion on the left. Each battalion (lacking one company left on a roadblock) reserved one platoon for reserve. The First Battalion was placed to back up the center of the line as regimental reserve. Anti-tank guns were carefully emplaced to cover likely avenues of approach. The only two tank destroyers available were made ready on call, near PUY ST MARTIN. As remarked above, this was excellent tank country. The river was low, the ground firm and open, cut only by hedge rows and cultivated farmland to a depth of 3-4000 yards where a ridge line offered a better defensive position. The artillery went into position on this high ground. To the right of the regimental sector a thin defense of engineers linked the 142nd Infantry with the 141st Infantry, whose sector extended West to the RHONE, though the main route along the river was still open to the Germans who were contesting fiercely every effort to close the gap. The left side, through virtually open except for certain roadblocks, depended on high ground as a curtain for defense. Voluntary companies of French Maquis were employed as an added security on this flank.

The stage was now set, but there was a disturbing factor certain to influence the enemy's course of action, and its importance could not be lightly reckoned. The movement of the 142nd Infantry was a deliberate attempt to tightly enclose the enemy pocket with a considerable force, and it was believed that this would be attained with a measure of surprise. The Division order, placed in a compartment of the jeep driven by the officer courier, was captured when a German roadblock on a strange road intercepted the messenger on the way to Regiment. Knowledge of this came at a time too late to counter with a change in plans. It remained only to see what advantage the enemy would take.

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The attack came just after noon of the 25th and was centered on the weak connecting link and boundary between regiments in the vicinity of BONLIEU. An informed prisoner of war stated they had been told of the capture of our order and had aimed the point of attack accordingly. He also stated that elements of three enemy divisions were in column anxiously trying to break through. After overrunning the first defensive positions, the enemy in this first attack was broken up and dispersed by heavy artillery concentrations, and a reserve force, the First Battalion, 143rd Infantry, sent to meet the threat, found the enemy in retreat and restored the river line by nightfall.

Next day the attack was almost identical and came at about the same time. A battalion of infantry supported by four (4) tanks succeeded in crossing the river West of BONLIEU. The First Battalion, 143rd Infantry (attached to 142nd Infantry for this defense), covering this flank was again ordered to drive them back. A separate enemy column apparently on an enveloping mission to the East, was sighted, and the First Battalion, 143rd Infantry, which had only two hours before been moved three miles closer to what appeared to be the threatened sector, from a reserve position vicinity of DARNES, was committed to stop this. The two tank destroyers were also rushed to the scene. A stiff battle ensued, the Germans being again forced back with a loss of two (2) tanks and heavy casualties. Captain George C. Fugate was killed while leading his company, Company "C", into the counterattack.

One more desperate try was expected on the morrow. Defensive positions were strengthened with the arrival of the companies which had been left on roadblocks. The situation at the roadblocks had remained quiet and the Third Division, coming up from the South, was passing through the roadblock positions. Therefore, they were released and returned to reinforce the regiment. Also, a critical stage in artillery ammunition supply was passed and sufficient stocks were now on hand.

The morning of the 27th dawned quietly and the day remained strangely so throughout. By evening the opinion of higher headquarters was that, despite the firm hold around the enemy pocket, the bulk of his forces had escaped to the North by the narrow stretch held open along the RHONE. Strong combat patrols were ordered South from the regimental sector to contact the Third Division along the LA BEGUDE - MONTEILIMAR road. The patrols on the left side worked freely to their objectives but those on the right, two from the First Battalion and one from the Second Battalion, were stopped by strong enemy fire just across the river.

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On the 28th, the regiment was released from this sector and wheeled North another fifteen (15) miles to strike again at the retreating enemy columns. Taking over from a 157th Infantry Battalion near ALLEX, the regiment jumped off on a night (28-29) attack to seize LIVRON and to cut the valley West to the RHONE above the DROME. LIVRON was taken with only slight resistance by the Second Battalion but the Third Battalion encountered strong opposition in attempting to swing North and then West into the flat valley. Small groups of enemy continued filtering across the stream-bed of the DROME river, some with tanks and armored cars. No organized direct attacks were apparent but scattered elements were still fighting determinately to work their way out. The Third Battalion was harried all day of the 29th before reaching its objective. Then, that night, two complete roadblock positions of the Third Battalion were swallowed up by enemy action. Next day the Second Battalion pushed West from LIVRON to clean out the area along the DROME to the RHONE. Local actions were frequent. Our artillery, from observation on the high ground North of LIVRON, smashed remaining enemy columns in the valley and inflicted a heavy toll on enemy equipment and men. This day brought the regiment a total of six hundred and fifty (650) German prisoners.

Mopping-up operations continued until the morning of the 31st. With the valley closed and the whole area to the South under control, the 142nd Infantry again mounted motor transport, and with armored elements leading, moved North on secondary roads paralleling the RHONE, through BEAUMONT, by-passing VALENCE, through BOURGE and on to CHATEAUNEUF, forty (40) miles closer to the great city of LYON, without contacting the fleeing remnants of the Germans.

In August the regiment fought and enjoyed a new type of warfare. With enemy resistance light and scattered, the weather ideally neither too hot nor too cool; with the people gratefully welcoming the army as their liberators; with invaluable assistance from French Maquis, and the novel experience of long rides through scenic country, it was a kind of battle that brought fast gains and rich rewards. Most of Southern France had been freed and in fifteen (15) days our forces were within reach of LYON. The German Army was falling back in disorder, badly set up and beaten and with orders to get to Germany as best they could. The attack in the South had been an overwhelming success.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
Staff Sergeant, 142d Inf.,
Author.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

21 October 1944

SUBJECT: Operations in France, September 1944.

TO : Commanding General
38th Infantry Division
APO # 36, U. S. Army.

Transmitted herewith Historical Record of Operations in France for
the month of September 1944.

G. E. Lynch

G. E. LYNCH
Colonel, 142d Infantry
Commanding.

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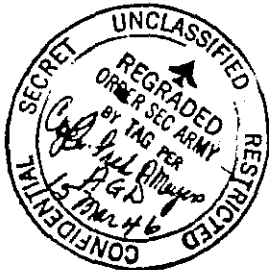
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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

L-1010

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 1944

The German 19th Army fell back in hasty retreat toward the border of its own country. Its soldiers had orders to get to Germany as best they could. Every type of vehicle that could be found was taken for use. Some rode bicycles. Some had to march. All were harried by the nightmare of the swift American advance pressing in its wake. The German Army had been pounded hard while enclosed in a pocket at MONTEILIMAR where long columns of men and materiel had been smashed by our artillery and planes. Now the smoke had cleared from that battle and the enemy was on the run to the North. The French industrial city of LYON was not far. Would they attempt to offer a fight for it?

The 142d Infantry in a single day's march had come North from LIVRON, where the last enemy elements attempting to escape from the pocket had been mopped up, to CHATEAUNEUF, about forty (40) miles South of LYON, on 31 August. The advance continued on the morning of the 1st September 1944 along winding secondary roads where the enemy was less likely to defend with delaying forces or by the use of mines. Objectives on the hills South of LYON were reached in the afternoon without contacting the enemy along the way, but on the plain before the city some activity was seen. Near CHUZELLES and CORBAS small groups thought to be road blocks were contacted and reconnaissance reported some enemy still in VIENNE. For the night a perimeter of defense was established with road blocks protecting at CHUZELLES, and South of the lateral ST SYMPHORIEN - D'OZON - HEYRIEUX road. CHAPONHAY was found clear.

In the morning at 0700, the Second Battalion advanced on MIONS while the 143rd Infantry on the right attacked toward TOUSSIEU and ST LAURENT. At 1000 the Second Battalion was in MIONS. Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander, 142d Infantry, then ordered each Battalion to send a reinforced company; the First Battalion to FEYZIN, the Third Battalion to CORBAS, and the Second Battalion to BESSAY. When enemy contact continued to be unreported each Battalion was ordered to assemble entirely on those points.

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At 1130 Major General JOHN E. DAHLQUIST, Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, ordered an officer patrol to investigate French reports that LYON had been evacuated. Second Lieutenant CHARLES E. BRANCHFIELD, Headquarters, Second Battalion, was given this mission. First Lieutenant JAMES R. CROCKER, I & R Platoon Leader, Regimental Headquarters Company, with the I & R Platoon was already on a motorized patrol to the city. Second Lieutenant BRANCHFIELD returned at 1640 to report that it was clear within the city up to the RHONE river where the Germans were covering approaches to the bridges by fire. First Lieutenant CROCKER reported he had gone to one of the bridge sites where enemy machine guns were active from the North bank.

At 1800 a small force including one (1) platoon of infantry and one (1) platoon of tanks was sent into the city with the mission of being at the Mayor's disposal for "the protection of the city hall". First Lieutenant WELDEN M. GREEN, Platoon Leader, Company "E", was placed in charge of this group and the men were warned to be strictly on the job at their posts. This was the original provisional occupying force in LYON.

At 2130 Major General DAHLQUIST ordered two (2) rifle companies sent to seize and secure the GALLIENI bridge across the RHONE within town. But at the time of their arrival, that bridge and in fact all the bridges across the river had been destroyed.

Sunday morning came, and with it the sun, but Jerry was on the far side of the river and still going North. The chase for the moment was effectively blocked with all bridges in the vicinity across the broad RHONE demolished. Except for the small force that had entered LYON during the night, the Regiment was not to see the city. An alert for motor movement was sounded in the morning. Extra transportation was provided by the 36th Division and beginning at 1330 the Combat Team during the afternoon moved East to a point of crossing already secured in the 3rd and 45th Division sector at SAULT, near LAGNIEU. The three Divisions poured their advance elements across this one bridge to fan out in separate sectors again to the North.

The Regiment pulled into its assigned assembly area near AMBERIEU at ST MAURICE-DE-REMIENS at early evening and immediately placed security detachments on bridges at three scattered points to fulfill a prescribed mission. These bridges were on the L'AIN river at PRIAY, GERIEUX and near MEXIMIEUX. The threat of an enemy attempt to come back in the night to destroy these was still possible. Near one of these crossings, at MEXIMIEUX,

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the 45th Division had caught ten (10) Tiger tanks the previous afternoon.

By candlelight, Colonel LYNCH issued instructions for an advance Northwest through BOURG to MONTREVEL the objective; to get under way at daylight. Such moves now had become quite systematized and customary through experience gained in coming up from the South; Reconnaissance elements to the front probing the route for enemy defenses, road blocks, bridges blown, etc; armored units, tanks and tank destroyers of attached organizations (consistently in this campaign Company "A", 753rd Tank Battalion and Company "G", 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, attached to the 142d Regimental Combat Team), with infantry mounted, forming an advance guard; then the main body of the Regiment following on organic transportation and the trucks of supporting artillery battalions. In this manner the column, often extending ten (10) to fifteen (15) miles in length, rolled along the route until contact with the enemy was made, when the column would deploy for action, the troops dismount and the artillery go into position. Often one, two, and three days would go by without sight of the enemy, though traces, like a bloodhound on a trail, were everywhere evident. Road distances of forty (40) miles a day in this fashion were not unusual. Caution though, always had to be regarded.

The proposed movement at daylight this time, however, was set aside by a higher Headquarters (Corps) insistence that the advance take place as soon as possible. Recalling that one (1) battalion was scattered on three (3) widely separated points and had to be gathered in, the lead battalion was ordered to begin at 0130 to proceed to an assembly point some five (5) miles South of BOURG, where the Regiment was to await further orders. And so, in the cool of the night--and it was cold that night--the men mounted up and in blackness reached the destination by daylight.

There were reports of enemy activity in and around BOURG. Reports of roads leading in and out of it being mined, and the hotel and railroad station being booby-trapped, caused Major General DAHLQUIST, who had contacted Colonel LYNCH along the way, to order BOURG to be by-passed to the West. But reconnaissance information a little later indicated no truth to these statements. The enemy had fled the town the night before. The column was then ordered to be routed through BOURG and from there North to a phase line at VARENNES-ST-SAUVEUR. It was nearly 1100 when the column moved off again. It passed through gallily decorated BOURG and on to VARENNES, reaching there at 1400 (though it was 1730 when the column closed in) without incident. Three (3) small bridges had been blown enroute which caused

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time-consuming detours over muddy trails and across little-used fords. An order to continue on to BRAILTES, short of LOUHANS, was cancelled, and the Regiment stopped for the night at VARENNES.

Next day, the 5th, a similar march to the Northeast, by-passing LOUHANS, brought the Regiment to BLETERANS, only some twenty-five (25) miles farther. It may be wondered why greater distances were not attempted while the enemy was not opposing. But all the time our supply lines were being extended and transport shortages were becoming more acute. Furthermore, single columns had to coordinate with the advance of parallel columns on the flanks which often lagged behind.

That evening our Third Battalion, with the 152d Field Artillery Battalion, was ordered Northeast to MOUCHARD, another twenty-five (25) miles. Since elements of the 3rd Division, pressing closer to BISSANCON, were already in that vicinity, the movement of our Third Battalion was made without any interference during the night. In the morning the rest of the Combat Team followed and closed into the MOUCHARD area in early afternoon, 6 September 1944.

The next obstacle that we faced was the DOUBS river, serious enough to be unfordable. The 36th Reconnaissance Troop, attached, probed the river line for bridge crossings in our assigned sector. The First Battalion was also alerted for movement within forty-five (45) minutes notice to secure any crossing site that might be found. Bridges at RANS, at FRAISANS and near SALANS had been blown, but the reconnaissance located what was considered a good prospect for a crossing near BYANS where the enemy had blown but one of a two-span steel bridge. Foot passage was still possible on the broken part of the bridge which lay flat on the river bed. This information came in at 2200 on 6 September 1944. By mid-night the Commanding General ordered this bridge site secured. Two (2) platoons of the First Battalion were dispatched in the night and by early morning were on position on both sides of the river at the bridge site. Our engineers at the scene set about making estimates and gathering materials for the construction of the bridge. The actual work began at noon. Normal bridging materials were not available but a French lumber yard in the MOUCHARD area supplied the needed heavy timbers. A wooden frame-work was built up from the fallen steel span as Company "B", 111th Engineers, attached, worked through the day, all night and past noon the following day to speed the job.

At 1100 of the 6th the remainder of the First Battalion moved from MOUCHARD to close into the bridge site area. Two (2) companies crossed the

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river to secure the far side. The crossing was at the lower loop of a V-shaped bend in the river. From heights on the South side of the river, and to the West of the bridge, our tanks and tank destroyers with the First Battalion engaged enemy movements seen on the North. The artillery observer located and fired on targets along the main DOLE - BESANCON highway North of and parallel to the river in the vicinity of ST VIT, which was still blandly used by the enemy as a general escape route to the BELFORT GAP.

That evening, 7 September 1944, the Regiment closed into the BYANS area to await the completion of the bridge crossing.

Just before dark a First Battalion patrol in ROUTELLE received machine gun fire from two (2) houses. Also an enemy road block was sighted on the road just North of the town. In the morning a Maquis report indicated the enemy was evacuating ROUTELLE, but at noon another patrol to the town skirmished with Germans still there. This patrol was ordered to withdraw and return to the Battalion as our Regimental attack North from the bridge was about to begin.

At 1430, in the midst of a drizzling rain, the first armored vehicle, a thirty (30) ton M-4 tank, crawled across the completed bridge, while anxious engineers watched the timber creak, but hold firm. Through the afternoon, and in support of the attack for several days, loads up to forty-five (45) tons were accommodated.

The first plan of the attack directed that all three (3) Battalions concentrate around ST VIT with the purpose of cutting the main lateral road from DOLE to BESANCON on the Western approach to ST VIT. Soon after the river crossing was effected a change in orders was received, giving the Regiment the mission of establishing a line of road blocks running North from ST VIT to RECOLOGNE. The Third Battalion was ordered to cut the highway at ST VIT and leave one (1) company on a road block position West of the town, the remainder of the Battalion to establish blocks at CORCELLE - FERRIERES; the Second Battalion to establish blocks and take positions at RECOLOGNE; the First Battalion to take reserve positions on the high ground at VILLERS-BUZON.

The Third Battalion, advancing on ST VIT encountered strong small arms and automatic weapons fire coming from the town. One (1) of our tanks moving boldly into the fight was knocked out by enemy gun fire. The fire fight

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lasted until early morning when the Battalion closed in and mopped up, battling in the streets. Elite German SS Troops here put up a determined stand but at the battle's end the Third Battalion took one hundred fifty (150) prisoners, counted thirty (30) enemy killed and four (4) wounded. The First Battalion, attacking North, after passing through TORPES engaged in a skirmish with a group of about one hundred (100) enemy in the hills and woods to the West. These fled at the sound of our tanks, delaying by returning small arms and mortar fire, but darkness closed the action.

The impracticability of continuing our advance in the almost black of the night prompted Colonel LYNCH to ask the Commanding General for a halt until daylight but the General believed it was urgent to continue on. No little skill was displayed by the Battalions in following compass courses across the unfamiliar terrain in the dark toward their objectives. The next day's prisoner-of-war returns proved that many a Jerry was bypassed or left stranded in the night. In one town a German Colonel was routed from his sleep to escape by ten (10) minutes time. In the morning two (2) German officers drove their Ford V-8 unwittingly into the hands of our soldiers beyond the Regimental Command Post.

The First Battalion reached its objective, VILLEPS-BUZON at 0420, before daylight. The Second Battalion, meeting only minor resistance but having farther to go, entered RECOLOGNE by noon. The Third Battalion was on its objective too. The Regiment now stood astride what had been the general path of the German exodus from Southwestern FRANCE, and with communications disrupted, enemy elements were still coming on, though BESANCON and the surrounding vicinity was in our hands. That day our prisoner-of-war toll mounted to some six hundred fifty (650), most of whom were Mongolians from German OST Battalions.

After gaining objectives, reconnaissance and patrol parties were sent out to the North and West. At day's end the outlying villages of EVANS, ANTHORPE, MERCEY, OUGNEY, ETRABONNE, JALLERANCE and CORBIRON were reported clear. Prisoners-of-war were taken by our patrols to MERCEY and at TAXENNE, while enemy fire was drawn from across the river at MARNAY and our artillery claimed a field day in firing on enemy moving Northeast into ERUSSEY.

Next morning, 10 September 1944, leaving the Second Battalion to secure the ST VIT - RECOLOGNE line with the Cannon Company in support, the Regiment moved East to PELOUSEY into assembly areas preparatory to attacking North. Company "L" established a road block at EMAGNEY. At 1530 the

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Third Battalion moved out with the mission of taking GY, marching by way of EMAGNEY (picking up the Company "L" road block there), COURGUIRE and CHARCENNE (establishing a block here). The First Battalion followed the Third, turning off at COURGUIRE to go through AUTOREVILLE, then proceeded across open fields Northeast to BUCEY. Our reconnaissance troops aroused the enemy at BUCEY as early as 1230 so that a fight was expected there. But when the leading elements of the First Battalion entered BUCEY at 1900 the last of the enemy was trailing off into the woods beyond. Our tanks were sent on to harry the retreat. In town one of our tank destroyers was in the process of taking a post to block the road from the Southwest when an enemy motorcyclist came barging around the corner to excite celebrating civilians, but alert soldiers in the streets gathered him in.

The Third Battalion entered GY without resistance.

The Regiment with elements at vital road intersections now secured a line all the way from ST VIT to BUCEY and was placed in Corps reserve.

On 11 September 1944 two side missions were undertaken to the Northwest. The Battalion executive officers of the First and Third Battalions were entrusted with command practice on parallel missions to GRAY. TASK FORCE MINOR (Major JAMES L. MINOR, Executive Officer, First Battalion) and TASK FORCE SIMPSON (Major EVERETT S. SIMPSON, Executive Officer, Third Battalion), as these were fashionably labeled, each consisted of reinforced companies from the respective Battalions, augmented by the Battalions complement of armor and a platoon of reconnaissance troops.

West of ANGIPEY, a town which the First Battalion force found burned, the force closed with the enemy manning two road blocks. A terse message reported this action: "Run into about one hundred fifty (150) Germans with self-propelled guns at SAUVIGNESY-LES-ANGIRRY. Am dealing accordingly". "Accordingly", proved to mean that the enemy was routed, leaving some killed no prisoners. Both forces reached the outskirts of GRAY, then, as planned, awaited further instructions. Civilians reported the Germans evacuating the town so the reconnaissance platoon of the First Battalion Force was ordered in to investigate. They arrived in time to watch the blowing of the bridge in GRAY across the SAONE while the enemy fled North. Further reconnaissance showed that bridges to the Northwest at RIGNY and QUITTEUR were also destroyed. Both forces returned to the Battalion areas by evening.

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At 2000 hours, orders were received relieving the Second Battalion from its security mission and directing that it assemble at BUCKY. At midnight the entire Regiment was ordered to assemble at PRETIGNEY as soon as possible on the 12th, prepared for further movement North to VESOUL.

By mid-morning the Regiment moved into PRETIGNEY. Other elements of Division had previously cleared this and the Division Command Post had even been established farther to the North at ANDELARRE. The 143rd Infantry and 141st Infantry were closing on VESOUL. After dinner the Regiment was ordered to the vicinity of ANDELARRE and took off-the-road assembly areas near the sister town of ANDALARROT.

A period of waiting to move on a moment's notice extended beyond one whole day. Meanwhile, two (2) things of note took place. First, the troops were paid their last month's due. There hadn't been time for that before. Second, the Regiment lost its able First Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel ELLIOTT W. AMICK, youthful but senior in length of command, who was sent to pull together a stricken Battalion of the 141st Infantry. (Three (3) days later Lieutenant Colonel Amick was seriously wounded in battle.) Major JAMES L. MINOR, Battalion Executive Officer, was placed in command of the First Battalion.

Had the men known what trials lay in store for them for the next fifteen (15) days, as they moved out of ANDALARROT in the pitch black of a steady rain at 0300 on the morning of the 14th, many would have shrunk from it. But good soldiers endure hardship and these next days brought back the reality of war as had not yet been experienced in Southern FRANCE. The rain that morning was characteristic of the whole period. But for brief lapses, the rain and dampness, and with it cold, was continuous; cases of trench foot cropped out again. Exhaustion from exposure mounted. Colds were normal. But with this weather, the enemy took advantage. With armor limited to roads, he felled trees to make innumerable road blocks. Under the cover of darkness he moved in his artillery in strength. In rain and fog his infantry was able to infiltrate both to strengthen his own positions and to harass our own. Biding time, he regathered and regrouped his routed army and turned it back to stem the advancing tide in the dense wooded hills of the VOSGES.

With LUXEUIL as prime Divisional objective, the 142d Infantry was given the mission of advancing generally Northeast along the SAULX-DE-VESOUL - ST SAUVEUR road, on the right of the 143rd Infantry. This sector did not

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include the city itself but followed a course to the South and East to isolate the town by cutting the roads on the East.

Our First Battalion, as lead Battalion, detrucked at SAULX-DE-VESOUL at break of day and pushed on up the main road. By 0900 they had marched to BROTTÉ-LES-LUXEUIL with minor skirmishes at the road crossing near SERVIGNÉY and at the junction of the road East to BROTTÉ. At the cross-road a mile East of BROTTÉ they had just arrived when an enemy group of three (3) speeding busloads and several sedans heading North came on the scene. One (1) of the group hailed to one (1) of our tanks to make room. The reply was a deadly blast that crashed into one of the buses. The enemy force was scattered. After a brief exchange, one hundred (100) were taken prisoner, fifty (50) were left killed and eleven (11) enemy vehicles were destroyed. The First Battalion held up here until the Third Battalion came abreast.

The Third Battalion moved East out of SAULX-DE-VESOUL, then turned to the Northeast along a parallel route of secondary roads. At BETONCOURT the Battalion turned East to follow the line of woods. At about noon, and continuing for several hours during the afternoon Company "I" in the lead chased enemy infantry over the rolling hills to DAMBENOIT. This was facing almost South. While Company "I" was engaged in clearing DAMBENOIT, sending back several groups of prisoners impressive in size, (Company "I" alone gathered in one hundred sixty (160) that afternoon), enemy self-propelled weapons opened up suddenly on the exposed Battalion flank from the vicinity of CITERS. Among several casualties inflicted on the rest of the Battalion coming to the front was the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel MARVIN J. COYLE. Major EVERETT S. SIMPSON, Battalion Executive Officer, assumed command and pressed the attack from DAMBENOIT, after it was cleared, to CITERS.

The Second Battalion, following the Third up from SAULX-DE-VESOUL to BETONCOURT was ordered North to attack BAUDONCOURT. It bogged down a mile South of its objective as enemy infantry, dug-in on both banks of the small stream South of town, opposed the entrance with intense small arms fire.

The First Battalion, continuing East during the afternoon, found AILLONCOURT clear and cut the main LUXEUIL - LURE road in two (2) places, establishing road blocks at coordinates K-044174 (1/100,000 Map), two (2) miles Southeast of LUXEUIL, and at K-059150, about another mile below, holding these positions for the night.

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The Third Battalion, with DAMBENOIT clear at 1715, advanced on CITERS receiving small arms, 20mm anti-aircraft and some self-propelled fire from the vicinity of this town where the houses line one street, until a sub-community, FAUBOURG, is joined. The Battalion gained about half the length before halting for the night, short of its intention to reach the main road.

On the morning of the 15th the Second Battalion attack on BAUDONCOURT was of first concern. At 0900 the Battalion, delayed in starting, entered the town after only token resistance by the enemy who had evacuated during the night and early morning.

The right flank of the Third Battalion at FAUBOURG caused repeated trouble during the morning. The enemy fire came from the vicinity of QUERS which was in the 3rd Division sector, and which, we were assured, would be taken care of by them. But if the harassment was under control, it was not stopped. A lone enemy self-propelled weapon succeeded in knocking out one of our artillery howitzers emplaced near DAMBENOIT, and shelled the road junction at FAUBOURG. Leaving this sore spot to the 3rd Division, the Third Battalion rapidly pushed on across the LUXEUIL - LURE highway and railroad to reach the small settlement of BOIS DERRIERE at 1130 where enemy infantry with an anti-tank gun was contacted.

reorganized during PM of 15th

The First Battalion was ordered South from its road block positions to follow the Third East from the junction at FAUBOURG, and the Second Battalion was ordered from BAUDONCOURT to follow the First Battalion.

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From BOIS DERRIERE, North to the junction of the RIGNOVELLE - ST SAUVEUR road the three (3) Battalions were directed to objectives on three (3) parallel routes; The Third Battalion North to the high ground at K-069220, the First Battalion North through ESBOZ-EREST, then West to a point west of FROIDECONCHE; the Second Battalion along the main road Northwest through EREST to ST SAUVEUR. Meeting only scattered resistance, the Battalions pressed on, again through a moonless black night, through forests even blacker; the First Battalion to reach its objective before daylight, the Third to gain its objective at 0900, the Second having to halt at K-054194 before daylight. By mid-morning the First Battalion had entered FROIDECONCHE and the Second Battalion had occupied ST SAUVEUR. LUXEUIL was entered about the same time by the 143rd Infantry from the Southwest, thus securing the Divisional objective. While the troops paused for rest reconnaissance elements were sent on the roads to RADDON and FOUGEROLLES.

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On the morning of the 17th the First and Third Battalions jumped off to attack Northeast through a dense wooded area, while on the right the 30th Infantry of the 3rd Division, attempted to take RADDON. It had rained the previous day and it was raining again this morning. Only two (2) trails, and these were very poor ones, were passable for the transportation and armor which accompanied the columns.

The First Battalion, proceeding North from the road junction at K-051220 progressed to a point near the trail crossing at K-050254 where contact with the enemy was made. The Battalion from here had to slash its way through groups of Germans hidden in the underbrush until the clearing at K-063260 was reached. Strong enemy fire, including mortar and 20mm coming from the cluster of houses at CHAPENDU held up the advance. Company "B" was then sent to flank and take out that strong point of resistance, traveling around to the right under cover of the woods. After Company "B" had left on its mission a counterattack aimed at the main body was thrown back. Some, coming upon the motor column along the trail, were dispersed by .50 caliber machine gun fire. Tanks and tank destroyers struggled to get forward and almost mired in the attempt, but with their appearance the enemy was chased back. By nightfall the Battalion had worked its way through to LES FORGES. Along the way thirty (30) dead Germans, nearly all killed singly by rifle fire, offered somber testimony to the kind of battle that had been waged.

The Third Battalion found itself stymied by two (2) road blocks, one at a junction of its route North at K-078238 and another up the trail at K-076247. At the same time the 3rd Division attack on RADDON was stopped which did not ease the situation in our Third Battalion sector. Finally a company was sent to take the high ground Northeast of the junction at K-080243. The road block was cleared--a 77mm anti-tank gun was destroyed--and for the night the Battalion took defensive positions South of CHAPENDU.

In the afternoon the Second Battalion was ordered up from ST SAUVEUR to assist the Third Battalion, then, when that situation cleared, was given the mission of taking RADDON from the high ground on the North, going into position to launch the attack at daybreak in the morning. In darkness so black that the men in the columns kept together only by holding on to the man in front, the Battalion crossed the wooded ridge. A few German rat-pistols spoke in the night but the Battalion took its position and in the morning found that the town had been evacuated. During the night enemy forces including tanks and self-propelled guns escaped from pockets at RADDON and CHAPENDU.

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Holding the LES FORGES - CHAPENDU - RADDON line for two (2) days, both motorized and foot patrol reconnaissance to the front was made. The I & R Platoon probing in the direction of REMIREMONT, found VAL D'AJOL clear and reached a point nearly to LE-GIRMONT-VAL-D'AJOL. The 36th Reconnaissance Troops going toward FAUCOGNEY, entered that town to find bridges blown and received enemy self-propelled weapons fire while there. French reports from behind the lines indicated the Germans were concentrating around REMIREMONT, preparing many road blocks and defensive positions.

On 19 September 1944, at 1410, Major General DAHLQUIST called and ordered one (1) Battalion with the 132d Field Artillery in support, to begin movement in forty-five (45) minutes on REMIREMONT. The Third Battalion was given this mission, and proceeded by way of FOUGEROLLES and PLOMBIERES, then North to the road crossing at K-095435, where it turned East to strike at REMIREMONT from the West. The Battalion detrucked in the vicinity of the crossroads and advance elements reached a point at K-149439.

Next morning the First and Second Battalions moved up to close on REMIREMONT from the South; the Second Battalion on an axis along the main VAL D'AJOL - REMIREMONT road; the First Battalion generally parallel on secondary roads from VAL D'AJOL to the right through LE-GIRMONT-VAL-D'AJOL.

The actions of the three (3) Battalions, though related, may be considered separately:

4 The mission of the Third Battalion included the reduction of the Fort West of REMIREMONT, entering and clearing the town. Major SIMPSON, commanding the Third Battalion, elected to take a more covered approach than the open ground along that assigned. He therefore swung the Battalion to the right along the FORET-DU-HUMONT, thence Northeast on the road from PLOMBIERES and first contacted the enemy in strength on a road block near the road junction at K-155731. This block was heavily constructed, over a hundred yards in depth. Enemy artillery was concentrated for defensive fires, too. By 1645, 20 September 1944, this had been reduced. The road from there into town runs along a defile. With enemy on the Northern ridge threatening the route of supply into town, a force of one (1) company was ordered to take them out on a flanking move to the left. On the right, though no fire was being received from the Fort, the area surrounding it was well covered by fire. Upon reaching the fort, men of the

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Battalion found it unmanned. Its use for our purposes was also thought to be of no advantage but one (1) company took positions near it. At the close of the 20th the Battalion dispositions were as follows: one (1) company on the Northwestern ridge of town at K-160445; one (1) company near the fort; one (1) company working its way to the high ground above town at K-167435.

The Second Battalion, coming up from the South, encountered its first enemy road block at K-153407 which after a brisk fight was reduced. Then a second one at K-159409. However, the enemy had only dropped back to a third one two hundred (200) yards beyond which proved more formidable. At these the road ran through a deep defile to which there were no turn-offs. Tall, heavy-set evergreens of the forest had been systematically felled, booby-trapped and mined to form each blockade. On either side the forests, the underbrush, and the steep slopes added to the effectiveness of the barrier. Within the woods it was impossible to use either artillery or mortars to do any good. Surging forward from the second block at daybreak on the 21st, in an attempt to filter past the third block on the left, Company "E" came upon more Jerries than they could handle in the woods at K-160420, and in the confusion and withdrawal which followed about a third of the company was lost. Company "F" was then sent deep to the right in an effort to get around the clearing. Near the trail crossing at K-177408 the company engaged an enemy group which returned 20mm fire. A number of the enemy, caught by surprise, were killed, but Company "F" was forced to go South toward the First Battalion in order to get out.

The First Battalion, on the 20th passed through LE-VAL-D'AJOL and HAMANXARD, beat back about thirty (30) enemy near CLAIREGOUTTE, and moved on LE-GIRMONT-VAL-D'AJOL, which after a sharp fight, was cleared at dark on the 20th. No less than sixteen (16) physical blocks had to be removed in and around LE GIRMONT. Pressing forward from LE GIRMONT on the 21st, after contacting the enemy at K-152389, the Battalion steadily fought and reduced successive road blocks until for the night it had reached K-180394.

Meanwhile, on the 21st, Company "I" of the Third Battalion early gained the high ground overlooking REMIREMONT at K-186436, where some concern was felt because the company was hemmed in by fire from three (3) sides--a large enemy force was still engaged in the pocket in front of the Second Battalion. But Colonel LYNCH ordered the company to hold its position with all-around defense. This it succeeded in doing, and from it supported effectively the slow but steady progress of the Battalion into the

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town. From this height also, artillery and mortars were directed on enemy vehicles attempting to escape in daylight across the bridge North of town. By nightfall of the 21st only a small portion of the town could be considered ours but even this and the ground we held was harassed by many snipers.

During the night of 20-21 September 1944, while the battle was locked around REMIREMONT, a first crossing of the MOSELLE was effected by the 141st Infantry to the North and on the Regimental left. Demonstrations were made by our Third Battalion in its sector. During the day the forces across the river were built up including troops of the 141st and 143rd Infantry Regiments. ELOYES was seized and on the 22nd movement South to the high ground Northeast of REMIREMONT was begun.

On 22 September 1944, Company "B" of the 142d Infantry was ordered to clear out an enemy road block at MOULIN, Northwest of REMIREMONT, in order to facilitate passage of heavy engineer bridging equipment. Company "B" was trucked from the First Battalion to a point near FALLIERE, where it circled to the North and East and accomplished its mission. Company "B" then took positions on the Northwest of REMIREMONT to support the Third Battalion.

On the 22nd, while the Third Battalion increased its pressure within the town to claim by nightfall two-thirds (2/3) of it, the First Battalion, from K-180394, advanced against light resistance, then lost contact and moved on to take its objective at K-180425. From there Company "C" was sent to cut the Eastern road out of REMIREMONT and a platoon of the Battalion went to the edge of the woods at K-170425 to help break the hold-up of the Second Battalion. The Second Battalion dispatched Company "F" far to the left this time, and Company "F" was able to work in behind the Germans at K-160423. Part of Company "G" got across the narrow opening at K-165418, thus forming a pincer on the resisting blockade.

By morning of the 23rd, the Germans in and South of REMIREMONT had fled. During the night they had evacuated, leaving small groups for delaying, from the pocket in front of the Second Battalion, had crossed the river to the North and blown the bridge. Company "C" at its road block knocked out an enemy 88mm gun and two trucks. The few snipers left in town were cleared before noon. In pouring rain the Second Battalion entered from the South, the Third Battalion made its headquarters in the center of town and the First Battalion waited on the outskirts as flank security.

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Orders to move again came too soon for the men were already worn by the heat of this battle. Leaving the Third Battalion for security in REMIREMONT, the remainder of the Regiment moved North on foot to cross the MOSELLE river on the temporary pontoon bridge at V-164417. The recent rains had swollen the river, and the approaches on both sides, deep-rutted and miry, were almost impassable for traffic heavier than one-quarter (1/4) ton. The rain continued through the night. It was early morning, before daylight, before the First and Second Battalions closed into their assembly areas at V-185425 and V-196440 preparatory to continuing the advance Northeast to enlarge the MOSELLE bridgehead.

A new phase was about to begin. In the words of old-line veterans of bitter ITALIAN battle experience it was as tough, if not tougher, than any they had known. No big news or fancy write-ups would come of it. No great gains were made. The going was hard, the ground rugged, mountainous, thickly covered with foliage, the weather intolerably rainy and cold, the enemy striking back with heavy artillery barrages and infesting the broad sector of advance with persistent infiltration of infantry. Casualties, the greater number non-battle resulting from extreme fatigue--exhaustion, foot trouble, respiratory cases--were heavy, reducing company strengths to a nub. The gallantry of our men in the face of these factors was unsurpassed. What solid accomplishment the Regiment did make was the protection of the Division right flank and a large share in enlarging and securing the MOSELLE bridgehead.

While a series of anti-tank road blocks held on the Regimental right, the First and Second Battalions jumped off toward objectives; First Battalion, high ground at V-237472; Second Battalion, the village of TENDON and the high ground at V-225477. To cross the mountain mass between ELOYES and the TENDON - THOLY road, a single little-used cart trail out of ELOYES was the only route of supply. This served the Second Battalion straight through to TENDON. Another trail branching East from it at V-177453 was the only one feasible for the First Battalion. Both were miserably poor, could not contain armor and even jeep traffic was laborious and grinding.

During the 24th, against increasing resistance, and slowed by rains, the Second Battalion reached vantage ground around TENDON, with Company "F" across the road at V-216465, Company "G" on the ridge at V-209465 and Company "E" to the North at V-2148. Before dark an estimated four hundred (400) to six hundred (600) Germans were seen in the town and our artillery was directed upon them. For the night Company "F" established a road block

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South of town and the remainder of the Battalion organized on the ridge to the Southwest.

The First Battalion out the TENDON- THOLY road at V-233450, met heavy resistance there including artillery, and threw off a strong enemy attack from the South before stopping for the night in that vicinity.

In order to strengthen vulnerable forces at the road blocks Colonel LYNCH had requested and obtained permission during the afternoon to bring one (1) company, Company "I", from the Third Battalion in REMIREMONT, to a block at V-200425, which arrived on position by dark. In the morning one (1) platoon of Company "I" was sent to the block at V-214438. Two (2) platoons of Company "A", one at each of these blocks, were thus relieved and sent to rejoin the First Battalion.

On the 25th, while the Second Battalion maneuvered to close on TENDON still meeting resistance from within, and the First Battalion plugged farther against strong enemy fire toward its objective, a planned enemy attack was launched against the Company "I", Anti-Tank road block at V-200425, preceded by artillery and mortar fire. One (1) of our anti-tank guns was knocked out and first reports called for an ambulance with aid men, indicating casualties. This began around 1245. Colonel LYNCH ordered the Regimental MP Platoon of twenty-five (25) men, the only reserve readily available, to move to the scene. The 141st Infantry was called and its Commanding Officer asked to send support from its Cannon Company located fifteen hundred (1500) yards to the West, to a point about five hundred (500) yards in rear of the block to forestall a possible breakthrough. Division ordered one (1) Company of the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry to reserve under 142d control (this was withdrawn after the next development). Then the remainder of the Third Battalion, 142d Infantry was released from Division at REMIREMONT and arrangements were made to hastily transport them to the threatened area. An attack against another block at V-193420 forced it to draw in its line. The fighting continued throughout the remaining daylight period. Visibility was poor, allowing the enemy to come in close to our positions.

Frequent counterattacks continued to hamper the movement of the First Battalion. The Germans filtered onto the Battalion's exposed flank and cut their route of supply, forming a block on it. Resistance from TENDON in front of the Second Battalion was still determined. Reports of large enemy concentrations and a column of one hundred (100) artillery vehicles entering

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LE THOLY were given by reliable French sources. With these in mind, and in particular, the fact that much needed supply to the First Battalion could not be effected, and with the existing danger on the right, Colonel LYNCH, with the approval of Major General DAHLQUIST ordered the withdrawal of the First and Second Battalions to favorable defensive positions in order to close-in our lines and to make resupply. A reinforced platoon from each Battalion was to remain in the advanced positions to screen the withdrawal and stay there until forced back.

Despite the precariousness of the situation many of the men were saddened at having to give up the gains that had been made but the decision was deliberate and necessary under the circumstances.

In the night the Second Battalion returned to take positions on the nose at V-185465. One (1) company of the Second Battalion moved to Regimental reserve at V-185440.

Just before dark, the Third Battalion, in its assembly area at V-185425 received a heavy shelling.

In the morning the First Battalion had to fight its way back, coming up against an estimated one hundred fifty (150) Germans on the block they had established on the First Battalion supply route. But the Battalion got through and took its position on Hill 769 at V-200445.

Our Third Battalion was active during the day, clearing the valley in the V-2042 area. Arrangements were made for the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry to relieve the Third Battalion, 142d Infantry, thus allowing us to push the three (3) Battalions to the front when the attack was resumed.

During all of this time the rain persisted.

Near evening of the 26th, a report from a lone GI who had wandered into TENDON and claimed to have found it emptied of Germans, prompted a patrol for investigation. This patrol, under Captain (then First Lieutenant) JOE W. GILL, Commanding Officer, Company "G", 142d Infantry, after receiving self-propelled weapons fire from the town and sighting an estimated two (2) platoons of infantry, returned.

In the attack of the 27th the mission of the Regiment was to concentrate on taking TENDON. It was planned for the Second Battalion to take

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positions, as before, to the Southeast and Southwest of the town while the First Battalion passed through to the town proper in force. The Third Battalion was ordered to establish a road block at V-223456 and to organize positions on the slopes of Hill 827.

The attack of the 27th progressed favorably for the Second Battalion. First a platoon and then the whole company of Company "E" worked into TENDON on the North. At 1500 the Germans were trying to get out to the South. The Second Battalion had been given the go-ahead signal when their position appeared to better advantage, while the First Battalion had had to stop to reorganize when the enemy sprang a sudden attack upon the center of its column. The Third Battalion, advancing toward the road, became subjected to a terrific enemy artillery and mortar shelling, and their attack was further disrupted when the Battalion Commander, Major SIMPSON and his S-3, Captain JAMES R. LOWERY, were wounded. To take hold of this situation, Colonel LYNCH ordered Major ROSS (NMI) YOUNG to assume command of the Battalion, and obtained Captain JOHN B. HUNLEY, formerly Assistant Regimental S-3, from Division G-3, to assist in the Battalion's staff duties. For the night, the Second Battalion occupied TENDON and the hill to the East; the First Battalion reached its objective, the North slopes of Hill 728 at V-225483, but supply up the trail could not be made as the Germans still covered the route; the Third Battalion dug-in short of the TENDON - THOLY road at V-216442, still receiving heavy concentrations of artillery.

For the 28th, the First Battalion was ordered to open its supply line and to police the woods in its area. Later two (2) companies were ordered to attack Hill 827 along the North slopes of the ridge line, while the Second Battalion attacked Hill 827 from the West and the Third Battalion was given the mission of reducing an enemy block at V-223456 and to attack Hill 827 from the Southwest.

Policing or advancing through the wooded areas on these hills was far more difficult than appears on the map. The Germans hid out, or infiltrated back into areas already cleared. A sinister German trick was encountered by our First Battalion--booby-trapping of their own dead.

The Second Battalion, with supporting tanks and tank destroyers, reached the clearing at V-222462 in its attack to Hill 827, then held up there until dark because the Germans covered the open ground by strong fire. The Third Battalion unwisely by-passed the enemy block crossing the road to reach the same clearing. At midnight both Battalions surged across the open fields

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and by daylight the Second Battalion had gained the top, while the Third Battalion took the Southern slopes. The First Battalion reached V-232480 along the North tree line, fighting hard all the way.

An attack by two (2) Battalions of the 141st Infantry up the valley to the left of our First Battalion toward HOUX and LAVELINE at daylight of the 29th was thrown back by heavy enemy artillery concentrations. An enemy Field Artillery observer captured by our First Battalion revealed that the four (4) Battalions of the 198th Division Artillery had moved into our sector. Their guns which had been virtually destroyed at MONTELIBAR had been replaced by new ones, though batteries now consisted of three (3) in place of four (4) guns each. This was borne out by the unusually heavy barrages that the Germans were putting down.

Continuing towards Hill 827, the First Battalion had a stiff fight all the way. Casualties for the day mounted to eighty (80), cutting the Battalion strength down to a fraction of its strength. And these were burdened by extreme fatigue. Before night Company "B" was cut off from the rest of the Battalion, but digging-in to defend itself, it was able to rejoin the Battalion on the morning of the 30th.

The Second Battalion improved its positions around Hill 827 on the 29th, while Companies "K" and "L" of the Third Battalion were ordered back to knock out the enemy road block on the TENDON - THOLY road. This proved to be a hard nut to crack. Our artillery was poured on it heavily but when the infantry came in the Germans were still there and ready. Several attempts to reduce the block by artillery alone did not avail. A coordinated attack of the Third Battalion on the evening of the 30th again was fruitless. The Germans clung to their positions.

Colonel LYNCH had been nursing a cold for several days. By the 30th it had taken a turn for the worse. Laryngitis had set in, causing loss of voice. On that morning Brigadier General ROBERT I. STACK, Assistant Division Commander, 36th Infantry Division, ordered Colonel LYNCH back to the rear to recover. The General himself took over the immediate command of the Regiment.

With the situation on Hill 827 cleared up the General laid down arrangements whereby Companies "A" and "C" would be relieved from the hill before dark. Company "B" was to remain, being attached to the Second Battalion in defense of the sector, and it was planned that Company "B" would

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be relieved on the following day when the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry would extend its positions to include Hill 827.

But the hopes, highly set, were dashed for the day when at noon, Company "G" received a strong enemy attack on the crest of Hill 827. Company "B", advancing to take positions on Company "G"'s left found Germans already there, digging in. Company "G" held its ground in a fight which lasted for nearly three (3) hours. Prisoners stated that four (4) companies had engaged in the attack. To take care of the threat on Company "G"'s left, both Company "G" and Company "B" pulled back a safe distance for the night and our artillery was placed on the German occupied area. By morning the Germans had abandoned their positions.

With Companies "B" and "G" in contact with the enemy at twilight of the 30th it was impossible to effect the intended relief. Tired men hung on yet another day.

A great deal had happened in September. Long distances had been covered. The pursuit had been continuous, rapid at first and rolling, but at the last slow and plodding. The power and drive of the early stages had been spent before the month's end, and the men, though weary and worn as they had not known it before, were not beaten or losing, but edged forward, forcing the Germans back into the hills that guard their country's frontier. September had brought a decided change in the weather. Continued rains and chilling cold gave a foretaste of approaching winter. The war too for the moment had changed. From easy-going motorized advances the campaign for Southern FRANCE passed into a bitterly contested battle to cross the border into GERMANY. The mountains, the rains, and the old stone houses became reminiscent of the fighting in ITALY. LYON had been entered, the river obstacles of the RHONE and the DOUBS had been crossed. Sharp fighting began at ST VIT, across the DOUBS. It occurred again South of LUXEUIL, increased at RADDON, toughened before REMIREMONT, was its hardest around TENDON. Again, this cost the Regiment some of its best and most familiar faces. Our strength had been severely depleted by the fierceness of the sustained action during the latter part of the month. These days of September 1944 will brighten the pages of our unit journal as representative of rare courage and extreme fortitude in the face of a determined and fanatical resistance and adverse conditions of weather.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
S/Sgt., 142d Infantry
Author.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1944

When, on 1 October 1944, the men of the First and Second Battalions trudged down the winding, muddy, rock-pocked jeep trail which was their single route of supply to the wilderness of Hill 827, the strain of hard fighting and exposure to continued rain and cold was plainly written in their tired, musty-eyed, bearded faces and marked the weary shuffle of wet feet. These were the men who had come up from the beaches of Southern FRANCE, and who had for the past fifteen (15) days ceaselessly plunged forward against toughening enemy resistance at LORVILLE, at REMIREMONT, and in the woodlands around TENDON, where extricating Germans seemed to be a never-ending task. There were far less of these men than had started. Battle casualties had been numerous, while the exhausting conditions of battle and the inclement weather that accompanied it, had similarly taken its toll. The Regimental strength physically was at low ebb. It was sorely in need of a rest. But, for lack of troops and the urgency of the situation, even a rest had to be qualified. During the month of October, with but limited intervals out of the line, a unit at a time, the Regiment was committed to the defense of a line extending at one time for a length of thirteen thousand (13,000) yards. The character of this mission was not so much defensive as it was a stabilizing of the previously uninterrupted advance of our forces. The enemy to our front, themselves in a desperate circumstance and weak in numbers, presented the great threat to our defense and only on occasion attempted to take limited objectives. They had to be content merely with holding the ground they possessed or in making an advance on our part costly. The initiative was still with us. Our strength was spread thinly on a broad front, biding time to obtain rest, receive replacements, and to rebuild, veiling these intentions with aggressive patrol action and attacks of platoon-size to the front keeping the enemy on guard for a possible main effort and in the course of the action destroying some of his forces. One incidental result during this period was that recruits received a thorough battle indoctrination including active patrolling.

While our line remained stationary, the other two (2) Regiments of the Division augmented the attack of the fresh 442d Regimental Combat Team,

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comprised of Japanese - Americans, on the Division's left, through BRUYERES and toward ST. DIE. After the fall of BRUYERES, gains made in this sector were further exploited by switching the 3d Division from South of the 36th Division (the 142d Infantry extended its sector to include that of the 50th Infantry, 3d Division) to pour through the gap and fan out to the Northeast.

Much rain with damp fog occurred during October. By the last of the month a crisp cold was evidenced by morning frosts. The clear weather brought our planes out in support. But, it also gave Jerry observation, and around the supply and communication line near BOUX and LAVELINE-DU-BOUX, his artillery found a favorite target.

On 1 October, the Regiment was engaged Southeast of YENDON, the First Battalion having cleared the long ridge from Hill 728 to Hill 827; the Second Battalion on the crest of Hill 827 having repulsed a German attack the afternoon before; the Third Battalion endeavoring to reduce a persistent German road block on the main YENDON - THOLI road near LE BRUX. Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander, 142d Infantry, was at the rear recovering from a cold and the Regiment, for the time being, was under the command of Brigadier General ROBERT I. STAGG, Assistant Division Commander. A relief of the First Battalion planned for the previous day had been postponed when the Germans staged an attack against our positions on Hill 827 which was driven off after a three-hour fight. However, one enemy group had succeeded in occupying undefended ground on the North close to Company "G", the left flank of the Second Battalion. During the night Company "G" pulled back a safe distance and the area was heavily shelled. By morning the Germans had abandoned their positions, and Company "G", occupying the ground, found unmanned enemy machine guns sited and ready to fire.

With the situation in hand on 1 October, the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry at 1600, began taking over the defense of Hill 827, relieving our First and Second Battalions, which returned to assembly areas in the vicinity of YENDON. The Third Battalion of the 141st Infantry became attached to the 142d Infantry, responsible for this sector.

Early on the morning of 1 October, the Third Battalion again closed on the German road block which had several times repelled attempts to take it. The night before, a terrific artillery pounding was laid upon the block, but when the Infantry came in they were once more thwarted in an attempt to dislodge the enemy. On this morning Company "I" and Company "J"

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flanked to the Northwest and fought for the high ground above it. Another heavy artillery concentration preceded the attack. The main point of enemy resistance centered around a group of houses at the road junction (coordinate V-228454). Company "I" and Company "J" attacked from LES CHERRIERES South along a winding trail, while tanks and tank destroyers, with engineers mounted, drove down the main road. The objective was finally attained at 1055, and Company "K" continued East along the sloping ground to the houses at the head of the draw at V-234457. The block itself extended in depth beyond the sharp bend in the road, and large trees had been felled crosswise to stop passage. Our engineers immediately set to work to clear the way but then the enemy countered with artillery and mortar barrages. During the afternoon and into the night work continued with tank dozers, which, with the loud thrashing of its engines, particularly in the still quiet of the night, repeatedly drew enemy fire. Two (2) tank dozers were disabled before work was stopped in the morning. Company "K" left an outpost at the point of its furthest advance, setting up a main line of defense North from the road junction at LE CREUL. Such a heavy blanket of German artillery fell on these positions that they were withdrawn to a similar line about four hundred (400) yards back. Until the 30th Infantry came abreast on the South, some enemy machine gun and mortar fire came from Hill 721. It is to be remembered that during this time the Third Battalion was in a very weakened condition.

Company "F" (reinforced) was called back to relieve the Third Battalion on the evening of 3 October.

On Hill 827 the enemy remained entrenched under cover of the heavy woods directly in front of the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry, positions. On the morning of 5 October this Battalion was ordered to attack East to clear the slopes and woods and to seize RUPP. But, little progress was made as the enemy held their ground behind a road wall.

At 0940 Brigadier General STACK ordered Lieutenant Colonel WILLIAM W. KILBOURNE, Commanding Officer, Second Battalion, to move his Battalion to an assembly area at LES CHERRIERES, ready to attack at 1600 East around the wooded edge of Hill 827, then North toward RUPP.

At noon, word was received from Major General JOHN E. DANLIQUIST, Division Commanding General, that the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry, was to be relieved that night as it was needed in the 141st Infantry sector to the North in fighting toward KERPIMONT. The First Battalion, 142d Infantry,

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was then alerted to be ready to relieve the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry, by night. In the meantime, the attack of the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry, was to continue, but no material progress was attained during the course of the afternoon.

Company "G", leading the Second Battalion, 142d Infantry, attack, shot out to the front, crossed the Southeastern nose of Hill 827, flanked the Germans in front of the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry, and drew up on a ridge overlooking RUPT and REHAUPAL (at V-242466). Company "E", following Company "G" to the right rear, cleaned out an enemy machine gun nest, then closed with Company "G" on its forward position. A platoon of Company "F", in reserve, was ordered to guard the Southeastern nose of Hill 827. They were in process of taking up positions when a group of Germans, leaving the densely wooded area of Hill 827, came out to the Company "F" rear. Both sides were surprised. The Germans recovered and fled, except for one who was taken prisoner. A Second Battalion patrol to RUPT during the night found the houses occupied by the enemy.

By morning of 6 October, the First Battalion, 142d Infantry, had taken over positions of the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry. Bombing of the woods on Hill 827 continued throughout the day. Company "E" and Company "G" received stiff resistance in the woods South of RUPT and at night pulled back to positions of the night before.

On the 7th, Company "G", attacking East, again ran into strong enemy fire in the woods South of RUPT, but Company "E", sent South to infiltrate from V-242461 across the clearing East to the wooded "lobster glen", succeeded in getting one (1) squad across, but the second was stopped by machine gun fire from the house in the clearing to the Southeast. Company "A" and Company "B" were again held up on the left of Company "G". Company "C" remained on top of Hill 827. That afternoon Company "A" was sent on a wide flanking maneuver North under cover of the woods to the V-2476 grid, turning Southeast from there to strike parallel to the road to REHAUPAL. By nightfall Company "A" had reached the turning point and established defensive positions for the night.

At 1800 of 7 October, Brigadier General STACK left for the Division Command Post, and gave command of the Regiment to Lieutenant Colonel EDWARD S. GRAHAM, Executive Officer of the 142d Infantry.

A coordinated attack of the Second Battalion and Company "B" of the First Battalion was planned for 1830 of the 8th, the Second Battalion

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sending one (1) company across the open clearing to the "lobster clear" following closely an artillery preparation. Heavy weapons of Company "E" were dug-in to lend support, but the preparation of these positions forced a delay in the time of the attack one hour. Simultaneously Company "B" attacked Southeast from near RUPT. Company "E" raced for the "lobster clear" and made it. A platoon of Company "F" followed. A bitter fight raged, with the Company "F" platoon receiving strong enemy attacks in return. But, by night, a firm hold on the ground was secured. The lower point of the "clear" was outposted by Company "G", which also had been brought around from the North. Company "E" and Company "F" held positions along the draw within the "clear".

Company "A", on its flanking mission met stiff opposition from the long stretch of woods that thrusts South toward RUPT. During the night two (2) tanks were brought up to the Company "A" positions. Just the sound of them so disquieted the enemy that in the morning Company "A" was enabled to complete its mission without opposition.

Thus, on 9 October, mopping up of the assigned objectives was completed and a line of defense was established, running generally South along the 25 grid, West to the point of the "lobster clear" and the Southern base of Hill 827, then Southwest to the 142d Infantry Anti-Tank road block at LE CREUL. Contact with the 143d Infantry on the left on the LAVELINE - REHAUPAL road, which had previously been made, was retained. To the South and on the right, the 3d Division, closing on LE THOLY, was with the 30th Infantry, attempting to cut the TENDON - LE THOLY road near DEMENGESTAT.

On the nights of 10 and 11 October, this line was taken over by the Third Battalion, "A", "G", and "E" Companies being relieved the evening of the 10th; the remainder of the First and Second Battalions on the 11th, which returned to assembly areas in the vicinity of TENDON.

Colonel LYNCH returned to resume command of the Regiment on 12 October.

Before the First and Second Battalions, 142d Infantry, got under way with proposed training schedules (for troops out of line after forty-eight (48) hours), the call came to extend the Regimental sector to include that of the 143d Infantry and Company "G", 141st Infantry; a line North along the high ground short of REHAUPAL, CHAMPIRAY and JUSSARUPT. The First Battalion sector included the LAVELINE - REHAUPAL road, Hill 808, and North to the 50 grid line. The Second Battalion (less one (1) company in Regimental

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reserve) sector, on the left of the First Battalion, extended North to include Hill 676, West of JUSSARUPT. The relieved 143d Infantry and 141st Infantry then attacked together with the fresh 442d Infantry to take BRUYERE.

On 19 October the Second Battalion, 141st Infantry, pushed out to take the wooded triangle North of JUSSARUPT, and was then attached to the 142d Infantry. Its left boundary included a road block on the road from the Northeast running into captured HERPELMONT.

Two (2) days later, 21 October, the Second Battalion, 142d Infantry, broadened its front to relieve the Second Battalion, 141st Infantry.

The following day, or rather, during the night of 22-23 October, four thousand (4,000) yards more were added to the Regimental line. Company "B", 111th Engineers, and the 36th Reconnaissance Company were attached, and each of these companies relieved a battalion of the 30th Infantry. From HERPELMONT to LA FORGE, where French forces on the right held a road block, the line approximated thirteen thousand (13,000) yards in length. The Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon backed up the two (2) attached companies in a reserve position. Later, on order, this platoon took over the position of Company "B", 111th Engineers. The Third Battalion with these attached units maintained control of the line from LA FORGE to REHAUPAL.

With the Divisional attack progressing well to the North, the holding force South from BRUYERE was combined on 25 October to include the 143d Regimental Combat Team and the 143d Regimental Combat Team, under the command of Brigadier General STACK, and called the "STACK FORCE". The situation remained virtually the same within the 142d Infantry set-up except that the Second Battalion was relieved by a battalion of the 143d Infantry, coming down the evening of 25 October.

Preparations were made beginning 27 October for an attack by the 142d Infantry and the 143d Infantry to seize limited objectives, generally the next ridge line from JUSSARUPT to DEMENGESTAT to include the towns of CHAMPDIRAY and REHAUPAL. Its purpose was to secure easier supply and communication routes which the JUSSARUPT - CHAMPDIRAY - REHAUPAL road would provide. Plans were drawn up, the First and Third Battalion Commanders made their reconnaissances, and all was ready for an "hour-to-be-announced" on 29 October, when a critical situation in the Divisional advance East of BRUYERE caused this attack to be postponed indefinitely on 28 October.

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The Second Battalion was ordered to LEPANGES on 30 October to be in Division reserve, ready to move on a two-hour alert. However, the following day, to give our Third Battalion a rest from the line, Colonel LYON ordered the Second Battalion to exchange places, the relief occurring the night of 31 October - 1 November.

The scene for the month of October, once the line was established, did not change much except for the broadening or contraction of the stage for the Regiment, while its individual characters, or battalions, shifted about variously to different sectors. JUSSARUPT, CHAMPIRAY and REHAUPAL became familiar question marks to nightly patrols. TRENDON, XAMONTARUPT, ST. JEAN, BOUX and LAVELINE were much-used landmarks for rear installations.

These hills in the VOSGES Mountains are well forested and in many places the underbrush is tangled and closely interwoven. But along the line of defense the forests had been cleared of the enemy and broken open ground faced to the front from JUSSARUPT to REHAUPAL. The Germans formed strongpoints around the scattered houses along the line and in the towns which our patrols regularly tested.

Our positions were carefully organized for defense. We first dug round fighting holes, then with the passing of time made shelters with overhead cover for protection against artillery fire, and dug-outs for groups of men to warm up and dry out in. Machine guns, including .50 caliber, with ground mounts, were sited to cover possible lanes of enemy approach. Because of the length of the line, only vital points were occupied and organized, the intervening spaces, sometimes lengthy, being covered by fire or patrols. Engineer wire was also employed around some isolated gun positions.

Patrolling to the front became a daily and systematized routine. It constituted the main combat action during the period and afforded invaluable training and experience particularly to the new men, but also for old-timers. By aggressive patrolling the enemy was kept guessing, some of larger size having the nature of or leading the enemy to believe that a full scale attack was in the offing. One morning, on such an occasion, the Germans laid down an intensive preparation of defensive artillery fires along the whole of our First Battalion front. Patrolling also determined enemy weak and strong points and kept a watchful eye on his intentions. Raiding parties and often regular patrols frequently inflicted severe casualties on the enemy to sap his strength.

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There are two (2) kinds of patrols. Reconnaissance patrols usually consist of three (3) to six (6) men whose mission is to follow a prescribed route, searching for enemy information or activity without engaging in a fight. Fighting or combat patrols went out in sufficient size, usually a squad or platoon, with a definite mission, but also prepared to engage any enemy along the way. Patrols and patrol routes were planned daily by the Regimental or Battalion's S-2. Patrol reports were summarized on a large air-photo map each morning and the information obtained forwarded to Division G-2.

Patrolling is a risky and sometimes eerie business. Once out in front of our own positions a sudden burst of fire may come from any quarter. A Company "I" combat patrol on 18 October went to search out a certain house in its sector. The patrol got to within fifty (50) yards of the house where an enemy sentry challenged. A brisk fire fight then followed -- a machine gun from one corner of the house, another from the edge of a nearby woods, small arms fire then rifle grenades from another direction, then mortar fire landing fifty (50) yards to the left, suddenly opened up -- yet the patrol got out without a casualty. But there were other times when our patrols worked in closely to German positions, without being discovered, to catch them by surprise.

Normal artillery support was restricted by an ammunition scarcity, resulting from the overburdened supply line. Cannon Company ammunition, though limited, was more available and frequently called for. Both artillery and cannon fires were carefully registered on defensive targets for emergency call. Battalion mortar fires strengthened further the defensive pattern.

An enemy strongpoint in a group of houses on a knoll North of REHAUPAL bothered the First Battalion several days. On 31 October an eight inch (8") howitzer was directed on the houses, demolishing them. Following this up, a party from Company "B" attacked and seized the ground. Then the Germans promptly counterattacked with about fifty (50) men. Our party had to fall back, but then with a second thrust succeeded in taking and securing the position, capturing twelve (12) prisoners in the fight.

The use of tanks was restricted by the terrain. They were brought up into position in anticipation of the planned attack of 29 October to lend direct fire support, but this action never developed.

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Close air support missions were flown when the weather allowed. A system in practice within the Corps directed fighter bombers to the target by field artillery observers in sub planes which hovered over or near the selected target, radioed the mission to the bombers as they circled the sub plane, and further indicated the target by firing an artillery smoke shell. This obviously obtained better accuracy and saved precious minutes in required time.

At the beginning of October the Regiment was at a severe handicap due to the casualties that had drained officers and non-commissioned officers from duty status. Over the period of time from SALERNO the ranks had been thoroughly culled to fill the vacancies on previous occasions and little qualified material remained. Replacements coming in therefore had every opportunity to show the spark that might make them responsible and able leaders within the Regiment. But at the month's end this condition remained much the same.

During the month eight hundred and seventeen (817) replacements were received and absorbed, and these along with returnees from the hospital built up the strength deficiency to an approximate one hundred and sixty (160) average per rifle company at the month's end. But in considering that figure, allowance must be made for the raw quality of green men and the difficulty of assimilating them directly under combat conditions. On the other hand, some of these undoubtedly profited by realistic first experiences. Casualties incurred during the month amounted to forty-four (44) enlisted men killed, seven (7) officers and three hundred and twenty (320) enlisted men wounded, and ten (10) enlisted men missing in action.

As the Battalions took their turn out of the line, though they were still assembled within enemy artillery range, every effort was made to make things comfortable under the prevailing conditions. Troops were bunked in houses. Showers and a fresh issue of clothing was supplied by the Regimental S-4, with the shower installation at IANONTARUFF. Movies and a recreation room were set up in TENDOL. Kitchens served hot meals.

Though supply during the month was eased by a stabilized line, a bulk of winter equipment for issue taxed its lengthy lines. The new type combat jacket, sweaters, and overcoat, blankets to bring the number to three (3) per man, a resupply of field jackets and raincoats, and a new type rubberized shoe pack, were among the items of issue for the month,

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in addition to the routine supply of rations, ammunition, and fuel.

An attempt to propagandize the Germans (and Russians which they were employing) to our front by the use of direct broadcast with a loud speaker system failed when mechanical difficulties interfered. Persuasive pamphlets with safe-conduct passes were hurled to the Germans by our artillery on several occasions. One morning three (3) Germans turned in bearing only one pass, wondering if that was sufficient for the three.

October then, was spent along a line of hills in the VOSGES. Action after the line was established, was confined to frequent and aggressive patrolling and raiding parties, while the Regiment variously held a broad front, and at the same time endeavored to build up a sorely depleted strength.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
S/Sgt., 142d Infantry
Author

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 1944

The 142d Infantry fought its way over and out of the VOSGES mountains in November to come within easy range of enemy soil and the RHINE River border. Starting slowly against bitter odds of weather and terrain in a push down the LES ROUGES SAUX River Valley, the fighting developed into a speeding race eastward across the hump of the mountain range and through the narrow ST MARIE AUX MINES pass to the broad RHINE River plain. Many obstacles were overcome and strong enemy defensive barriers broken down or out-manuevered. The clearing of the FORET DOMINALE DU CHAMP was the scene of hard sustained wilderness action. Around CORCIEUX the enemy became elusive in retreat, leaving a wake of charred destruction in the burning of entire villages. An all-night, all-day march from MANDRAY gained BAN DE LAVELINE and WISEMBACH. ST MARIE AUX MINES was taken by a flanking route that caught the Germans by surprise. Tough battles took place in ST CROIX and East of LIEPFRÉ. At the month's end the Regiment had won the last hill before the RHINE and had entered its first town in the plain, KINTZESIM.

At the opening of November two (2) battalions of the Regiment were holding a line in the VOSGES along the hill mass West of JUSSARUPT, South through REHAUPAL and DEMENGESTAT to LA FORGE. These positions with slight variations had remained virtually the same throughout the entire month of October.

But operations, which had for so long been in a state of static defense were formulating for offensive action. To the North, other elements of the Division, with the 442d Regimental Combat Team attached, had reached eastward from BRUYERES along the southern edge of the FORET DOMINALE DU CHAMP to a point in the southeastern tip above LA HOUSIERE. This made a considerable salient to the East from which it appeared advantageous to strike southward taking the trio of hills on that flank. But, after reconnaissance and plans for this mission had been made, the idea was abandoned for the moment in favor of a drive down the narrow valley from LES ROUGES SAUX to clean out the enemy in this sector.

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The Third Battalion had assembled in LE PANGES as Division reserve on 1 November. Relief of the Second Battalion by elements of the 141st Infantry was accomplished the following evening and the Battalion closed into TENDON until moving to the assembly area prior to the attack.

The 141st Infantry had secured a line generally astride the LES ROUGES RAUX River Valley at V345618 - V338613 - V335606. Passing through this, the 142d Infantry, with a battalion on either side of the valley, was to attack Southeast, clearing the high ground to the head of the valley. On the right this involved clearing out the opposition in front of the 442d Regimental Combat Team which held a line generally parallel to and Southwest of the valley.

The First Battalion remained in defensive position from JESSRUPT to REHADPAL and came under command of the STACK FORCE.

On the 4th the Second and Third Battalions moved into assembly positions East of LES ROUGES RAUX just back of the 141st Infantry line, the Second Battalion on the right. Artillery fire which reportedly had been light in the valley commenced before noon and continued to harass our entrance onto position until after dark.

The valley itself is a narrow flat bed and open clearing from two hundred (200) to four hundred (400) yards wide running through the heart of a densely wooded wilderness on sharply rising high ground to either side. Only a few houses dot the single valley road. Our troops in their advance had to avoid this minimum of open ground and pushed up and down over the numerous ridges under cover of the thickly forested areas. But this presented special difficulties. The going was slow, the fighting often from tree to tree, and a most terrifying effect was that of tree-burst artillery, crashing and splintering every which way. On the other hand the use of our own artillery and mortars was restricted on close-in shooting because of this type of terrain. But the hardest foe that made the fighting tough was the weather, as rain and mist and snow fell incessantly throughout the entire period of this action and casualties resulting from exposure, particularly trench foot, mounted to a high and costly toll. Troops had no means of drying wet feet even after several days of sustained dampness. There were no houses in which to take shelter in the deep wilderness and the forests dripped with rain, until, on the sixth and seventh days a blanket of wet snow whitened the ground and hung on the tree limbs to make a pretty picture but not the kind to fight a war in.

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Before the attack jumped off a squad of Engineers, with Infantry protection, in the early morning hours before daylight, moved four hundred (400) yards out in front of the most forward tank to sweep the road for mines. They came within sight of the road junction at MARMOSSA without drawing fire. This had previously been a defended point and as far as was known a road block still existed there.

To take this junction it was planned for Company "E" to make a wide envelopment to the Southwest, then to turn back to attack it from the hill between the fork at V344604. The Second Battalion was late for a scheduled 0800A jump-off on 5 November and it was nearly 1100A when Company "E" got into position to assault the road junction. On the way down the nose Company "E" became involved in strong fire coming from the base of the draw across the valley at V343607. Part of the Company was cut off. One platoon lost both its platoon leader and platoon sergeant leaving the men in a state of confusion, but they dropped back to 141st Infantry lines. The afternoon was nearly gone before Company "E" had succeeded in reorganizing and launched another attack, this time from the West. A tank and a tank destroyer, moving in to support this try were craftily knocked out near the junction itself by enemy bazooka fire. The issue at the road block was not decided that night.

Meanwhile Company "G", to the right of Company "E", and continuing Southwest had gained the Battalion's second assigned objective, the hill at V344604.

On the left side of the valley the Third Battalion advanced rapidly, making good progress against light opposition. It crossed Hills 699, 686 and 661, then by nightfall reached V355603.

On 6 November, Company "F" was given the mission of taking the road block. It advanced from the South and by 1215A had cleared the houses at the junction. Resistance was lighter than the day before. Companies "E" and "G", moving Southeast abreast, reached V348596 with Company "F" behind at V344600.

The Third Battalion, held up until ordered to move at 1030A, encountered stiff resistance including mortar and artillery at V358598 but by darkness had captured Hill 662 at V358598, a high knobbed hill that was an excellent Observation Post for enemy use, from which they could observe the entire valley to LES ROUGES SAUX.

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Mines were being used increasingly by the enemy as he dropped back. Engineers were constantly in demand and swept roads and trails immediately behind advancing troops. Even so, unavoidable contact with mines occurred. At 0200A of the morning of 7 November, within a few minutes both a tank destroyer and a jeep were blown up by separate deep-laid wooden box type ramp mines which had been undetectable on a previously swept and used road.

The attack Southeast was continued at 0800A on the 7th with the plan of attack changed to give the Second Battalion the mission of taking the ridge at V356574 after gaining objective at V353582 - Hill 645. The Third Battalion was given the mission of taking Hill 652 at V357597, which it had, and Hill 641 at V363588, organizing these for defense from the North, East and South, prepared to seize the initial Second Battalion objective, Hill 658 at V367683.

By 1220A Company "K" had taken Hill 641 and at 1620A had gone on to claim Hill 658. This series of hills was then organized for defense and a patrol sent to the North with a view to contacting the 7th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division, at V360604.

At 1450A the Second Battalion had gained its objective, Hill 645 at V353582. With orders to move on to a line V355570 - V360579 by dark, the Battalion pushed ahead but an uncoordinated advance from the West on the part of the 442d Regimental Combat Team across the path of the Second Battalion fouled the plan, so that in order to avoid a mixture of forces, the Second Battalion was halted for awhile, but at 1920A Company "F" reached the designated objective line.

While the Third Battalion maintained a defense of the northeastern and eastern slopes of Hills 652, 641 and 658, the Second Battalion again attacked Southeast toward objectives on the outer fringes of the forest and hill mass to a line V360562 - V366575 - V367575.

Strong resistance stopped the Second Battalion short of its objectives. Company "F" dug in for the night at V358586; Company "G" at V364569; Company "E" at V362577 with one platoon at V362575.

During the night 8-9 November, the First Battalion, which the night before had been relieved from control of the STACK FORCE in the REHAUPAL JUSSARUPT sector, came onto position to the right of the Second Battalion, relieving elements of the 442d Regimental Combat Team. These positions

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covered the southern slopes of the same hill mass. Company "A" took positions V353562 to V357564; Company "B" V348564 down nose to houses at V343561 with one platoon at V337567; Company "C" at V350563 along the forward slope of nose.

Patrols of the Third Battalion entered CHEVRY on 8 November and established contact with the 7th Infantry on its left.

The attack of the Second Battalion was resumed the morning of the 9th, though supply trains had not been able to reach Company "G" during the night. Opposition was again heavy. Company "G" received several attacks, was driven back a bit, then regained lost ground. Casualties cut its company strength down to eighty (80). Company "F" was caught in a heavy concentration of artillery and lost, for the moment at least, its power to advance. On the South, against Company "C" positions, the enemy launched what appeared to be an attack which was broken up by a call for our own defensive artillery fires.

But a small force, consisting of a platoon of Company "I" and a platoon of Company "K", ordered South from the Third Battalion to strike on the flank at the opposition in front of the Second Battalion, succeeded in its mission, cutting in behind the enemy, engaging in a prolonged fight until their ammunition was exhausted and the group leader, First Lieutenant RAYMOND T. LAHAR of Company "K" was wounded. Contact with this group was lost, resupply was not possible. It was not until the next day that the results of its work were realized. The two (2) platoons took shelter and organized a defense in a railroad tunnel nearby and next morning passed a note by a French civilian who carried it to our lines to reestablish contact.

For 10 November a pincers movement was planned, Companies "B" and "C" moving East from the left flank of the First Battalion to pass in front of Company "A" and contact Company "G" turning Southwest after reaching its objective. But it was soon discovered that the enemy had pulled out during the night. Assigned objectives were reached and cleared. Only a pocket of scattered resistance remained in front of Company "E" at V367566. Company "G" entered VANEMONT without contact and Company "B" chased a German patrol out of LA HOUSIERE in occupying this town.

In the afternoon the Third Battalion dropped back into Regimental

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reserve and the sector was divided between the First and Second Battalions.

This day, the 10th, marked a turning point that may be likened to reaching the crest of a hill and starting on the down-run. For over a month our troops had found advances costly and for a long while were forced to be content with defensive operations only. Weather and terrain had been bitterly against them while the enemy showed no inclination to yield to pressure. From this date however a weakening of the enemy was apparent. The line began to surge slowly forward until the chase assumed the proportions of the "good old days" -- the dash up the RHONE from the beaches.

As a general attack on the Division front to seize the pocket West of the line GRANGES - VIENVILLE - VANEMONT was being planned, a platoon of Company "C" worked South from LA ROUSIERE the night of 10-11 to establish itself on MT THIRIVILLE. They remained quietly undercover until attacking a group of houses behind them in the open on the North slopes of the hill during the day. The following night, 11-12 November, the remainder of Company "C" moved across the valley to join the Company "C" platoon. At dusk an enemy counterattack attempted to drive them off. Close hand-to-hand fighting occurred as Company "C" held its own and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy--from fifteen (15) to twenty (20) dead.

Also on 12 November Company "E" pushed out into the narrow neck of forest to the East and took positions at V372579, V369577 and V368573 without much trouble.

Tanks and tank destroyers began entering positions at night at the South base of the hill to be able to support the coming attack of the Regiment scheduled for 15 November. Several smoke generators were also placed to cover the valley with haze.

During the night 12-13 November, Company "A", less one (1) platoon, advanced across to MT THIRIVILLE, taking positions on the left of Company "C" at V342546.

The morning of 13 November, elements of the 442d Regimental Combat Team relieved the Second Battalion preparatory to that Battalion going into reserve for the attack of 15 November.

Patrols from the advanced positions probed far to the front and little contact was reported. When on 13 November daylight patrols from each of

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the three (3) companies of the First Battalion found no trace of the enemy on top of Hill 785, and at V343540 and V323547, it was decided to push out the First Battalion across the next valley that night, then in the morning for the Battalion to continue on to final objectives according to the original plan.

In the night the First Battalion assembled on the southern slopes of Hill 785 at V325540. At 0445A the Battalion jumped off and, meeting no resistance, occupied all objectives by 0630A; at V325533, V335526 and V330520. Fully a day ahead of schedule objectives of the planned attack had been realized.

Patrols from the First Battalion went nearly to CORCIEUX before gaining contact with the enemy.

The Third Battalion relieved the First Battalion during the night of 14-15 November and extended its sector left to VANEMONT. In the morning the Second Battalion by Division order began movement to relieve elements of the 143d Infantry on the right of the Third Battalion in the vicinity of GRANGES. After dark of 15 November the Third Battalion pushed out to take RENNEGOUTTE.

For the next several days, in the face of an evident withdrawal or weakening of the enemy, a policy of thrusting outward with patrols and then following up with occupying forces in points not being defended by the enemy was pursued.

Early in the evening of 15 November the sharp glare of fires burning began to dot the horizon and the cloud-covered sky glowed in reflection. First fires were reported within CORCIEUX. These extended North to LES COURS. Similar reports came in from other sectors on the Army front as this wholesale arson flared both North and South and in depth to the East.

Company "I" moved into MARLEMONT at midnight of 16-17 November. House-to-house fighting here continued throughout the day. The enemy had left a company in the town as a delaying force. Some thirty (30) prisoners were taken before it was finally cleared out.

Patrols had entered BARBEY SEROUX and reached VICHIBURE during the night. The Germans applied the torch to BARBEY SEROUX after dark of 16 November. On the 17th the Second Battalion pushed out to occupy BARBEY

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SEROUX without opposition in the afternoon. A patrol from Company "I" entered destroyed CORCIEUX during the night 17-18 November and found no enemy there. By noon of the 18th a platoon from Company "L" had established all-round defense in CORCIEUL. Company "F" consolidated South of MARIEMONT.

By this time a serious withdrawal of the enemy was obvious. A larger jump was undertaken for the next twenty-four (24) hour period. The remainder of Company "L" closed on CORCIEUX after dark of 18 November while Company "K" moved from LA HOUSSIERE southeasterly through LES COURS to CORCIEUL. At first light of morning Company "L" continued East to mount Hill 640 at V384522 and Hill 666 at V388626 without contact. At the same time the 143d Infantry was proceeding down the ridge from LA COTE to link up with the Company "L" force.

Late on 17 November a Second Battalion reconnaissance patrol had gone cross-country to BANBOIS. During the night 17-18 November LA CHARMEILLE and VICHIBURE, South of CORCIEUL, were both occupied. In the morning these gains were extended to RAMBAVILLE and another force swept the two (2) hills just West of BANBOIS and entered both BANBOIS and GERBEPAL. FLADIFRE and FOUYE were also taken by the Second Battalion. From the advanced Company "L" position a patrol went as far as LES GRANGES (V4252) to observe out into the MEURTHE River Valley. It had been known that the Germans had been preparing for sometime a winter line along the East bank of the MEURTHE and the large-scale burning of whole towns in front of that line was part of a plan to deny the advancing Allies shelter in the cold winter months. A thorough job had been done but now it was too late and needless destruction. The onrushing troops were bent in shoving on through. Serious breakthroughs, both North and South, by the FIRST French Army at BELFORT, and the SEVENTH Army in the SAVERNE pass were causing a cave-in in the center of the line as this pressure was being exerted.

In the midst of this moving situation the 142d Infantry was relieved from the line for intended rest and training. This was much needed, in view of the bitter fighting down the LES ROUGES SAUX Valley, but was to be cut short when the situation continued to roll and demand active participation of all available troops.

By noon of 20 November, after the 141st Infantry had passed through to continue the attack East, the Regiment dropped back to reserve areas, the Second Battalion at JUSSARUPT and the Third Battalion at HERPELMONT.

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The First Battalion remained in LES POULIERES. The Regimental Command Post was established at LAVELINE DEVANT BRUYERES. Here the intended customary forty-eight (48) hour allowance for rest and showers upon relief from the line was to be followed by a five (5) day training schedule. To date this plan had never materialized.

Near midnight of 21 November, however, the alert was sounded. The First Battalion was ordered to be ready to move by motor at 0800A in the morning as lead Battalion in a Regimental column including armor and artillery, that, it was hoped, would pass through the 143d Infantry East of ST LEONARD on the MEURTHE River, and roll eastward across the VOSGES through the ST MARIE pass. The Third Battalion was to be prepared to move on call after 0900A and the Second after 1200A. Additional trucks were provided by Division. The call to move was to be conditional upon the 143d Infantry clearing the hill East of ST LEONARD and opening the road to MANDRAY. A bit of optimism anticipated that this might be done quickly against only meager resistance. But in the morning the 143d Infantry found themselves bucking a determined delaying force and they were unable to achieve the hoped-for opening through which to pour the motorized 142d Infantry.

At noon 22 November the First Battalion was notified to move to an assembly area at SARUPT. But it remained there until the next day, ready to move on a moment's notice.

At 1055A 23 November, a platoon of the 636th Reconnaissance Company, attached, was ordered by Major General JOHN E. DARLQUIST, Division Commander, to move immediately to ST LEONARD to follow the Third Battalion of the 143d Infantry and then to reconnoiter the road to LE CHIPAL.

The First Battalion had hardly time to down its specially prepared Thanksgiving Day turkey dinner when the go signal was given at 1435A. But their column was soon halted along the road near ST LEONARD as the 142d Infantry continued fighting for MANDRAY in the afternoon.

The streets through MANDRAY had been heavily mined while within the houses were frequent booby-traps. MANDRAY was the first town beyond the scorched-earth line so that the town was immediately packed with installations of all kinds.

The First Battalion was brought up in trucks to MANDRAY and dismounted

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at 2200A to strike out on foot, passing through the 143d Infantry just East of MANDRAY, to follow the road to LE CHIPAL, LA CROIX, with its objective BAN DE LAVELINE. A continuous skirmish in the dark to LE CHIPAL forced the Germans to abandon a 20mm flak wagon and two (2) artillery pieces. The Battalion marched on through the night and by 0800 had cleared LE CHIPAL and was entering LA CROIX. Forty (40) prisoners were taken in the night. Beyond LE CHIPAL no further engagement took place and the Battalion entered BAN DE LAVELINE at 1500A.

The Third Battalion, which had been waiting in HERPLEMONT for several days, was ordered to start out at 0930A. It was planned to pass the Third Battalion through the First at BAN DE LAVELINE, where the Third would go on toward ST MARIE. 422.4

However, commencing about 1000A, a situation arose at LE CHIPAL which prevented for the entire day a follow-up of any motor traffic. From the high ground Southeast of the town the enemy began to interdict the road with machine gun and mortar fire. In the morning it seemed like this would soon be cleared up. Only one (1) or two (2) machine guns were firing and a single mortar dropped light shells in regularly. Our own tank destroyers and tanks fired into the places where the enemy was believed to be. The 143d Infantry in that vicinity, was committed to taking the trouble out. But, whenever it appeared that the enemy had been destroyed or had left, and a jeep boldly dashed out to try to run through, the fire would begin again. This happened several times in the course of the day.

Another route, around to the North was expected to be opened by late afternoon or evening. This was the road East from ST MARGUERITE in the 103d Division sector. While the Third Battalion waited in column at MANDRAY, the Second Battalion, which had been called up behind the Third, was ordered first to make a trial passage over the mountain trail through ENTRE DEUX RAUX to PLANCHETTE to COINCHES to BAN DE LAVELINE. But before this was undertaken the better road to the North had been opened. At about 1830A, the Second Battalion began to roll over this, through SAULCY, ST MARGUERITE, thence East to a point short of the railroad crossing near RAVES, where, since the railroad bridge was out, a wide detour North to NEUVILLERS, FME DES FEES, and South through BERTRIMOUTIER to BAN DE LAVELINE was made, closing in at 2040A.

When the delay in passing the Third Battalion through LE CHIPAL lingered, Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, 142d Infantry Regimental Commander,

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ordered the First Battalion to continue on from BAN DE LAVELINE to WISEMBACH. Here the Battalion closed in at 1830A without incident.

After dark the Third Battalion was able to slip by the hot corner at LE CHIPAL and entered an assigned assembly at VERPELLIERE for the night.

At 0530A the following morning, 25 November, the Third Battalion moved out by truck from VERPELLIERE to WISEMBACH. According to plan two (2) forces divided here, one consisting of Company "L" with the Battalion's attached armor to advance along the main road toward ST MARIE; the second, consisting of Companies "J" and "K" to be trucked as far as possible up the trail to the Northeast by the GROS PRAUX FME at V557631, thence East and South to join onto the road into ST MARIE at FENARUPT (V581612). Lieutenant Colonel A. WARD GILLETTE, Commanding Third Battalion 142d Infantry, went with this flanking force. Major ROSS YOUNG, Executive Officer Third Battalion 142d Infantry, commanded the frontal force along the road.

The Germans were ready on the more obvious approach. High on the ridge line, where the road, after following a winding precipitous course, reaches the crest and the border line to ALSACE, a strong physical road block had been prepared and was determinately manned. Contact was first made here by reconnaissance elements at 0846A and a hard fight developed soon after when Company "L" came upon the scene. This lasted through the day.

Meanwhile, at 1135A, Colonel LYNCH ordered the First Battalion to begin movement after lunch along the same trail that the Third Battalion flanking force had used to the Northeast, bearing more directly East to pass through LA BOUILLE to come down on ST CROIX from the Northwest. Again, to save the men's feet, trucks were to be used to the farthest point possible. A jeep carrying rations was to follow the Battalion column. When in ST CROIX contact with the Third Battalion in ST MARIE was to be made.

The Second Battalion was ordered up from BAN DE LAVELINE to bivouac in WISEMBACH after the First Battalion had moved out. Very surprisingly enemy shells had fallen in BAN DE LAVELINE during the morning. One (1) company of the Second Battalion was given the mission of sweeping the hill line due East of BAN DE LAVELINE to Hill 866, then North to WISEMBACH. Nothing was ever found up there, but for security the company was placed

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By RB/VSW

NARA, Date 11/18/92

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in position on Hill 856 at the close of day.

The flanking force of the Third Battalion flashed back at 1320A that they were fighting in ST MARIE. They had achieved complete surprise in coming in on the town from the North. ST MARIE had been a German base for supplies for the VOSGES sector at one time and appeared to be a thriving community, one which they would have liked to defend. Companies "I" and "K", entering the city on the North side and rear, surprised Germans riding bicycles and driving vehicles nonchalantly in the streets. Mopping up operations against unorganized resistance lasted until dark. In all, about one hundred fifty (150) prisoners were taken while the only casualties suffered were two (2) minor wounds.

Artillery and mortar fire was expended freely on the enemy road block holding up the frontal force. An enemy anti-tank gun succeeded in knocking out two (2) tanks and a tank destroyer attempting to rush the block. Finally Company "L" seized Hill 894 and worked down the nose to come in behind the main defenses. The houses at the turn in the road were also prepared strong points and within them was stored a good quantity of ammunition. Company "L" reported the block cleared at 1915A, taking twenty-eight (28) prisoners and leaving an equal number dead on the scene. The heavy installations were immediately tackled by the engineers who had opened the road to ST MARIE by 2240A.

Snow fell lightly on the high ground that night. Soon after midnight, the Second Battalion, less Company "G" left on Hill 856, by motor convoy wound over the mountain road to close with the Third Battalion in ST MARIE.

The surprise that worked to such advantage in taking ST MARIE did not favor the First Battalion force advancing on ST CROIX. The enemy, alerted by the ST MARIE incident, had also brought up a fresh battalion that manned a strong block within the town. First contact was made just after midnight 25-26 November Northwest of the small village of PETIT ROMBACH. By 0800A the First Battalion force was fighting at V615625 on the outskirts of ST CROIX and at noon reported all but the East and North end of town clear.

The Second Battalion, less Company "G", moved out on foot from ST MARIE at 0800A toward ST CROIX to contact the First Battalion there.

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They pushed back an enemy pocket at the edge of ST BLAISE, which joins ST CROIX, before establishing contact with Company "B".

With enemy on the hill North of ST CROIX and a strong block within town holding the First Battalion, Colonel LYNCH ordered the Second Battalion to by-pass ST CROIX, on a route along the ridge line on the North to attack LIEPPE. Company "G", moving up, after relief from its position near WISEMBACH, was to join onto the Second Battalion column, less one (1) platoon remaining with the Battalion armor which would wait for the valley road to open.

Meanwhile, around ST MARIE, Third Battalion road blocks at ESCHERY and at FERTRUPT had been relieved by the 143d Infantry, the Third Battalion assembling in ST MARIE prepared for another mission. A plan to truck the Third Battalion, beginning at 0800A 27 November, Southeast on the road through FERTRUPT to the hair-pin turn at V630589, from where it would dismount to follow connecting trails eastward to seize KOENIGSBURG CHATEAU, hinged on the result of a 143d Infantry force which during the night of 26-27 November pushed South with the mission of clearing the road to the point of trails. But numerous physical road block which the enemy had thoroughly prepared along this route counted the plan out.

While the First Battalion made little progress in reducing the enemy block within ST CROIX and the resistance stiffened, the Second proceeded uphill North of ST CROIX. Enemy contact was made near Hill 645 at V623643 at 2140A and the Battalion stopped in this vicinity after midnight.

When, at noon 27 November, the First Battalion battle in ST CROIX still waged strongly, orders were changed to direct the Second Battalion downhill to the road at MUSLOCH, then for one (1) company to work West to STIMBACH to be in behind the German positions. Company "G" would remain on the ridge.

At the same time the Third Battalion was ordered to move out by truck to V616605 and dismounting there, to go East through the woodland to attack LIEPPE from the South.

As the Second Battalion came down from above, the First Battalion exerted pressure frontally. Artillery was poured on the enemy positions. A German self-propelled was damaged by the artillery. Then one (1) of

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the new-type 76mm tanks came up to finish it off and knocked out a second enemy self-propelled. The enemy opposition was crushed by dark. At 1900A Company "F" was in STIMBACH and Company "E" was in MUSLOCH where mopping up continued.

As planned, the Second Battalion now turned East, following both the ridge to the North and the main road, to attack LIEPVRE.

The Third Battalion reached V650614 for the night without contact. It was ordered to attack LIEPVRE also in the morning, prepared to continue Southeast and East to KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU if LIEPVRE was found clear or the Second Battalion was able to enter and handle the clearing of LIEPVRE by itself.

The Second Battalion encountered no resistance East of MUSLOCH and at 0345 had stopped at; Company "F" - V645638; Company "E" - V637633 and V639632; Company "G" at 641641.

In the morning the Second Battalion moved on into LIEPVRE and had cleared the town at 1100A.

During the night Major General DAHLQUIST alerted the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, for a possible motorized movement, attached to the 142d Infantry, down the main road to CHATENOIS, if LIEPVRE should be taken without a fight. Now that LIEPVRE was clear, the time was right, but other obstacles developed. In the center of town a necessary bridge across the LIEPVRETTÉ River had been thoroughly demolished. Enemy fire was drawn by reconnaissance elements searching another route. Enemy artillery began to fall within the town. Action soon developed on three (3) sides of LIEPVRE.

The Third Battalion, before reaching LIEPVRE, was ordered East to the trail leading to KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU, and along that, to proceed to its objective. The Third Battalion armor was due to follow up the trail from LIEPVRE. Rather than wait for the completion of the Bailey Bridge being constructed in LIEPVRE, the armor was ordered to make a try on a still existing light bridge West of town in order to get across to the South of the river. The river was crossed but a soggy field on the far side proved a greater obstacle. Three (3) tanks succeeded in getting to hard surface but two (2) others mired down. It was now approaching late afternoon.

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At 1655A Major General DAHLQUIST ordered the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, committed on a mission of attacking East along the valley road. But it would be a walk, not a ride. It was after dark by the time the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, had dismounted in LIEPVRE and pushed out to the East. They first encountered a road obstruction East of the trail junction at V670633 which was cleared by 2150A. When the situation with the Third Battalion warranted it, the three (3) tanks that had gotten across the river, were told to accompany the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry. After the bridge was in, other armor could get to the Third Battalion. A second road block five hundred (500) yards beyond the first offered stiff resistance. An enemy anti-tank gun caused about twenty (20) casualties. This was reduced sometime after midnight when the Battalion stopped until daylight.

The Second Battalion, 142d Infantry, found stiff opposition in pushing North and Northeast from LIEPVRE. Company "E" engaged continuously with enemy on the North side of the valley East of town along the railroad track. Company "G" with the Battalion armor drove through to clear LA VANCELLE, then found the passage behind them closed. Company "F" on the small knoll North of town, Hill 572, was driven off by an enemy counter-attack at dusk. The Company reorganized at the base of the hill and then during the night regained the hill. Company "A" was attached to the Second Battalion and given the mission of opening the route to Company "G". This it was unable to do by morning. Colonel LYNCH then ordered Company "G" to come back from LA VANCELLE, placing the tanks in supporting position as a base of fire at V675642, and, striking around the slopes of the CHALMONT Hill, to knock out the enemy in front of Companies "A" and "F".

The First Battalion, which had been alerted the night of 28 November to be prepared to pass through the Second Battalion at LA VANCELLE and continue East for HURST, was ordered in the morning to move from ST CROIX up the trail from STIMBACH, thence Northeast to MANGIGOUTTE and East to LA VANCELLE, thus striking at the other flank the opposition holding the Second Battalion.

All day of the 28th the Third Battalion advanced quietly up the trail to KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU. At 1715A the Third Battalion had passed the road junction at the SCHAENTZEL HOTEL (V697607). Still no contact, though civilians at the hotel reported the castle fortified and heavily defended. To gain surprise a night attack was ordered on the CHATEAU.

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which sits high on the dominating ground to command a wide view of the valley. At 1930A the Third Battalion reported they had taken the castle without a fight, the Germans having abandoned it several hours before. The fortifications of the castle consisted only of ancient cannon, moats, thick walls and the like, which could have been most formidable had it intended to be defended.

On the morning of 29 November, with the battle still deadlocked East and Northeast of LIEPRE, an order to the Third Battalion to send two (2) companies North to the valley road was cancelled. The Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, maneuvered a company South around an enemy block at V684632, knocked the block out and pushed on into BOIS L'ABESSE at noon. Here another fight occurred. One (1) enemy self-propelled was cornered and destroyed--another got away. The town was cleared about 1400A and by dark the Battalion had gained another one thousand (1,000) yards East.

Company "A" drove through to LA VANCELE at noon. Companies "F" and "G" were in close proximity with only scattered resistance between them by then. At 1500A Companies "B" and "C" were mopping up pockets of resistance within HANGIGOUTTE. Then an enemy 470th Reserve Battalion Commander surrendered with the remnants of his Battalion to the First Battalion near ROMBACH and enemy opposition in the LIEPRE sector collapsed. Some fifty-five (55) prisoners were gathered in the surrender to the First Battalion. Others for the day brought the total over two hundred fifteen (215).

All remained quiet for the night as the First Battalion assembled in LA VANCELE and the Second Battalion was brought back to LIEPRE.

While the Third Battalion remained at the KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU, artillery observers looked out from its tall tower and saw enemy trains operating in the RHINE Valley. Our long range artillery was brought down on these. A patrol to THANNENKIRCH learned from prisoners of war which they captured that a company of Germans was in the town and more were expected that night. A patrol to ST HIPPOLYTE ambushed a German vehicle enroute while other patrols probed KINTHEIM and ORSCHWILLER.

At evening of the 29th Colonel LYNCH ordered Lieutenant Colonel GILLETTE to advance on CHATENOIS in the morning by two (2) forces--one with armor down trail to KINTHEIM, then North to CHATENOIS, the

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two forces converging on CHATENOIS simultaneously.

On the morning of 30 November the First Battalion moved East from LA VANCELLE toward HURST and an objective in the valley Southeast of NEUBOIS at V7267. The Battalion pushed through to HURST where the enemy was holed up in houses. Leaving Company "A" to mop up, the remainder of the Battalion turned North along the road to its objective. Numerous obstructions along this road halted the passage of armor until the engineers could clear it out, but the Battalion pressed on. At 1440A lead elements of the Battalion were at V710666. Lieutenant Colonel JAMES L. MINOR, Commanding Officer, First Battalion, 142d Infantry, was then ordered to continue across the valley to Hill 384 at V743664, from there to proceed to SCHERWILLER if armor was available.

The Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, driving on up the valley road, engaged in almost continuous contact after reaching V713642 and also received a heavy shelling in that vicinity from enemy guns believed to be near SCHERWILLER. By 1720A it had pushed to V725648 and was meeting only scattered resistance. Another flurry of artillery and 20mm fire harassed the approach to its objective, the road junction at VAL DE VILLE, which was claimed at 2145A.

The Third Battalion first contacted a group of enemy at V723615 at 0930A which was soon dispersed. At 1420A Company "L" was nearly to KINTZHEIM at V742617. A large block at V740619 held up the Battalion armor with Company "L". A platoon of Company "I" was sent to stay with the armor there until the block could be cleared, which would be sometime after dark. While two (2) platoons of Company "I" guarded the left flank in position at V733624, Company "K" shoved Northeast without contact to seize the high ground above CHATENOIS. From here, artillery was fired on targets plainly seen in the valley below. At least a battery of enemy guns was put out of action near SCHERWILLER. This ground was organized and held for the night, preparatory to attacking CHATENOIS in the morning. An enemy tank in KINTZHEIM proved troublesome for Company "L", entering the town--one (1) platoon was badly cut up by a sudden burst of fire from the tank--but KINTZHEIM, first such town in the flatland, fell to our troops that day.

The Second Battalion, in the morning of 30 November moved up by truck to take the place of the Third Battalion at KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU establishing defensive positions there. A platoon-sized patrol was dispatched to

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THANNENKIRCH. There the platoon occupied a few houses on the edge of town, then engaged in a fight with enemy there. The platoon was ordered withdrawn after dark as a plan to attack the town in force on the following day was scheduled. The Second Battalion was also ordered to attack a reported enemy position close-in to the castle North of the trail on the 620 line between the 702 and 715 easting. But after a careful approach no enemy was ever contacted and it was believed that they had abandoned this ground going East.

After dark, the night of the 30th, the First Battalion was having a rough time of it. They crossed the stream at V7267 beginning about 2000A by wading hip-deep. No supply or evacuation route was open to them directly so when an urgent call for ambulances came for several casualties received on the far side, a round-about way to reach the Battalion was devised. This went North from LIEPVER through ROMBACH to POUCHY to VILLE to THANVILLE, in the 103d Division sector, thence South along an unpatrolled portion of the valley to the point of crossing. Even here, however, patients and supplies had to be hand-carried across the stream. After crossing, the Battalion slogged on to reach its objective at 0430A without further contact.

November closed with the forward elements of the Regiment poised on the outer fringes of the VOSGES, in control of the pass to the RHINE flatland, in possession of KINTZHEIM, ready to strike at CHATENOIS and SELESTAT, within sight of GERMANY, itself.

The line had moved eastward fifty-five (55) kilometers on a direct line on the Division front during November. Forty (40) of these had been gained in the last seven (7) days. Of course actual road distance and the routes of marching troops were a great deal more. In the Regimental advance from MANDRAY, either one or the other of the Battalions had walked all the way through the action had been speeded by the ability to quickly bring up by motor reserve and other elements not under fire. Personnel-carrying trucks were used as much as possible to conserve the doughboy's feet. Even so it was a hard march--the First Battalion, for example, had footed it nearly all the way. A new item of issue, the rubber-shoe-pack, was found to be damaging to the feet on long marches. After the first marches from MANDRAY to WISEMBACH, the old-type combat boots were recalled.

At the beginning of the month the Regimental strength was well up in numbers, but a good proportion of these were untried and little-trained.

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replacements. Casualties were heavy in the period 4-12 November during the drive down the LES ROUGES EAUX Valley when rain, snow and cold prevailed continually. In contrast the score was light during the fast moving last eight (8) days, 23-30 November, though several sharp clashes took place:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>DOW</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>NBC</u>
4 - 12 November	41	3	235	7	345
23 - 30 November	45	1	157	5	129
1 - 30 November	89	8	422	11	766

Replacements received and absorbed during the month totaled four hundred sixty-one (461).

But the German personnel problem was nearly disastrous. Over nine hundred (900) prisoners were gathered in during the seven-day drive through the mountains besides the unknown number of wounded, killed and missing. And this could not stop our advancing army.

Weather favored the enemy and prevented possibly a total rout. Interminable rains hampered the LES ROUGES EAUX Valley advance. The good proportion of dry, though cloudy and threatening weather favored the large gains of the last days. A heavy blanket of snow fell on 13 November.

Rains severely limited employment of air support while soggy ground in the valleys and flatlands confined use of armor to roads and restricted artillery emplacement areas.

Tanks and tank destroyers came frequently into play in close support of Infantry actions to break up tight situations with enemy delaying forces during the over-the-mountain drive despite vulnerability because of being road-bound. The new 76mm gun mounted on the M-4 tank proved an effective weapon as our troops experienced their first action with it during the month.

With the Germans methodically laying mines and arranging booby-traps as a prime characteristic of delaying tactics, and constructing road block

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after road block on nearly every road or trail contemplated, supporting engineers were in constant demand. Speed in overcoming a German defense was essential to avoiding the mines or blocks he might lay or defend a short distance beyond.

The fighting from LES ROUGES SAUX was in a thickly forested wilderness. Around CORCIEUX it was more open, rolling ground. To ST MARIE and through to the RHINE Valley a narrow pass confined the maneuver of troops and limited the direction of attack.

After the lengthy stalemate deep in the VOSGES, being able to drive through and emerge onto the ALSATIAN plain with such swiftness came as a pleasant surprise to most troops. It was a job they could look back upon with satisfaction as one well done. The black mountains of GERMANY rising out of the RHINE Valley mists were very near now, and, hopefully in every soldier's heart, foretold the enemy's approaching doom.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
S/Sgt., 142d Infantry
Author.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

1-1041

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 1944

Continuing its sustained late November drive over the heart of the VOSGES Mountains the 142d Infantry reached out on the RHINE plain in early December to seize its assigned portion of the city of SELESTAT, and moved southward from KOENIGSBOURG CASTLE to take THANNENKIRCH, ORSCHWILLER, ST HIPPOLYTE, RODERN, RORSCHALFR and BERGHEIM, establishing and maintaining a broad line of defense along the flooded barrier of the ILL River. When the Germans attempted a surprise attack in strength to retake SELESTAT on 12 December, the First Battalion, though thinly spread in defensive strong-points thoroughly spoiled the enemy effort, accounting for some six hundred (600) casualties in the day's battle. The Third Battalion, as Division reserve, engaged in bitter fighting for hotly contested MITTEWIER from 14-20 December. On 21-22 December the Regiment was relieved from the COLMAR sector and motored to the vicinity of STRASBOURG. Christmas Day was spent moving westward for a brief period of rest and training near SARRBOURG at TROIS FONTAINES. At the year's end with the Germans threatening the northern Seventh Army front, the Regiment was again made ready to move into action to steady a wavering line.

Since the night of 23 November 1944, when the First Battalion passed through elements of the 143d Infantry at MANDRAY, the 142d Infantry Regiment had pounded its way through the ST MARIE pass, taking BAN DE LAVELINE, WISEMBOURG, ST MARIE AUX MINES, ST CROIX, LIEPVRE, and the KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU, breaking out onto the RHINE lowland at KINTZHEIM. By evening of 30 November a Third Battalion force had secured KINTZHEIM and another Third Battalion force was organized on the high ground overlooking CHATEBOIS. The Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, attached to the 142d Infantry for the final phase of this operation, drove East along the valley road and pushed through to VAL DE VILLE. The First Battalion, 142d Infantry, on the North, during the night of 30 November - 1 December, waded waist-deep the GIESSEN River South of THANVILLE and plunged on through the FORET DE SCHERWILLER to occupy Hill 384, the last high ground at the gate of the pass, at 0430A in the morning. The Second Battalion, 142d Infantry, in regimental reserve at KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU, began to work southward to THANNENKIRCH and ST HIPPOLYTE.

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DOD Dir. 5200.9, Sept. 27, 1958
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A platoon of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers, attached to the Third Battalion for its attack on KINTZHEIM and CHATENOIS was routed over the narrow trail from LIEPVRE to the CHATEAU to KINTZHEIM. But an enemy road block West of KINTZHEIM obstructed passage through to the town. The Infantry had entered and cleared KINTZHEIM although three (3) enemy tanks were in its streets at the time. During the night difficulties which arose in getting a tank dozer up the trail to clear the block were overcome and by morning the Infantry in KINTZHEIM had armor with it.

Before dawn Company "K" and Company "I" (less one platoon) descended on CHATENOIS from the high ground to the West and by 0750A the town had been occupied without resistance. Contact was soon established with the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, coming around by the main road from VAL DE VILLE. The remainder of the Third Battalion with armor moved up from KINTZHEIM to close on CHATENOIS. Meanwhile elements of the 409th Infantry, 103d Division, passed through our First Battalion to enter SCHERWILLER.

Patrols sent out by the Third Battalion in CHATENOIS to SCHERWILLER found the bridge blown on the river at V753647; and to SELESTAT encountered enemy in position at V758639.

SELESTAT, the junction of several important roads including the main STRASBOURG - COLMAR highway, now lay within grasp. An attack was launched almost immediately with four (4) battalions converging on the city from North, East, and South.

Two (2) battalions of the 409th Infantry moved Southeast from SCHERWILLER with the objective of clearing the northern half of the city, while the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, still attached to the 142d Infantry, advanced directly East from CHATENOIS, and the Third Battalion, 142d Infantry, from CHATENOIS circled South through KINTZHEIM, then East to attack SELESTAT from the South.

At KINTZHEIM the Third Battalion was split into two (2) forces: One of Company "L" and Company "K" with a section of heavy machine guns advancing Southeast along the road to the junction at GANZINOTTE; the other of Company "I", the remainder of Company "M", and the Battalion Headquarters, with the Battalion armor, two (2) tanks and two (2) tank destroyers, advancing East to NEURUHEL. The second force received a very heavy shelling just East of KINTZHEIM which somewhat disorganized the group, but by nightfall the two (2) forces had secured GANZINOTTE and NEURUHEL. Company "K" moved up to NEURUHEL. Along the main road into SELESTAT a civilian car with a German non-commissioned officer was captured about dusk.

Meanwhile the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, fought against stiffening resistance to enter the western edge of SELESTAT to stop short of the railroad yard for the night. The two (2) battalions of the 409th Infantry stopped at dark about half-way between SCHERWILLER and SELESTAT, then before dawn the following morning, moved into the northern suburbs of SELESTAT.

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During the night the Third Battalion positions received a heavy shelling, but also captured an enemy patrol of six (6) men near NEUERUOE. At 0630A, with Company "I" and Company "K" leading, the Battalion moved off for SELESTAT. Flooding in the plain along the ILL River, which runs parallel to the main road, narrowed the Battalion sector of advance North to the right or East of the road. Contact was soon established with Germans in the town and enemy artillery tried to break up the attack. An enemy 88mm gun and road block near the road junction at V782618 offered strong resistance. The "88" knocked out a tank second in column. But when that happened the lead tank rushed the block, firing, and routed off the enemy crew. Men from Company "I" completed the assault and seized the block. From then on in the clearing of the Third Battalion's assigned portion of SELESTAT was hampered only by intense sniper fire. This area included all to the East of the main Northeast - Southwest road to the circle at V786623, and all South of the lateral street East from the circle. By nightfall this area had been cleared to a portion in the Southeast corner where enemy activity still flared in a closely-knitted group of buildings. At 1600A an enemy column of approximately one hundred fifty (150) men, apparently sent to reinforce the enemy garrison, was sighted marching into SELESTAT on the road to the Southeast. This was thoroughly dispersed by prompt artillery fire.

In the action of this day, the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, striking at SELESTAT from the West crossed the railroad under heavy fire and succeeded in driving the enemy from its assigned sector. The 409th Infantry on the North during the day did not penetrate the line of the old city wall which forms a semi-circle on that end of town. On the following day, 3 December, Company "K" led the Battalion in clearing the Southeast corner and in reaching the bridge at V793618 which the Germans had blown. A strong exchange of fire raged from houses on both sides of the river and Company "K" was prevented from securing the site. On the North contact with the 409th Infantry was not established.

With the Third Battalion controlling the southeastern part of SELESTAT and the 409th Infantry still engaged in clearing the North section, the Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, was withdrawn from the West part of the city during the morning of 4 December in order to rejoin the 143d Infantry in the vicinity of RIBRAUVILLE.

An attempt by a reinforced platoon of Company "I" to take the road junction at V753579 on the 4th met with strong opposition, and in the face of heavy mortar and machine gun fire the force was ordered to be pulled back to SELESTAT.

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Patrols from the 409th Infantry contacted our Third Battalion on the 4th. However, no sizeable force was seen and it was not definitely established that the North section of town was cleared. A relief of 409th Infantry strongpoints was ordered and carried out during the night of 4-5 December, platoons taking over company positions on the Northwest and Northeast of the city. A company of twelve (12) light tanks of Company "D", 753d Tank Battalion was attached to the Third Battalion and assembled in SELESTAT during the night. In the morning, the First Battalion, which had been in reserve, moved into the South portion of the city to assume responsibility for this sector and to reinforce the Third Battalion defense. Only scattered enemy self-propelled fire interfered with the relieving operation. After taking over the 409th Infantry positions on the North, the Third Battalion conducted a thorough search of the buildings in the heart of the city.

While the spotlight was focused on the fighting for SELESTAT, the Second Battalion, from a reserve position at KOENIGSBURG CHATRAU, fanned out to the South and East, taking a number of towns at the base of the line of hills. On 1 December Company "E" entered THANNENKIRCH at noon and engaged the enemy there until after dark when the town was cleared. A platoon of Company "G" sent to ORSCHWILLER stayed just outside of the town because of a larger enemy force within. Company "F" placed a platoon road block above ST HIPPOLYTE at V702600.

Sniper fire continued in THANNENKIRCH during the night and early morning of 2 December. Company "E" was ordered to push on to BERGHEIM on the road from THANNENKIRCH where stiff opposition was encountered Southeast of THANNENKIRCH. After noon Company "G" entered ORSCHWILLER without resistance and contacted a 638 Reconnaissance platoon there. Company "F" engaged in a brief fight for ST HIPPOLYTE and took thirteen (13) prisoners in clearing the town by 1550A. Enemy artillery, mortar and self-propelled fire, as well as two (2) tanks blocked the advance of Company "E".

After dark when all was apparently quiet within ST HIPPOLYTE, the Germans sprang a night counterattack, re-entering the town on the Southeast. Fighting was sharp as the enemy regained some of the buildings. Company "F" withdrew to high ground North of town until morning when it attacked again to drive the enemy out. In close-in street fighting Sergeant ELLIS R. WEICHT, 33131569, from Everett, Pennsylvania, leading the Third Squad of the assault platoon, Company "F", 142d Infantry, performed valiantly to speed the success of the attack. Two (2) enemy machine guns covering a narrow winding street were neutralized by the accuracy of his rifle from an exposed position which he boldly rushed forward to take. Then as an

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artillery observer directed fire on 20mm flak wagons, Sergeant WEICHT remained under the barrage though he knew the company had withdrawn to a safe distance. When, after the barrage the Germans attempted to pull out the flak wagons, Sergeant WEICHT'S rifle fire into the crews caused them to flee and abandon the guns. Finally, in exposing himself to fire on an enemy road block South of town Sergeant WEICHT was killed by a direct hit from an enemy antitank gun.

Company "G", less one (1) platoon, was ordered from ORSCHWILLER to assist Company "F" and by noon the situation was progressing favorably though the flak wagons and enemy road block checked immediate pursuit to the South.

The advance of Company "E" toward BERGHEIM was halted for the day on the 695 easting, under strong artillery fire.

On 4 December Company "G" moved South from ST HIPPOLYTE to enter RODERN without opposition, then continued on to within three hundred (300) yards of RORSCHWIHR where the enemy offered some opposition. Company "E" made better progress, advancing to V707570 where it engaged an enemy force well dug-in on Hill 336 to the East.

With the assistance of tanks which were able to join Company "G" after a physical block at ST HIPPOLYTE had been removed, RORSCHWIHR was occupied at dark and the enemy resistance put down. Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander, then ordered Company "G" to make a night attack by moonlight, starting after midnight from RORSCHWIHR to seize road junction 177, which the reinforced platoon of Company "L" had been unable to secure in a tough fight during the day. This second attack from the South and East contained an element of surprise, coming as it would, from another direction.

Company "F" had been brought up to help Company "E" in its attack on BERGHEIM. During late afternoon the enemy defense on Hill 336 was reduced and nearly one hundred (100) prisoners were taken. Both companies then entered BERGHEIM at dusk and fought to control as much of the town as possible in the night. Contact was established with the 143d Infantry which came up from RIBRAUVILLE and at 0900A of the 5th BERGHEIM was declared to be clear.

The night attack of Company "G" was entirely successful though opposition was met nearly all the way East from RORSCHWIHR. An enemy 88mm gun was overrun at V743577. Five (5) prisoners were taken. The vital road junction, objective of the attack, was seized and held.

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With the clearing of BERGHEIM the Regimental sector now extended North to include SELESTAT. The Germans dropped back behind or to defend points of crossing the broad water barrier along the flooded ILL River. On the South the 143d Infantry came abreast, taking GUEMAR and OSTHEIM. The major problem at once became the crossing of the flooded plain in order to make penetration eastward to the RHINE or to envelop COIMAR. Reconnaissance troop elements sent to secure four (4) possible bridging sites failed to do so before the enemy prepared them for defense.

On the night of 5-6 December two (2) missions were undertaken which illustrate the difficulty of the problem. Company "F" was sent East from road junction 177 by moonlight to secure the bridge at V780566 or the one at V777559, and if both of these were not to be had, the town and crossing at ILLHAESERN was to be seized. Advance patrols reached the first bridge sites and found them blown. An attack on ILLHAESERN became impractical when the approaches were found to be waist-deep and the Company became surrounded by water. Company "F" was ordered back to RORSCHWIER where dry clothing and a hot meal awaited them.

At the Southeast corner of SELESTAT the Germans hotly contested any attempt to cross the river by the blown bridge at V793618. Before dawn of 6 December, the Third Platoon of Company "C" led by Second Lieutenant CLARENCE F. BRADBERRY, O1315774, from Nitro, West Virginia, who after being assigned the mission made a skillful reconnaissance, carefully planning the attack. Using one leaky shell riddled rubber boat and a three-man shuttle system (the last three had to swim as the boat sank), he effected a surprise crossing about five hundred (500) yards South of the bridge site. A hard fight followed. A second platoon was sent to help. Finally, after some delay a footbridge was installed and before noon a firm bridgehead was secured and the enemy driven from the houses in that area. Still any further advance was limited to the single road out by a second bridge a thousand (1,000) yards farther.

Also during the night of 5-6 December, a battalion of the 141st Infantry, attached to the 142d Infantry, relieved our Third Battalion in the North sector of SELESTAT. The Third Battalion then occupied GRSCHEWILLER, ST HIPPOLYTE and RODERN in reserve assembly areas.

Preparations were made during 6 December to push out to the Southeast from the SELESTAT bridgehead. The Second Battalion was alerted for possible movement to follow through if the bridge at V795610 could be seized.

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A platoon of Company "C" attempted to employ similar tactics of the night before in attacking this bridge site after dark. But the Germans were found to be using an underground shelter as a fortified position at the crossing and were extremely alert along the length of the stream. A place for crossing could not be found. Lieutenant Colonel JAMES L. MINOR, First Battalion Commander, suggested a second try before daylight with a fresh Company "A" platoon and rubber boats. The rubber boats were rushed up from CHATENOIS in time but the Company "A" platoon was prevented from making a crossing by a heavy enemy shelling on the platoon's approach.

After this event operations in this sector became defensive in character. A similar situation existed North of SELESTAT and blocked the advance of the French 2d Armored Division which tied in on the Regiment's left.

Artillery exchanges and patrol activity occurred for the next several days. When the Germans were found to be occupying a house within two hundred (200) yards of a Company "B" outpost at V800627 a party from Company "B" went out to drive them off. Eleven (11) Germans were taken in a raid on this house the night of 9 December and a platoon outpost established there. From road junction 177, a Second Battalion patrol went East to the stream crossing at V775575 and tangled with Germans there. This area was well under water and waist deep in the fields off the road. The patrol had to swim the stream on its return, after having killed at least two (2) enemy in an encounter at the house and in the woods. Both SELESTAT and road junction 177 were targets of intermittent enemy artillery.

The First Battalion took over the defense of SELESTAT entirely on 8 December, relieving the 141st Infantry Battalion on the North of the city. Strongpoints were established on a broad front.

On 10 December, the Regimental sector was extended to include GUEMAR on the South. Company "E" relieved elements of the 141st Infantry here during the afternoon.

Prisoners taken about this time made mention of eight hundred (800) replacements being brought across the RHINE into the SELESTAT sector. After dark of 11 December the Germans grabbed off a three-man outpost in the Company "B" defense. Still it was somewhat of a surprise when the enemy launched a major attack on the morning of the 12th with the

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intention of retaking SELESTAT and penetrating as far as the hills West of CHATENOIS and the KOENIGSBOURG CHATEAU. Furthermore the attack on SELESTAT was accompanied by a serious infiltration on the South around BEBLENHEIM and MITTLEWIEK and as deep as to cut the ST MARIE AUX MINES - RIBEAUVILLE road, endangering the whole of the Division flank to cover the eastern approaches from North to South.

At SELESTAT, a heavy artillery concentration alerted the First Battalion at about 0630A. A Company "B" platoon at the road junction at V800627 was first to report the German attack. On both flanks approximately one hundred (100) enemy struck but in time were driven off and thirty (30) prisoners taken. The main weight of the German attack was then realized to be further to the North. Before daylight the enemy infiltrated in strength in the VIEHWEG area, quickly seized and controlled a half-mile stretch of houses along the first North - South street and cut off another platoon of Company "B" with an antitank gun platoon on position at the junction of roads at V795635. Another route of infiltration was along the streambed and railroad track on the North. One column may have gone as far West on the North bank as the railroad crossing to SCHERWILLER where it was guided across a footbridge and returned East to gain control of the factory area at V792637. When a friendly unit holding a post on the North at V797641 first saw the enemy in strength early in the morning it withdrew. This left a wide gap through which the Germans may have poured a large number. This was not known until nearly noon and therefore presented a grave threat to CHATENOIS and SCHERWILLER and, of even more concern, to artillery positions just back of SELESTAT. The isolated Company "B" and Antitank Company platoons, though separated on several elements, some squad-size, remained intact and held their own, taking prisoners and keeping them under guard at the same time.

To counter this situation Company "I" was attached to the First Battalion and trucked to SELESTAT from GRSCWILLER arriving about 1100A. The remainder of the Third Battalion was then ordered to CHATENOIS to block any penetration along the river between SCHERWILLER and CHATENOIS. In SELESTAT two (2) light tanks drove through to the besieged Company "B" platoon and thereby lent additional effective machine gun support. By noon two (2) medium tanks had arrived. These in support of a reserve Company "C" platoon began to work North from the junction at V795628 systematically clearing the enemy from each house. At about the same time a force consisting of another platoon of Company "C" and a platoon of Company "I" engaged the enemy in the Northwest corner at the factory. Hard fighting lasted all afternoon within the factory area as the Germans used the cover of walls,

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machinery, etc. in defense and stubbornly had to be pried out. The Company "C" platoon took a position on the right of the factory from which it delivered strong fire on the Germans attempting to make an exit from the factory under pressure of the Company "I" platoon.

Initiative and daring by certain individuals of the Company "B" and Antitank platoons kept small groups together in the face of far greater numbers and were cause for amazing results that did happen. Private First Class EDWARD L. SMITH, 31422033, from Hyde Park, Suffolk, Massachusetts, of the Antitank Platoon, Headquarters Company, First Battalion, worked his way forward one hundred (100) yards to a house that had been a platoon outpost, but had been overrun in the German attack. Moving to a window he boldly called upon the Germans within to surrender which they promptly did without firing a shot. In all twenty-five (25) Germans were taken and five (5) Company "B" men were freed. He took the prisoners back to his squad, then keeping four of the Germans with him, again exposed himself to pick up a wounded comrade in an area under enemy small arms fire, using the prisoners as litter bearers. While removing the wounded man Private First Class Smith suddenly spotted a German in a nearby ditch, and covering him with his rifle, ordered the German and any others hiding there to surrender. The German dropped his rifle, raised his hands and walked out, followed by fourteen (14) other enemy soldiers. Marching the prisoners back to his squad's position, he then began working his way from house to house in search of more Germans. While moving around one house he suddenly heard German voices around the corner and called out to the enemy. An enemy officer sticking his head around the corner of the house to investigate was immediately killed by Private First Class SMITH'S accurate fire. Then rushing around the corner, he ordered the remaining two (2) enemy soldiers to drop their weapons and surrender. This they did without offering opposition. Thus Private First Class SMITH was directly responsible for taking forty-one (41) prisoners and killing a German officer.

During late afternoon a clean up of the enemy was being made in this fashion as they were rooted out of the houses which they had taken earlier in the day. The prisoner total amounted to three hundred (300) and by morning had reached three hundred thirty-three (333). Over a hundred could be counted dead and a likely number could be considered wounded, thus costing the enemy at least six hundred (600) casualties. The attack had been made with a force of about one thousand (1,000) men, elements of four regiments. Apparently the Infantry had expected tank support which did not arrive in time.

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At dusk an attempt to stir up a fading ember with a second attack, this time supported by two (2) pieces of armor, was beaten off. Launched against the Company "B" platoon at V800627, the initial weight of the attack succeeded in driving in this post. However, strong defensive artillery fires prevented any further gain and in the morning at daylight the original Company "B" platoon position was restored.

The First Battalion had thoroughly checked the enemy attack. The cost to him had been high, at least six hundred (600) casualties out of a probable one thousand (1,000) man force. In contrast our First Battalion losses were very light; five (5) killed in action, twelve (12) wounded in action, and eight (8) missing in action.

After the battle had cleared in the evening measures were taken to strengthen the defense of SELESTAT. With Company "I" attached to the First Battalion and holding positions on the North flank, the remainder of the Third Battalion was ordered into SELESTAT, Company "K" taking over Company "C" and Company "A" platoon positions on the South, allowing these troops to become a battalion reserve on the North. Company "F" was moved from BERGHEIM to CHATENOIS, relieving Company "K" in its reserve defense positions. A Bailey bridge which had been constructed at the stream crossing Southeast of SELESTAT at V793618 in anticipation of our own advance to the Southeast was ordered removed.

In the morning, with quiet reigning in SELESTAT, Company "F" was sent back to the Second Battalion at BERGHEIM.

At 1130A, 13 December, Major General JOHN E. DARLQUIST, 36th Division Commander, in view of the continued danger on the Division South flank ordered one battalion to assemble in SELESTAT for possible movement South. Colonel LYKCH notified the Third Battalion to assemble in SELESTAT, sending the Antitank Company to assume Third Battalion positions on the southern part of the city.

When at 1735A, the First Battalion reported that Company "C" patrols were unable to contact the French across the river on the North, the Third Battalion was ordered to move one company to SCHERVILLER at 0630A in the morning, and the remainder of the Battalion, less Company "I", to CHATENOIS at 0800A. An officer was sent to contact the French, while Division was asked to find out what strength the French had to protect the SCHERVILLER area.

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At 2015A Lieutenant Colonel MIOR, reported the enemy was again hitting the left flank on the North. It was later determined that three (3) companies attempted to infiltrate without artillery preparation along the railroad track. Staff Sergeant SHELBY (NMI) SPEIGHTS, 14194309, of Poplarville, Mississippi, on an outpost of a Company "C" platoon in support of Company "B", after being caught in the stream of infiltration, led his men in a fight back to the platoon position, from which he directed artillery on the area where he knew the enemy to be. When four (4) tanks arrived in support of Company "C", Staff Sergeant SPEIGHTS, on his own initiative, guided them to a point where they could blast houses the enemy had occupied. This action, remember, was taking place in the dark. It was therefore difficult to estimate the size of the enemy force or understand his intentions. Much of the fire in defense was done blindly or as in the case of Staff Sergeant SPEIGHTS, where the enemy had made his presence known in gaining a foot-hold. Flares were used extensively but these were not too successful.

At 2105A Colonel LYNCH ordered the Third Battalion to move Company "K" immediately to CHATENOIS by motor, to outpost all entrances to the town on the East.

By 2250A the First Battalion declared the situation well in hand with tanks and infantry working together to clear out the enemy held houses. It was learned by this time also that the French had sufficient force in ECHERWILLER. In the morning, when the scene of battle was looked over, some thirty (30) dead Germans were found lying in close proximity where the artillery had fallen, with strewn weapons and equipment indicating the effectiveness of the defensive barrage. The enemy did not again make an effort to take SELESTAT while the First Battalion remained in its defense.

At 0630A of the 14th, Major General DANLQUIST ordered the Third Battalion, less Company "I" to move on motors to RIBEAUVILLE. Colonel LYNCH then ordered Company "G" into CHATENOIS as Regimental reserve. At 0915A Company "I" was ordered to join the Third Battalion in REBEAUVILLE as soon as possible. As the subsequent action of the Third Battalion was under Division control we shall describe that separately later.

In the Regimental sector relative quiet maintained until relief from the line. On 16 December clear weather permitted an air support dive bombing mission on the bridge and stream crossing at V795610. Direct hits

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were made on the underground shelter and enemy positions. A Company "A" patrol following up took eight (8) dazed prisoners and seized the crossing. The bridge was found to have been hit either by heavy artillery or bombs. However, just after dark, the enemy countered with a heavy artillery concentration, causing several casualties in the small force, which then withdrew.

Company "G" was attached to the First Battalion to relieve Company "B" in SELESTAT on 17 December. Company "E" took over Company "F" positions in GUEMAR also.

By Corps order the boundary of the French on the left was changed to include SELESTAT. Relief by the French of our First Battalion was carried out during the night of 17-18 December, the First Battalion assembling in RIBEAUVILLE by noon of 18 December as Division reserve.

The Third Battalion encountered some of the toughest fighting it has experienced while operating around MITTLEWIHR under Division control. The Germans had succeeded in retaking BENNWIER and MITTLEWIHR and were attacking vigorously in an effort to complete a breakthrough. On 14 December the Third Battalion was trucked to RIBEAUVILLE as Division reserve and almost immediately was committed with the mission of passing through the Third Battalion of the 143d Infantry Regiment to seize MITTLEWIHR. After assembling in ZELLENBERG, the Battalion marched to BEBLENHEIM, from which at 1430A, with Company "L" and Company "K" leading it, attacked South to MITTLEWIHR. Though our troops held the height of Hill 251, the Germans persisted in keeping the eastern slopes from which they could fire into the forces attacking MITTLEWIHR. Company "K" fought its way into the edge of MITTLEWIHR, winning several houses by nightfall. But at 2000A hours, German SS troops, one hundred (100) strong, counterattacked sharply with fanatical yelling and screaming through MITTLEWIHR'S streets. They had the support of at least two (2) tanks. In the confusion of battle Company "K" was driven from its slight holding with a loss of forty-four (44) men missing in action, who apparently were caught in the sudden rush of the enemy attack. The following morning, 15 December, Company "I" attacked again toward MITTLEWIHR reaching the cemetery on the Northern tip but was forced back under heavy enemy artillery and enemy action from the slopes of Hill 251. On the following day, 16 December, the Third Battalion reported sighting enemy elements apparently withdrawing from MITTLEWIHR. That night the Battalion was returned to reserve position at RIBEAUVILLE. On 17 December the Third Battalion again returned to the MITTLEWIHR sector.

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This time Company "I" chased the enemy out of MITTELWIHR and brushed off a similar night counterattack by a different set of German troops for the SS had in the meantime been relieved. The town was a scarred and crumbled battleground by this time. A defensive line was established South and East of MITTELWIHR which held firmly until the final relief from this area. Casualties of the Third Battalion during the period 14-20 December, included seven (7) killed in action, eighty-three (83) wounded in action and fifty-five (55) missing in action.

When the flooding along the ILL River was realized to be a definite barrier to further advances East to the RHINE, another plan was formulated for striking at COLMAR from the mountains on the West. It was planned that the 142d Infantry would follow through a French Combat Command thrust of TROIS EPIS (V627446). For several days the Regiment waited in readiness for this which would have involved moving into position around through the mountain passes, but the general German counterattack Northwest from COLMAR commencing on 12 December forestalled the completion of even the first phase.

To give the Division a respite from the line after its long and continuous action, an order to switch places with the 3d Division, in the then quiet STRASBOURG area was effected over a period of several days. Battalions were exchanged for Battalion, the 141st and 143d Infantry Regiments being the first to go, while the 142d Infantry was relieved by elements of the 15th Infantry, and on 22 December moved by motors North to reserve assembly areas near STRASBOURG at MUNDOLSHEIM (First Battalion), DINGSHEIM (Second Battalion) and HOLSHEIM (Third Battalion). While for the brief time in this area the 141st and 143d Infantry Regiments held river-line defense positions, the 142d was so located to be able to shift readily to meet any threat of a German crossing of the RHINE in strength in the Division sector. The night of 23-24 December the enemy filtered across in undetermined strength at GAMBSHEIM, approximately eight (8) miles North of STRASBOURG. Major General DAHLQUIST, at 0900A of 24 December ordered the First Battalion to move to the scene immediately, where under 143d Infantry control it remained in readiness but not committed. After release at 1600A, the Battalion returned to MUNDOLSHEIM.

March orders had already been issued for the Regiment to move West to an area at TROIS-FONTAINES near SARREBOURG, for the purpose of rest and training. The motor movement of thirty-five (35) miles was accomplished on Christmas Day. While the men took showers and received an

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exchange of clothing and on 27 December enjoyed the specially prepared Christmas turkey, training areas and ranges were set up and schedules prepared. The afternoon of 28 December battle awards were presented to fifty-two (52) officers and men at an impressive Regimental review. Training had only started when German pressure on the 7th Army front near BITCHE threatened and eventually called the 142d Infantry back into the line. On 31 December a reconnaissance of possible assembly areas was made in the vicinity of SARRE UNION and from that date the Regiment remained on a status of alert.

Both fast moving offensive and heroic defensive actions had occurred during December. In flat or low rolling open terrain nearly all types of weapons were employed in close coordination as armor and Infantry fought for SELESTAT and warded off a serious enemy counteraction, while artillery rained heavily in close effective support. The weather, except for a very few days, was misty and near freezing, but the men were able to take advantage of the long-settled and numerous villages within the battle area. Casualties were relatively light despite several heavy engagements. From 1 December to 21 December these amounted to forty-six (46) KIA, two hundred seventy-nine (279) WIA, and seventy-eight (78) MIA. But as no reinforcements were received during the month these represented direct losses that would be felt in future operations. The moves to the STRASBOURG and SARREBOURG areas though short lived, released the entire Regiment for the first time since the beach landings in August from some phase of immediate tactical concern. With the Germans assuming an offensive character in December, the war in Europe might be expected to last a little longer, but the 142d Infantry had proved its mettle in operations of the new character during the month.

Richard A. Huff

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Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author

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ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

L-104 ✓

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 1945

In January, the 142d Infantry was involved in operations on three (3) widely separated sectors of the Seventh Army front. Frequent motor movement on hurried call over long distances carried the Regiment from place to place. Early in the month the Regiment was sent to reinforce the threatened BITCHE area where strong German attacks had been launched New Year's Day. A cross-country motor march placed it in reserve for a four (4) day period backing up the line at SAARERUCKEN. Then, on 18 January, a movement from the far left to the Army right flank, placed it in position to steady a wavering line near BISCHWILLER. Defensive measures here were thorough but were only lightly tested by the enemy. Finally, the more familiar order to attack was given again and at month's end the 142d Infantry was reaching out for OBERHOPFEN, prepared to follow-up with a strike to the RHINE River at DRUSENHEIM.

At the opening of the new year German attacks threatened Seventh Army advanced positions. The powerful and surprising RUNDSTEDT thrust into southern BELGIUM had been checked short of its intended objectives and now the enemy was improvising another plan to relieve the effect of morale on the home front by launching another large-scale effort, an attempt to cut the heart of the Seventh Army line stretching along the Franco - German border from near SAARERUCKEN eastward to the RHINE. On the right flank, Seventh Army troops, which had crossed the border into GERMANY at WISSEMBERG and LAUTERBOURG to come up against SIEGFRIED LINE defenses, were in danger of being boxed in a corner by strong attacks on the West coupled by a further increase of a small German bridgehead already established to the South at GAMBSHEIM, on the RHINE, eight (8) miles North of STRASBOURG.

The 36th Division, which on 25-26 December had moved to the vicinity of SARREBOURG for the purpose of training, as Army reserve, was kept in readiness to back up or counter serious enemy action. An alert status prevailed and actual training was limited. Warnings were out for enemy para-troop landings also, but though several cases were reported, nothing ever came of them.

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At midnight 31 December - 1 January, traditional moment of celebration, the Germans struck with force in the central Army sector near BITCHE. The objective was to cut the American supply route through the SAVERNE gap to the RHINE. That same day, the 141st Regimental Combat Team was sent to the threatened area in the vicinity of MONTERONN taking positions facing East on the flank of the enemy bulge. In three (3) days the Germans, spearheaded by fresh SS troops late from NORWAY, nipped a wedge about five (5) miles deep and six (6) miles wide.

Reconnaissance for possible assembly areas and defense lines were made by the Regimental Executive Officer and S-2 on 1 January in the vicinity of SARRE-UNION. On the afternoon of 3 January a warning order to move was received. Then, beginning at 1700A, the 142d Infantry began a motor march to the MONTERONN area, covering approximately forty (40) miles along a route that was strange and difficult after dark under blackout conditions. It was also sharply cold, and snow was falling. Despite the fact that the quartering parties were dispatched only an hour before the Regimental column, and were unable to make a reconnaissance in daylight, units reached assembly areas with slight confusion and set up bivouacs for the night out in the open, West of MONTERONN, with the tail of the column closing in before midnight.

In the morning the First Battalion moved East to ST LOUIS to back up the 141st Infantry line extending North - South from above LEMBERG to GOETZENERUCK. After prior reconnaissance ENCHENBERG was selected for the Second Battalion, and SOUCET for the Third Battalion, and both battalions closed in these towns by marching before dark.

Next evening, 5 January, the Regiment relieved the 141st Infantry in the line, our First Battalion taking positions on the northern half of the sector defending LEMBERG, the Third Battalion holding the line generally along the LEMBERG - GOETZENERUCK road. The Antitank Company was attached to First Battalion and, as Infantry, assumed positions on the right flank of the First Battalion. Company "A" assembled in LEMBERG as Battalion reserve. The Second Battalion remained in ENCHENBERG as Regimental reserve but placed a company in line back of the First Battalion to defend the head of the draw on the left at Q725470.

On the First Battalion left there existed a small out-back in the line between the Battalion and the 100th Division, adjacent friendly unit, holding the GLOSSEMBERG height at Q735480. This it was deemed advisable to wipe out and shorten the contact between units. Accordingly plans were made for

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a coordinated attack to jump off at 0800A, 7 January, to jointly seize the ground between. But in the evening word was received from higher headquarters that the planned attack was off until approved by the Army commander.

During 6 January, enemy artillery was scattered over the Regimental sector. At 1000A about twenty (20) Germans approached the First Battalion positions on the right at Q746455, but were driven off by Company "B" and Antitank Company mortar fire. A First Battalion patrol felt out the enemy positions that were to be seized in the attack and saw the enemy digging in. At night artillery and mortar fire was placed on the area where enemy cries testified to good effect. On 6 January, the Germans reached their farthest penetration in the BITCHE sector as lead elements of their offensive southward were checked and isolated in fighting at WINGEN.

The Third Battalion reported hearing tracked vehicles in the vicinity of Q764434 at 1945A and a contact patrol between Companies "I" and "K" brushed with the enemy in the dark. Considerable enemy artillery was poured into SARRENSBERG, just South of the Third Battalion during the night.

Sharp patrol clashes marked activity on 7 January. One (1) man was killed and another wounded as a Company "A" patrol exchanged fire with eight (8) to ten (10) of the enemy at Q743445, a short distance in front of the Antitank Company line. A Company "B" patrol drew fire from an estimated six (6) Germans at Q747452. A Company "C" combat patrol was stopped by strong enemy artillery fire to its front. In the Third Battalion sector a patrol of Company "L" came upon enemy reverse slope positions dug in on a line Q751438 - Q748442, and in a firefight, killed at least one.

Army approval was granted on the proposed plan of attack on the left of the First Battalion and preparations for readiness were again set in motion. On the previous day, with the attack due the following, Company "G" had been moved to LEMBERG to replace Company "A" as Battalion reserve. Company "A", with Company "C", were to be used in the attack.

Company "C" held positions on the ridge from Q741462 to Q747461. Before dawn, at 0500A on 8 January, Company "A" moved from LEMBERG to assemble on the left of Company "C" at Q736466. With Company "A" having further to go before striking the enemy line, its jump-off time was set at 0800A, one-half (1/2) hour ahead of Company "C". A platoon of five (5) medium tanks also was sent to assist the Company "C" attack, moving up along the road on the right.

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A heavy concentration of artillery had been placed on the enemy positions--the objective of the attack was the knoll and ground South of the 47 grid and West of the road--at 0630A, but no preparation preceded the assaulting companies. Both Companies "A" and "C" struck the enemy positions at about the same time, Company "A" being more on the enemy's right flank attempting to out behind, while Company "C" applied pressure frontally.

The Company "A" men descended the wooded slopes from their assembly area, crossed the stream gully and mounted the enemy held knoll. Just as they had virtually succeeded in driving through the enemy line of defense, a heavy artillery concentration fell on them from the left rear. The friendly unit on the left was firing into what they thought was enemy activity. This was at 0915A. The assault was spoiled and the company scattered. The men dropped back off the slope into the draw at the base. Here, after the artillery had been stopped, First Lieutenant RAYMOND J. SCHLODER, 01314234, of St. Marys, Pennsylvania, Company "A", 142d Infantry, quickly reorganized his Company and prepared for another advance. Climbing the hill again, a second assault, with men firing from the hip, drove deep around the flank. Many Germans, resisting stubbornly, were killed in their holes. Company "C" pressure forced the enemy into the Company "A" trap. By 1030A the fighting was over. Forty-seven (47) prisoners had been taken while twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) enemy dead littered the battle scene. Our casualties were relatively light. One (1) of the five (5) tanks that supported Company "C" had been knocked out by a 47mm gun at Q748465.

The newly-won ground was immediately organized for defense with Company "A" taking positions on a line facing Northeast from Q742469 to Q467464. Very shortly the enemy launched a strong counterattack, principally against the unit on our left. Company "A" joined in repelling the attack by firing into their flank and in clearing the little knoll at Q747469 where eight (8) prisoners were taken.

The attack of Companies "A" and "C" had been entirely successful and quickly done. The uneasy gap had been wiped out and the line shortened, according to plan.

The German reaction appeared the next day, 9 January. Heavy artillery began pounding LEMBERG with regularity at 0200A, continuing through the morning hours. At BITCHE, a German battalion of three (3) companies, one hundred (100) men each, assembled and were dispatched, by route of the railroad, to seize the high ground at LEMBERG. About a mile from LEMBERG, the companies split to strike to the North and from the South. One of these

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worked up the draw in front of Company "B" at Q747453, and at first light of morning seized two (2) squads and a section of heavy machine guns of one platoon of Company "B" before the Company was alerted to the attack. The enemy, getting in amongst one platoon of Company "B" at Q747455 disrupted the defense there and isolated another platoon on the nose of the ridge at Q752457. Wire lines from companies to the battalion had been knocked out by the artillery during the night. Communication was therefore slow. But, when first warned of the plight of Company "B", a platoon of Company "C" was sent to help. Our defensive artillery fires were laid in heavily and continuously, stopping further enemy support. The Company "C" platoon fought fiercely and well, forcing the Germans back and denying any further penetration. It is thought a second company of the enemy was behind this first and was disorganized by our artillery fire. A third company evidently tried to flank to the North, striking at Companies "A" and "C" positions, as a brisk small arms battle lasted briefly in that sector but soon faded. Thirteen (13) prisoners were taken and fifty (50) enemy, which could be counted, were killed.

Quiet settled on the First Battalion front for the remainder of the day. A Third Battalion combat patrol fought with the enemy at the stream junction (Q750434) in the morning hours, while enemy artillery harassed Third Battalion positions through the day.

After dark, 9 January, elements of the 143d Infantry began relieving the First and Third Battalions. In the morning of 10 January, the Regiment moved back approximately fifteen (15) miles to the towns of BETTWILLER (Q5932), REXINGEN (Q5934), ADAMSWILLER (Q6134) and DURSTEL (Q6033), again for the purpose of rest and training. But, by the next day (11 January), an order to plan for work on a defensive switch position was received. This was a line running through DOMFESSEL (Q5739), RATZWILLER (Q6339) and VOLKSBERG (Q6839), considered the next defensive position should the enemy break through the existing front line. The digging of trenches, siting of weapons, clearing fields of fire, etc, was begun by the 141st Infantry and this work was to be taken up by the 142d Infantry on 14 January. Then the schedule was stepped up a day. Reconnaissance and unit planning for this mission was completed and the troops were already on the march to the work areas when a change in order affected the Regiment.

At 1230A 13 January, a warning order for movement to the 103d Division sector was received. It was 1615A, an hour until dark, before the destination was known. Yet the movement was expected that same night. The 142d Regimental Combat Team was attached to the newly formed XXI Corps, as Corps

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reserve, and was to close into an assembly area in the vicinity of FRANCALETROFF, a distance of about thirty (30) miles, by noon of the following day. Quarters parties, immediately dispatched, were unable to make a proper reconnaissance, as it was dark upon arrival. Though the route was strange in the dark, the movement begun at 0330A 14 January, rolled smoothly to the new area. Here however confusion resulted with the changing of assembly areas. A biting cold wind sweeping across flat snow-covered plains made the two (2) to three (3) hour ride in open jeeps and trucks a frosty one to remember.

Relieving battalions of the 409th Infantry, 103d Division, in reserve at MERLEBACH (Q3262), CAPPEL (Q3553), and ST JEAN - ROERBACH (Q3848), the Regiment provided a reserve force to back up the SAARERUCKEN sector while elements of the 103d Division were relieved by the TASK FORCE HERREN. The Second Battalion, in CAPPEL assumed responsibility for guarding twenty-eight (28) bridges in the rear areas. The First Battalion in MERLEBACH and the Third Battalion in ST JEAN - ROERBACH enjoyed a welcomed rest, as this sector proved to be exceptionally quiet with hardly a round of enemy artillery to interfere, and the Regiment was not called into action.

A day of hasty movement and needless confusion occurred on the 18th, but it demonstrated the mobility of modern Infantry. At midnight 17-18 January, word was received for a motor movement eastward to begin as soon as possible. Captain JOHN B. HUNLEY, Regimental S-3, said we could be under way in two (2) hours. But then it was learned that additional trucks necessary would not arrive until 0700A. A schedule was set-up whereby the lead elements crossed the initial point at 0900A--the combat team column was three (3) hours long--the destination vaguely "somewhere within HAGUENAU", eighty (80) miles away by road. The column had not long been rolling when instructions were received to reroute the Regiment to the area of its former bivouac near BETTWILLER to DURSTEL. Corps MP's stopped the column head at SAVERNE and turned it about. But parts of the column were turned elsewhere and scattered to where they did not know. After closing in the BETTWILLER area (less some units unaccounted for) the Regiment was immediately alerted for further movement to HAGUENAU, which began after dark at 1900A. This route, however, was over a winding mountain road, slick with ice. In the blackout driving many accidents occurred that would have been avoided had the column continued on the main SAVERNE - ROCHFELDEN - HAGUENAU road. It was after midnight when the column closed in.

It was expected that employment of the Regiment would be in the then hotly contested HATTEN - RITTERSHOFFEN area where savage attacks by German

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armor had been going on for several days. A reconnaissance was made in this sector during the morning of 19 January, but a more serious threat Southeast of HAGUENAU, which developed during the day, changed plans.

In ^{two (2)} six weeks time a small German bridgehead across the RHINE, which centered on GAMBSHEIM, had expanded to include OFFENDORF and HERRLISHEIM, and then linked up with the main forces to the North by taking DRUSENHEIM, opening the highway paralleling the RHINE. HERRLISHEIM and DRUSENHEIM were momentarily recaptured by our troops to sever the enemy tie-up, then, just prior to 19 January, in a strong bid, HERRLISHEIM was retaken by the Germans. On 19 January a breakthrough of concentrated armor threatened WEYERSHEIM to the West, while heavy pressure forced the yielding of DRUSENHEIM. An armored division in this sector was badly mauled. Into this situation the 36th Division was thrown; the 143d Infantry during the afternoon establishing a line to defend ROHRWILLER to WEYERSHEIM--the enemy tank attack moving toward WEYERSHEIM was stopped--while before dark the 142d Infantry moved into reserve areas at KURTZENHAUSEN, GRIES and BISCHWILLER. Secondary defense positions were set-up around these towns. At 2230A Major General JOHN E. DAHLQUIST, Division Commander, ordered the First Battalion, in BISCHWILLER, prepared to attack East toward ROHRWILLER and DRUSENHEIM, in the event our line there should collapse.

20 January was spent in organizing defenses and anticipating a follow up of the German attack. The Third Battalion, in GRIES, was ordered to move to BISCHWILLER at 1350A to organize main-line defenses there, while the First Battalion remained assembled in BISCHWILLER ready to counterattack. That evening a general and sizeable withdrawal of VI Corps troops was carried out, to form a stronger and shorter line along the MODER River from BISCHWILLER to HAGUENAU, and there to the West. South of BISCHWILLER the woods at RO60150 became a focal point, then Southwest to just East of WEYERSHEIM and HOERDT. The 1st French Army maintained a line from HOERDT to KILSTETT to the RHINE. At 2300A the 143d Infantry Battalion in ROHRWILLER withdrew behind our Third Battalion defenses at BISCHWILLER, which became the new front line. The Germans did not disturb the operation, though our First Battalion was alerted for a counter-measure in the direction of the woods North of ROHRWILLER in case they did.

Our own attitude now was entirely defensive while that of the enemy was considered potentially a powerful threat. A major effort with the objective of taking STRASBOURG was fully expected.

The German reaction to our withdrawal was prompt. During the afternoon

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the 143d Infantry Battalion in the woods East of KURTZENHAUSEN became heavily engaged with an attacking enemy force. In the course of the action seven (7) German tanks were knocked out and one hundred sixty (160) prisoners taken. The Germans did succeed in seizing the small patch of woods at R072148 and could not be extricated before dark, but that was all they were able to gain.

At BISCHWILLER enemy targets were frequently seen during the day, most of these to the Northeast headed toward OBERHOPFEN. The bridge at R095187 required two (2) separate charges before it was satisfactorily blown, and this was accomplished not any too soon, as an hour-and-a-half after the second blast six (6) enemy tanks came charging up to the bridge site, the leading one firing into the Company "K" platoon covering force on the far side. This was at dusk. The tanks took cover behind the buildings in the vicinity and eventually went away, while Company "K" maintained a double alert. Flares were used at intervals and our tanks were brought up to fire at short ranges into the houses across the stream. The situation then quieted down for the night.

The 143d Infantry battle had subsided by nightfall, after which relief of the 143d Infantry Battalion by our First Battalion was carried out according to plan. Our Second Battalion relieved another 143d Infantry Battalion to the South, thus giving the Regiment responsibility for the sector from just above HOERDT to include BISCHWILLER.

On the morning of 22 January, tank and machine gun fire from the First Battalion in the big wooded patch was concentrated on the little woods to the Southwest which the enemy had taken. Then a barrage of 4.2 white phosphorus smoke shells was poured in. After this, Company "E" of the Second Battalion entered the woods quietly from the South and cleared the area, only to find that the enemy had apparently evacuated it in the night.

Further South the Germans had made a strong attack on the French at KILSTETT during the night, cutting off elements within. But in the morning the French regained control and drove the Germans back, taking a toll of some three hundred fifty (350) prisoners.

While the next few days were confined to patrol action only, our defenses were in process of being perfected: Antitank mines, anti-personnel mines, and wire obstacles being installed to the front; weapons including .50 caliber machine guns, antitank guns and tank destroyers being carefully sited, barricades put up in the streets of BISCHWILLER. Snow began to fall

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Consideration of attacking again, eastward to the RHINE, began on 26 January and plans were formulated. Indications were that the Germans had changed their intentions and were thinning their defenses to a minimum in order to supply troops and armor elsewhere. The next few days then were spent in preparation, issuing of orders, extensive patrolling to determine enemy strength and to obtain prisoners, air reconnaissance to watch movements in the enemy's rear and especially along the RHINE. With the over-all objective of clearing the West bank of the RHINE up to and including DRUSENHEIM and establishing a West - East line from OBERHOFFEN to DRUSENHEIM by the 36th Division (with CCB, 14th Armored Division attached), the plan of attack placed the 142d Infantry on the left, or North flank, with the mission of first securing that flank by the seizure of OBERHOFFEN one night before a broad attack eastward to take DRUSENHEIM, the DRUSENHEIM woods, ROHRWILLER, HERRLISHEIM and OFFENDORF. The night seizure of OBERHOFFEN to be made by one (1) battalion, was phase one. In phase two, jumping off from OBERHOFFEN and BISCHWILLER the following night, two (2) battalions of the 142d abreast had as objectives the DRUSENHEIM woods and DRUSENHEIM, and then East to the RHINE, while two (2) battalions of the 143d Infantry on the right were to successively seize ROHRWILLER, HERRLISHEIM and OFFENDORF. The 141st Infantry in reserve, initially was to maintain the existing BISCHWILLER - WEYERSHEIM line. CCB of the 14th Armored Division was to relieve and hold OBERHOFFEN after it had been taken by the 142d Infantry Battalion, which would return to BISCHWILLER as Regimental reserve. Only limited demonstrations were to be made elsewhere along the entire Corps and Army front.

Daylight patrols were out of the question in the flat open terrain and easily tracked snow covering. Patrols to ROHRWILLER for two (2) nights running, 25-26 January and 26-27 January, found little or nothing within, but on the following evening were driven off after drawing fire. OBERHOFFEN was closely watched and its southern edge frequented by our patrols. Several ambush and combat patrols were tried after enemy positions were located, but without success. On the night of 30-31 January a Company "I" platoon-sized combat patrol met with fierce enemy machine gun fire after approaching close-in to a house in OBERHOFFEN. At least five (5) enemy machine guns and two (2) machine pistols opened up as though they had been waiting. That same night, however, the First Battalion picked up two (2) prisoners from the woods North of ROHRWILLER and killed four (4) of a group spotted on the way back.

During these several days enemy patrols were active, and some attempting to enter our lines were driven off with casualties. Four (4) of a

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and in a week's period blanketed the ground a foot deep, a favorable item for the defense. The cold remained steadily below freezing, often as low as 10° above zero. Artificial moonlight was first experienced in this sector with the installation of a battery of powerful searchlights to the rear. These, hanging their beams in the air out over the front, provide a luminous glow which especially on clouded nights, resembles moonlight, though without the shadows. Moving objects can then easily be seen.

On 22 January, our planes bombed and dispersed twenty-six (26) enemy tanks seen moving West from HERRLISHEIM toward WEYERSHEIM, but not across the ZORN Canal. On the 23d the Germans rather spottily controlled the air as several types of enemy aircraft including the new jet-propelled, in groups of two (2) and three (3) darted out of low-hanging clouds to bomb WEITERUCH, KURTZENHAUSEN, GRIES, BISCHWILLER and other targets in the rear, throughout the day. Little damage was reported, however.

During the afternoon of 23 January, an estimated eighty (80) enemy approached the First Battalion line South of HANHOFFEN. Though this space was thinly held, but well covered by fire, the enemy force was broken up after concentrated artillery, mortar and small arms fire was poured into them.

The Second Battalion was relieved by 143d Infantry elements after dark of 23 January, and marched to GRIES in the morning.

Light demonstrations of machine gun fire were made by the Germans in OBERHOFFEN the night of 24-25 January, in conjunction with what developed to be their main effort further North. These soon quieted down, but two (2) days were required to wipe out German penetrations across the MODER Northwest of HAGUENAU. This large-scale effort was what we had been waiting for on our front. When heavy casualties were imposed on the enemy, this factor plus that of the gravity of the situation on the Eastern front, halted the German's offensive character along the VI Corps line.

The First Battalion, 142d Infantry was relieved by the First Battalion, 143d Infantry, the evening of 25 January, again reducing the Regimental sector to the BISCHWILLER area. These frequent reliefs were necessary because of the intense cold so that troops out in the open could warm and dry out. At BISCHWILLER houses were a part of the frontline defense, of which our men there could take advantage.

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fifteen (15) man enemy patrol were killed by a Company "I" outpost on the morning of 28 January.

The Second Battalion relieved the First Battalion, 143d Infantry in the sector of the wooded patch East of KURTZENHAUSEN on the evening of 28 January, then in turn, was relieved by a battalion of the 141st Infantry on the following night. The Company "L" sector of the Third Battalion was also taken over by the 141st Infantry this same night, in order to assemble for the mission of taking OBERHOFFEN, assigned to the Second Battalion by Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander. Phase one, or the night attack on OBERHOFFEN, was set for 30-31 January.

On the morning of 30 January, however, the higher command had postponed the launching of the attack for a twenty-four (24) hour period. The assembly of troops went on as planned; the Second Battalion grouping in BISCHWILLER, and the Third Battalion, with only Company "K" on the line, assembling in BISCHWILLER also. On the 30th, a steady cold that had lasted since before Christmas, hardening the ground thoroughly, suddenly broke with a mildness that seriously hampered the coming operation.

When it appeared that the attack might be postponed indefinitely word came at noon of 31 January that it would go on that same evening.

Footbridges for three (3) columns to cross over the MODER River were quickly installed during late afternoon and evening. At 2000A hours Company "G" started crossing with Company "F" following. Their route was a wide sweep to the East in order to strike at the flank of OBERHOFFEN above the southern end. All remained quiet up until midnight when the time of our narrative runs out.

With the exception of the limited attack of the First Battalion on 8 January and the repelling of the German counterattack the following day, action for the month was confined mostly to patrolling and the establishing of strong defensive positions. A definite defensive attitude in anticipation of concentrated enemy attacks covered almost the entire period as the Regiment shifted frequently to meet strained situations in several sectors, the most important of which was the defensive line from BISCHWILLER South, denying the Germans any penetration in their fond hope of taking STRASBOURG. Despite a steady below-freezing, and often near-zero, temperature, Regimental strength was evenly maintained and casualties, including

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non-battle, were relatively light. Battle casualties amounted to one (1) officer and twenty-eight (28) enlisted men Killed in Action, one hundred six (106) enlisted men Wounded in Action, and two (2) officers and fifty-nine (59) enlisted men Missing in Action. Some ground had had to be yielded by the Seventh Army troops under heavy enemy pressure or by planned withdrawal during January, but at the last of the month the gravity of the situation had eased and the tide was turning the other way once more. The 142d Infantry was quietly approaching the first of several attack objectives, OBERHOFEN.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author

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Foothridges had been thrown across the MODER by engineers just East of the sharp bend during late afternoon and evening. When these were completed at about 2000A, Companies "G" and "F" filed across in column heading North on the broad flatland to East of OBERHOFFEN, Company "E", following Company "F" across the river, turning in sharply to the left with the mission of securing the southern end of the town. It was planned that all companies would attack the town proper at midnight but a chance discovery of the presence of Company "F" or "G" out in the open fields would have led to an earlier clash with the enemy (See Figure 1, page 6, for routes of Second Battalion attack, assembly areas and initial objectives). At the appointed time Company "G" approached the road junction at the northeastern corner of town, coming in on the road that juts out to the East. The enemy sentinel was found to be asleep. Company "G" closed in rapidly, capturing a defending antitank gun and its crew without a fight. One (1) platoon was left at the intersection to organize positions for defense while the remainder of the company moved on to seize its objective in the northwestern section. The two (2) junctions at R-095203 and R-096204 were occupied by 0330A. In the central part of town Company "F" moved on in without raising a stir, but Company "E", coming up from the South, encountered a strongpoint of five (5) or six (6) machine guns at the principal "Y" junction which offered steady resistance and prevented completing consolidation of the battalion within OBERHOFFEN. Leaving two (2) platoons of Company "F" to organize holding positions, the third platoon was dispatched South on the West road to assist Company "E" by attacking the enemy strongpoint from the rear. This action was ordered at 0330A. Thus early indications optimistically pointed to an easy seizure of OBERHOFFEN with only the clearing of the enemy machine gun strongpoint to be accomplished (Figure 2, page 6). Had the Germans evacuated, leaving only a token force? It appeared so but later events proved the determination of the enemy's intent to hold OBERHOFFEN.

In the hazy gray light of dawn two (2) monster Tiger tanks emerged from the woods to the Northeast, and with supporting infantry attacked the Company "G" platoon first which had been left to defend their first objective. Our bazookas were ineffective against the heavily armored tanks and the Germans, blasting each house with tank fire, and following up with infantry, forced the Company "G" platoon to withdraw. Moving on down the street the enemy tanks disorganized the two (2) Company "F" platoons in the center of town while persistent calls for armored support went to no avail. The bridges to carry armor across the MODER, under construction during the night, were not completed on schedule (one was planned to be ready for tank traffic at daylight) so our infantry had to face unequally the heavy enemy armor. The one

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(1) platoon of Company "F" working South to assist Company "E" in clearing out the machine gun strongpoint was completing this mission, having taken some forty (40) prisoners, when the enemy tanks struck at the platoon's rear. The platoon withdrew under fire to the West into a draw that led to the river, taking some of the prisoners with them, crossed the river and entered 315th Infantry positions there. Other dispersed elements of Companies "F" and "G" straggled across in the confusion of the morning (Figure 3, page 6). When this situation was learned, an officer was sent to regroup the men and to reorganize an effective force, bringing them back to OBERHOFFEN by way of BISCHWILLER.

Meanwhile, the main body of Company "G" (two platoons and Headquarters) to the North, held their positions, but after dispersing an enemy column of two approaching them, were beginning to receive some small arms fire. The rapid development of the enemy tank attack on the East and to the South left this Company "G" force isolated with only spotty "300" radio contact with battalion. They did not know what had happened over on their right. But this lack of understanding was general at the time. Scattered platoons could give only meager or conflicting reports, and the battalion had been dispersed more than the command then knew. Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Commanding the 142d Infantry, ordered Lieutenant Colonel MARVIN J. COYLE, Commanding Second Battalion, 142d Infantry, to withdraw Company "G" at 1030A, in order to consolidate the battalion strength, but as wire lines were out from Regiment to Battalion at this critical time, the radio message had not been acted upon by 1200A. But by then Company "G" was involved in a battle of its own as more enemy tanks, at least two (2), with infantry, drove in upon them from the woods at R-098206 (Figure 3, page 6). The enemy infantry was kept at bay for awhile, First Lieutenant BERNARD A. ROONEY'S Second Platoon exchanging hand grenades with Germans attempting to take one (1) of his defense posts, a wall-enclosed yard and barn. A bazooka aimed at the advancing tanks failed to operate. Finally, the tanks locating the position, blasted away without mercy, and the squad withdrew. Contact with the remainder of the platoon was barred. Somehow, this group of men, and similarly others, worked their way back, dodging Germans and German tanks, until rejoining the battalion at the southern end of OBERHOFFEN. Other elements remained under cover where they had been overrun, waiting for darkness, or an opportunity to get out.

Thus, shortly after noon, the success of our troops in gaining their objectives within OBERHOFFEN had been suddenly wiped out by the German counter-attack. Our own tanks had not been able to move across the MODER in time to render effective support. Companies "G" and "F" were largely disorganized.

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But still the situation was "fluid". Both sides had more forces to throw into the battle. The German penetrations were thin and not organized for defense. The arrival of our tanks supplied the strength needed. But the fight for OBERHOFFEN had to begin all over again, proceeding slowly northward from the slight holding South of the main fork.

While the Second Battalion advanced on OBERHOFFEN, during the night two (2) armor-carrying bridges were being laid across the MODER at the two (2) road sites, a treadway type on the BISCHWILLER - ROERWILLER road at R-103184, and a longer bailey type on the BISCHWILLER - OBERHOFFEN crossing at R-098187. The engineers working on the bailey bridge brought it to completion at 1100A, nearly within the estimated time required. But the treadway, which was counted upon to be finished in time to take armor across it at daylight, because of the engineers' inexperience in handling this type of construction, was not finished before 1000A. Some enemy harassing artillery had fallen near the sites during the night but not enough to interfere effectively. But the inability of our tankers to enter the morning battle within OBERHOFFEN was the prime factor in the resulting losses of objectives as described above.

The first of our tanks to reach OBERHOFFEN around noon had to deal with a German Mark V (Panther) in favorable firing position South of the main fork. Two (2) of our M4A3's jockeyed to outmaneuver the Panther which, from behind a slight bend, covered the main approach from the South and the secondary street leading in from the flatland to the Southeast. Our tank on the southern approach was caught when it pulled out to quick-fire into the enemy tank. But the combined pressure of the two (2) tanks, with the presence of our infantry bazookas, forced the Panther to retire.

Fighting around the fork continued intensively during the afternoon with Company "E", now supported by tanks exerting the main pressure (Figure 4, page 9). Gradually it was learned that Company "G", still thought to be intact in the North, had been dispersed.

Combat Command "B", of the 14th Armored Division, had been attached to the 36th Infantry Division for this operation. Its intended employment was as relief of 142d Infantry elements in OBERHOFFEN after the town had been secured. Major General JOHN E. DAHLQUIST, Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, watching developments of the attack at the Regimental Command Post, ordered a company of the Combat Command "B" tanks to cross on the treadway bridge and made a thrust on the flank to the North, hitting the town at the point where Company "G" did the night before (Figure 4, page 9). This, however, was slow in getting underway, and it was late afternoon before the action took

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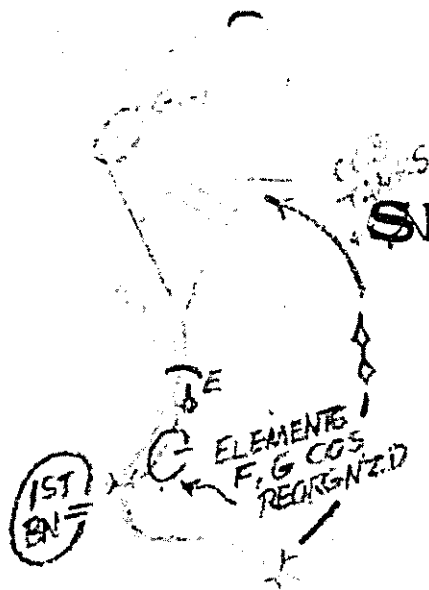


FIG 4. SITUATION, 2ND BN AFTERNOON, 1 FEB

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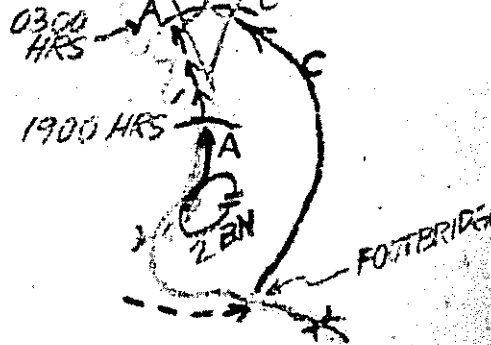


FIG 5. 1ST BN PASSES THRU 2ND BN, DARK, 1 FEB

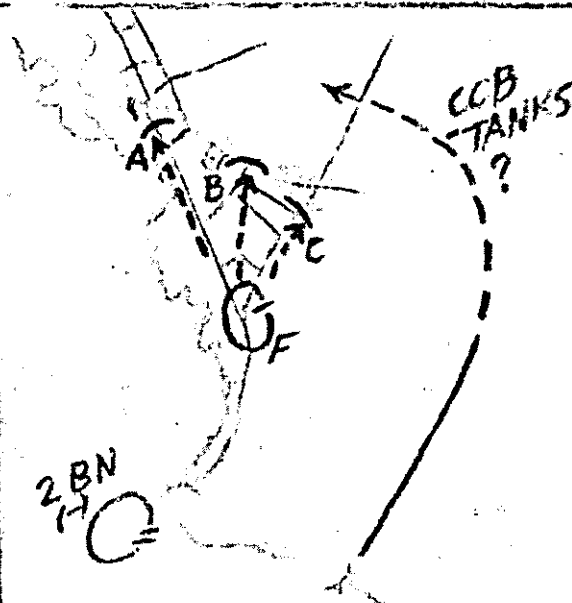


FIG 6. SITUATION 1ST BN, DARK, 2 FEB

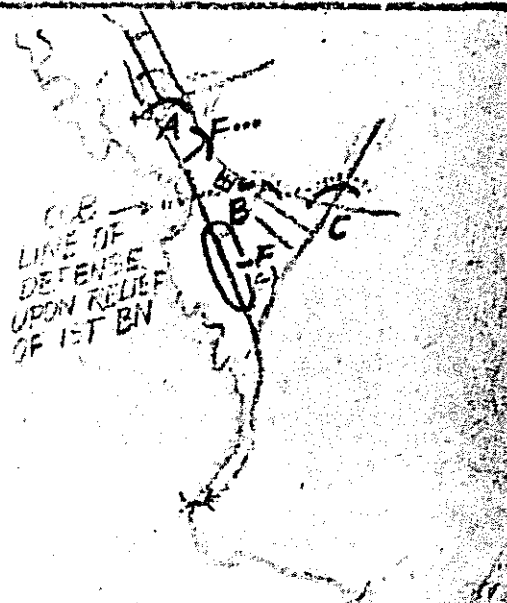


FIG 7. 1ST BN POSNS UPON RELIEF BY CCB, DARK, 3 FEB

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place. Its character was diversionary but little change was realized in the fighting at the South end of town.

At 1300A Colonel LYNCH informed Lieutenant Colonel JAMES L. MINOR, Commanding Officer, First Battalion, 142d Infantry, that his Battalion would pass through the Second after dark and continue with the mission of clearing OBERHOFFEN. This necessity directly affected the scheduled plan of launching the Division attack East to the RHINE. If OBERHOFFEN had been secured, the First and Third Battalions would have jumped off to the East at 1900A. When the First Battalion was committed in OBERHOFFEN a modified plan of using only the Third Battalion on the Division left was first ordered, then as H-Hour neared, the plan of this larger effort was postponed to await improvement of the situation at OBERHOFFEN.

The scheme of the First Battalion maneuver in passing through the Second Battalion sent Company "A" across the bailey bridge from BISCHWILLER, to take over the battle of Company "E" two hundred (200) yards South of the "Y" fork, while Company "C" crossed on the previously used footbridges to follow a route similar to that of Company "F" the night before, striking at the central portion of town above the "Y" fork (Figure 5, page 9).

Company "A" moved up under heavy artillery fire and found the resistance initially tough South of the fork. Darkness shrouded the movement of Company "C" across the open ground. After assembling without being disturbed, and discarding their snow suits, now that most of the snow had disappeared with the continued thaw, the Company moved into town two (2) platoons abreast at 2200A. Surprise was gained as the Germans had not counted on their entry at that point. Immediately part of the company was turned South toward the fork. Very soon two (2) German tanks, realizing the danger to their rear, rushed North from the vicinity of the fork, passing up the street through Company "C", still entering town. Attempts to engage or ambush the tanks were unsuccessful. But the enemy hold at the fork was broken. Company "A" moved up and cleared to the first junction on the West at R-097194. Fighting and mopping up of enemy in the area continued until 0300A when Companies "A" and "C" had established a line from East to West three hundred (300) yards North of the fork (Figure 5, page 9). Here a pause was made until early morning light. Thirty-seven (37) prisoners were taken in this fighting by the First Battalion.

Stiff opposition was met by both Companies "A" and "C" soon after jumping off at 0715A. Company "B", sent North through the center found the going much

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easier. Company "A", slowed at first, was able to push through on this broad main street to reach the area near the church at R-094204, before noon. Sharp fighting followed as the Germans brought up more tanks and infantry. In the center Company "B" closed up to their objective, the road junction at R-097202. But on the right Company "C" was faced with hard battling as the Germans countered with a strong tank and infantry force, trying determinedly to drive through as they had the day before. One (1) of our tanks scored several hits on a hulking German Tiger tank which either glanced off or failed to pierce its heavy frontal armor, then was disabled by a strike from the enemy tank. Any gains here were slowly won. Houses line each side of the street in close fashion and had to be taken one at a time. By noon Company "C" claimed two (2) houses beyond the junction at R-099198.

In the morning Major General DAHLQUIST informed Colonel LYNCH that the Division attack eastward would come off in the evening. Two (2) battalions of the 142d would be used. Therefore, he was anxious to clear up OBERHOPFEN in order to release the troops involved. Colonel LYNCH ordered the Second Battalion Commander to prepare to take over the originally assigned mission of the First Battalion, to attack on the Division's left and North flank toward DRUSENHEIM.

Elements of Combat Command "B" were to relieve the Second Battalion, following up and protecting the gains of the First Battalion in OBERHOPFEN. But as the battle waged fiercely for OBERHOPFEN throughout the day (the Germans having drawn from forces in SCHIRRHHEIN and DRUSENHEIM during the night to meet our attack on OBERHOPFEN. These troops as well as those already defending OBERHOPFEN were of the 10th SS Panzer Division) a modified plan for the main Division attack was adopted involving only the Third Battalion of the 142d Infantry.

To speed up the job in OBERHOPFEN the General also ordered another enveloping attack of Combat Command "B" tanks, two (2) companies this time, similar to the one of the day before. Company "C" (142d Infantry) prepared to coordinate with a small task force of its own attached armor to skirt the opposition holding its objective, by a short envelopment to the right.

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While the armored attacks were forming, one flight of a group of friendly planes on a mission to bomb SCHIRRHAIN, at 1230A, mistakenly dropped their bombs on our Company "C" and strafed the area. Fortunately no casualties were incurred though three (3) houses which had just been vacated by one of the platoons were demolished.

At 1400A the Germans pressed Company "B" back in the center with tanks that came out of the woods to the North. This same action carried East to throw Company "C" back seventy-five (75) yards, but the enemy effort was stopped when one of their tanks was put out of action and another hit. Company "A" was finding the enemy strong around the church on the left. Then enemy infantry threatened to filter to the right rear of Company "A". A platoon of Company "F" was brought up to meet and relieve this danger.

What happened to the Combat Command "B" tanks is still vague. From the flatland on the East they claim to have shelled the woods to the North, and, under heavy artillery fire, to have crossed the OBERHOFFEN - SCHIRRHAIN road North of town and headed West (Figure 6, page 9). However, our First Battalion reports that at least one (1) company of seventeen (17) Combat Command "B" tanks was lined up along the East road in OBERHOFFEN during the afternoon. This company was eventually used to effect a relief of Company "B", 753d Tank Battalion, attached to the First Battalion, that evening. Company "B" of the 753d Tank Battalion was then attached to the Third Battalion for its operation, while the Combat Command "B" tanks were to assist our infantry in clearing OBERHOFFEN.

Heavy fighting continued throughout the afternoon. Houses and slight gains exchanged hands several times. Each of our rifle companies knocked out an enemy tank. Prisoners later declared that five (5) of the Royal Tiger (Mark VI) type were in OBERHOFFEN in this fighting. At darkness, the completion of twenty-four (24) hours' engagement, the First Battalion had captured one hundred thirty (130) prisoners. Company "A" remained locked in hard fighting near the church. Company "B" had rewon its objective in the center. Company "C", able to make but small gains against fierce opposition, was ordered on to the junction at R-102201 after dark (Figure 6, page 9).

At nightfall, attention was shifted to the pending attack East to the RHINE. At 1900A four (4) battalions of the Division moved out from the existing BISCHWILLER - WEYERSHEIM line with the mission of clearing the enemy

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from the West bank of the RHINE from DRUSENHEIM southward (the French holding GAMBESHEIM). Our Third Battalion's first night objective was the DRUSENHEIM WOODS (BOIS DE DRUSENHEIM) between ROERWILLER and DRUSENHEIM (See sketch, Figure 10, page 14). Two (2) battalions of the 143d Infantry were to seize ROERWILLER, then swing South from HERRLISHEIM. A battalion of the 141st Infantry on the right, coming up from the South formed the second prong of a pincers on HERRLISHEIM.

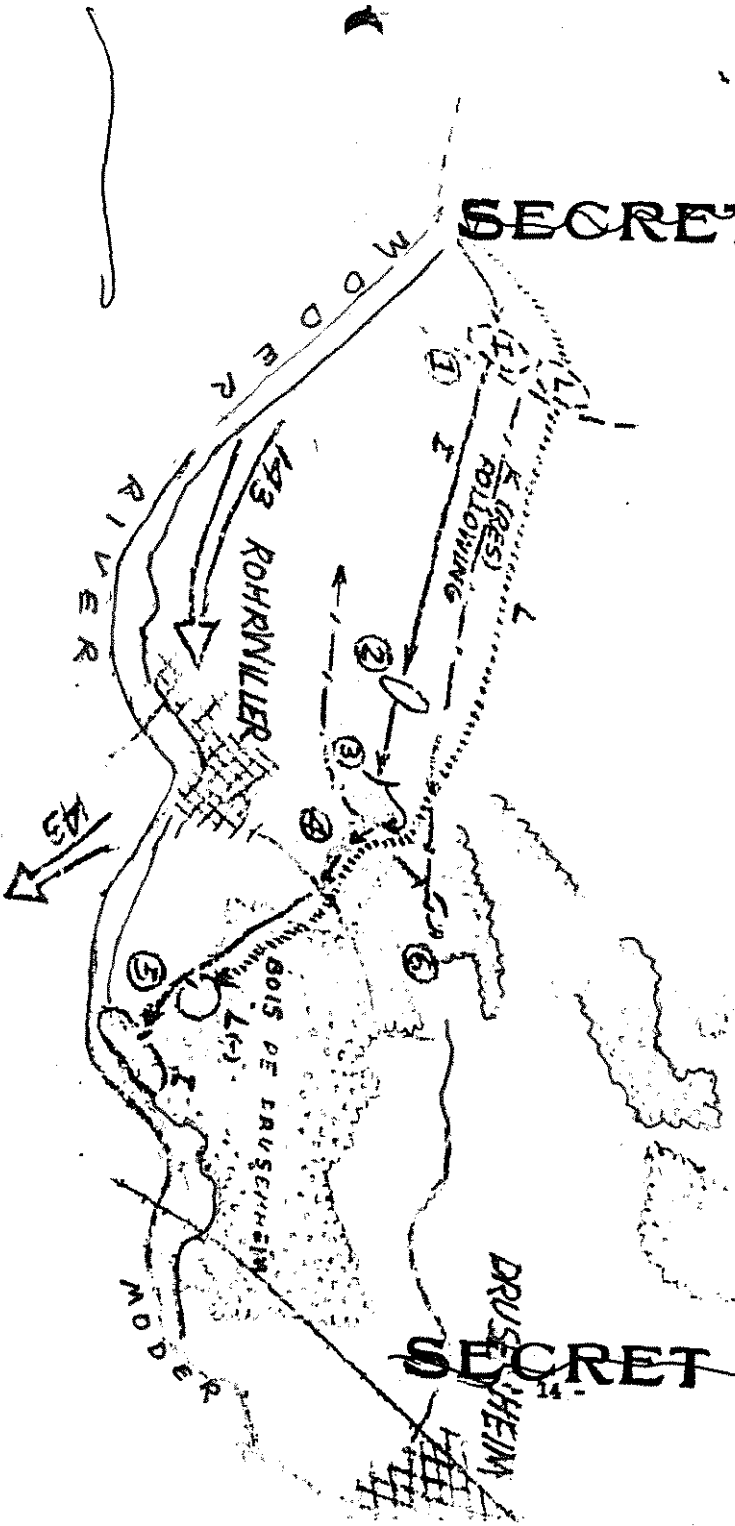
Four (4) days of extreme mildness had released a flood of water onto the lowlands of the attack route. More than a foot of snow had seeped into the once solid ground in the thaw. The MODER River rapidly rose and overflowed its banks in the vicinity of the treadway bridge, where the Third Battalion crossed in ankle-deep water. The footbridges were washed out completely. Complications, therefore, were greatly increased even at the start of this operation.

After wading across the MODER and three hundred (300) yards of water on the far side, the Third Battalion lined up in assault formation, Company "I" on the right, Company "L" on the left, Company "K" following in reserve. Compass readings were taken and the men moved off into the quiet darkness. Control was very difficult over the rutted and soggy ground. At a distance of four hundred (400) yards from the woods the advance was halted in order to reform the battalion and prepare to assault the woods. As yet no enemy fire had been drawn. It was nearly 2300A. Off to the right a few rifle shots and a flare marked contact of 143d Infantry troops closing on ROERWILLER.

The movement was again resumed, Company "I" on the right approaching the woods cautiously, expecting enemy action at each nearing step. It was impossible to hide the noise of wading through pools of water, but happily, at that moment, long flights of British night bombers were droning overhead, muffling the sound. When within one hundred (100) yards of the woods five (5) enemy machine guns suddenly broke loose. But they were firing blindly. Company "I" men dropped to the ground. Knowing that to remain lying on the ground in full view of the enemy with absolutely no cover or protection would soon subject his platoon to the disastrous effect of mortar fire in addition to the machine gun and small arms fire which he was already receiving, Technical Sergeant BERNARD P. BELL, 34336107, assault Platoon Sergeant, from Fayetteville, North Carolina, a member of Company "I", decided to attack by employing assault fire. Rising to his feet in a hail of machine gun and sniper fire, he let out a piercing yell and with tommy gun from his hip blazing, walked gallantly forward into the face of an enemy machine gun, at the same time urging his men to follow him and move forward. Inspired by their Platoon

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ATTACK OF 3RD DIV, NIGHT, 2-3 FEB - FIG 10.

- ① Assembly and line of departure. 2030
- ② Pause to reorganize.
- ③ Assault on enemy MGs firing from wood. 2300
- ④ Enemy tanks fled to NE.
- ⑤ Objectives seized. 0245
- ⑥ Enemy attack with tanks against K CO at daylight

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Sergeant's magnificent courage and fearless example, the men of Technical Sergeant Bell's platoon rose as one man and moved forward into the woods, firing from the hip and yelling demoralizing oaths to the enemy. The enemy was completely unnerved by Technical Sergeant Bell's daring assault on his dug in positions and unable to halt his advance. All but a handful broke and ran. The phase line was reached with a minimum of casualties, and the company moved on into the woods (at coordinates R-128182). Noting the sound of enemy tanks two hundred (200) yards to the Southeast on its route of advance, the company moved toward them. A bazooka called up from the rear came forward too late as the enemy tanks, at least two (2) of them, took off to the Northeast. Upon reaching the ROHRWILLER - DRUSENHEIM road at R-132179 the company lined up along the road to cover one platoon sent across the open ground to the Southeast. But no further enemy action developed as Company "I" skirted the edge of the DRUSENHEIM WOODS to go into position on the southern nose of R-140171 by the MODER River. Company "L", following, went in position behind them at R-135175. These objectives were reached at 0200A.

But with Company "K", all did not go as well. After pushing through the neck of woods at R-130185, they tangled with enemy infantry in the clearing. By daylight, at least five (5) enemy tanks were opposing them on the North. After losing contact with friendly units to front and right, and not knowing what had happened within ROHRWILLER, whether it had been taken or not, nearly all of Company "K" streamed back to BISCHWILLER. When this condition was learned at early morning, the company was reorganized and trucked up to ROHRWILLER (which the 143d Infantry had taken with surprise) before noon.

German tanks and infantry held the wooded section along the ROHRWILLER - DRUSENHEIM road. A two (2) company attack North from ROHRWILLER, with Company "K" on the right of the road and a 143d Infantry company on the left, ordered at noon (the Third Battalion was under 143d Infantry control for this operation) did not get under way. Companies "I" and "L" consolidated positions during the day. Enemy traffic on the DRUSENHEIM - HERRLISHEIM road was taken under fire. The Germans warded off the combined 143d Infantry and 141st Infantry effort to take HERRLISHEIM. ROHRWILLER then became the hub around which further action centered.

To return to OBERHOFFEN: While the Third Battalion shoved out to the East during the night of 2 February, the battle within OBERHOFFEN continued. Company "C" reached its objective, the road junction at R-102201 at dark, then

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was thrown back by more enemy tanks. One of these survived a 155mm artillery hit, merely being lifted and turned partly in the road. At midnight, however, another assault was made and the road junction was taken and held. The morning of the next day (3 February) was spent in hard fighting, Company "C" clearing out the final houses along the Northeast road to the point of woods; Company "A" won the church area and defended the road junction there against enemy infantry attacks during the day. Elements of the 68th Armored Infantry Battalion, Combat Command "B", 14th Armored Division, began relief of the First Battalion at noon--first Company "C" on the right, then Company "B" in the center. Company "A", with a platoon of Company "F" attached, continued operations around the church until dark, when they withdrew under cover of darkness (Figure 7, page 9). The Combat Command "B" defense position was assumed to the South of the cemetery on the left, thus leaving the Northwest section of OBERHOFFEN to the Germans, but forming a stronger line for defense. The First Battalion then returned to BISCHWILLER for a well-earned rest.

The Second Battalion, less Company "F" attached to First Battalion, had assembled in BISCHWILLER the night before (2-3 February). It was ordered to relieve the Third Battalion East of ROERWILLER after midnight of 3-4 February, thus averting the imminent danger of many cases of trench foot among the Third Battalion men who had been wading and marching in cold water for more than twenty-four (24) hours. Company "G" organized positions to defend the central portion of the DRUSENHEIM WOODS, from R-138172 to R-137177 with a strong outpost at the trail junction at R-142178. Company "F" took positions North of ROERWILLER at R-1318. In this vicinity during the morning of 4 February a company of the 143d Infantry completed clearing the woods to a line R-128183 to the road at R-133180. But enemy still lurked in the woods on either side of the ROERWILLER - DRUSENHEIM road. A platoon of Company "G" with four (4) tanks in support moved North across the road from Company "G" positions and in brisk fighting cleared the North woods, working East to win the exit of the road from the woods at R-137184. However, in taking this objective two (2) of our tanks were knocked out by direct fire from the edge of DRUSENHEIM.

That evening Company "F" relieved Company "G". The Battalion line now was disposed as follows: Company "E" at R-130185 and R-138182; Company "F" at R-137176 and R-138172. During the night (5-6 February) the Germans evacuated both HERRLISHEIM and OFFENDORF, freeing the area to the RHINE below DRUSENHEIM. Patrols to DRUSENHEIM in the night and in the morning determined that strong enemy forces were remaining there.



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Because of extreme difficulty allied with attacking forces across this flat open ground, most of which was under water or unable to support armor, on 4 February the Corps Commander outlined a new order of defense. A sector from KALTENHOUSE to include OBERHOFFEN and BISCHWILLER was assigned to the 142d Infantry, effective upon relief of the 315th Infantry, 79th Division, on the night of 5-6 February. Other elements of the Division held the line eastward from BISCHWILLER to the RHINE.

Accordingly during the afternoon and evening of 5 February, the Third Battalion took over the positions of the 315th Infantry. These extended from KALTENHOUSE to BISCHWILLER to cover the West bank of the MODER. Of course the right portion of this line was now screened by the gains made in OBERHOFFEN

On 6 February Colonel LYNCH ordered Antitank Company to secure the South end of OBERHOFFEN from the "Y" fork South to the bailey bridge, releasing troops to the 68th Armored Infantry preparing to attack once more in the Northwest sector of OBERHOFFEN. The Combat Command "B" troops encountered strong opposition at the church area again. A significant fact revealed by prisoners of war taken by the Combat Command "B" on 6 February was that the crack 10th SS Panzer troops had been relieved by a badly-knocked-about 257th Volksgrenadier Division the night before.

The 68th Armored Infantry Battalion reached the junction at R-093206 when our First Battalion relieved them at dark of 7 February. There followed three (3) days of terrific battling for this last section of OBERHOFFEN. Our forward elements were raked by hammering self-propelled fire from the woods to the right. Enemy artillery from the vicinity of CAMP D'OBERHOFFEN and heavy mortar were strong. In addition, the Germans were determined to hold our attack, throwing in repeated counterattacks of insufficient strength in themselves to win a decision. Three (3) days were required for a job that was expected to be mopped up in less than one. After that a larger enemy attack made a serious penetration which required another day to beat back.

It was planned to pass a Third Battalion Task Force, consisting of Company "L" with armor, through Company "A" when Company "A" had cleared the last of the town houses on the main or left road to the Northwest. This Company "L" force would then push to seize the railroad station and thus from a line on the East side of the MODER to include OBERHOFFEN. Company "A" advanced slowly during all of 8 February. The story describing the action of Staff Sergeant PAUL (NMI) EGNER, 15072431, from Canton, Ohio, Squad Leader of the Second Squad, First Platoon, Company "A", is typical of the day:

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Staff Sergeant EGNER'S squad, to the front in the company advance up the main street, was suddenly subjected to withering enemy machine gun and bazooka fire from a nearby house. Staff Sergeant EGNER, quickly grasping the situation, called for a tank, which supported his squad, to move into position and fire on the house. After two (2) shells had been fired into the enemy strongpoint, a German bazooka man launched a rocket at the tank, seriously wounding the tank commander. A fragment of the shell also wounded Staff Sergeant EGNER in the face. Heedless of his own painful wound, he dashed to the aid of the tank commander and carried him from the fire swept street into a nearby house where aid could be given. Although ordered to the rear himself, Staff Sergeant EGNER refused evacuation and continued to lead his squad in the attack against the German position. Establishing a base of fire with five (5) of his men, he then courageously led four (4) others in a flanking movement to the rear of the house. Crawling forward under the intense machine gun fire, he reached the house and entered through a window. Moving swiftly to the front of the house he hurled hand grenades into the midst of the enemy, destroying the machine gun, then swept the enemy with accurate fire from his tommy gun, killing five (5) Germans and capturing two (2). Receiving orders to halt the attack until the following morning, he set up defensive positions for the night. At dawn the following day, Company "A" again moved in attack, with staff Sergeant EGNER'S squad leading. Working from house to house the squad came upon an enemy personnel mine field between two houses, in a clearing fifty (50) yards wide. While crossing this mined area the squad sustained several casualties, and as the mines exploded, the Germans opened fire with machine guns and machine pistols from the next house. Under this deadly fire, Staff Sergeant EGNER led his men to assault the enemy position, leaping through the windows and delivering fire upon the Germans. As a result of this attack the squad killed four (4) Germans, captured three (3) and seized the house. After occupying the building, Staff Sergeant EGNER heard one of his men, who had been seriously wounded in the mine field, call for help. Without regard for his own safety, he moved back through the mined area, picked up the man, and carried him toward the house. While crossing the clearing he himself stepped on a mine, receiving serious wounds in the legs and in the face, and was immediately evacuated to the aid station.

At dark of 8 February, Company "A" was still short of its objective when an enemy counterattack of an estimated fifty (50) men filtered past the left platoon. Several hard-won houses were lost. Fighting continued until 2230A when Company "A", after retaking two (2) houses was ordered to hold up until morning. In the morning (9 February) the same stubborn resistance was met and enemy self-propelled fire was particularly aggravating.

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A bombing mission requested by the First Battalion, along the woods at the point where the railroad runs into them, was carried out with good effect at 1430A. Meanwhile, another counterattack of the enemy had been stopped at 1345A. Again the First Battalion lunged forward, Company "C" on the right making some progress. Late in the afternoon one (1) house on the right where Company "C" was working yielded some fifty (50) prisoners, including a Battalion commander. With the fighting still going on at 1800A a small enemy effort on the left was thrown back. Company "C" cleared the final houses on the right only to have the Germans bounce back with a stronger seventy-five (75) to one hundred (100) man counterattack and retake six (6) houses. A fresh platoon of Company "C" then was sent forward to relieve the hard-pressed and tired men of First Lieutenant CLARENCE F. BRADBERRY'S platoon who had done a magnificent job of pushing out on this vulnerable flank.

During the night (9-10 February) Company "L" passed through Company "A" on the left. Another thrust to the enemy flank launched from the vicinity of KALTENHOUSE was carried out by Company "I" in the early morning (10 February) hours before daylight (Figure 8, page 20). From a reserve area at the North edge of BISCHWILLER at R-082195, Company "I" moved North to pick up rubber boats at KALTENHOUSE. These had to be hand-carried more than a thousand yards to the river crossing site, a point selected between the two (2) blown railroad bridges at R-082210. A swift current greatly hampered the ferrying operation. With time running out, Captain ALBAN E. REID, JR., Commanding Officer, Company "I", ordered his men to try crossing on the broken debris of the North railroad bridge. This worked more successfully after some improvising. From there the Company "I" men moved along the railroad and at daylight quickly seized the railroad station at R-088211 and the factory two hundred (200) yards to the North. The main effort of Company "I", however, turned South toward Company "L". Here the resistance stiffened at the houses strung along the main highway. Soon the Germans were alerted to the new danger and swept the Company "I" holdings on the road with concentrated self-propelled fire from the woods to the Northeast. At 1000A an enemy force also drove off the outpost left to cover the factory. Company "I" attacked and won the factory at noon, but in itself the buildings were too extensive in size to be securely defended by the force that could be afforded at the time. Late in the afternoon the Germans returned and took the factory again. Meanwhile Company "I" pushed toward Company "L", their whole left flank and rear menaced by enemy fire and infantry action. The linkup was not effected that day, nor during the night. Hand-carrying of rations and ammunition across the river became necessary for resupply. After dark a squad of Company "K" came across to assist in protecting the rear of Company "I".

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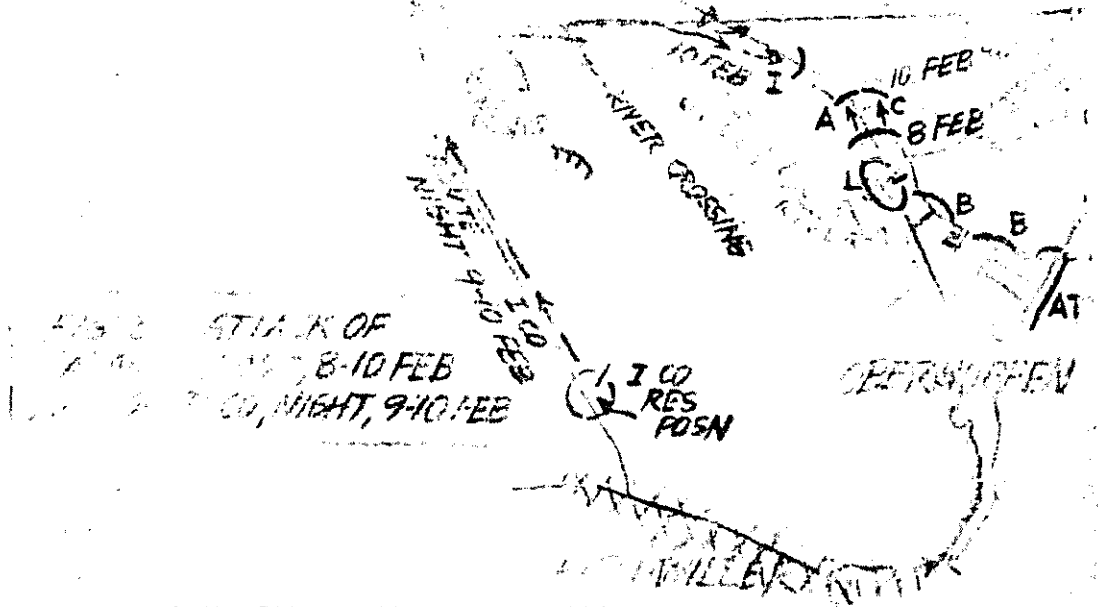
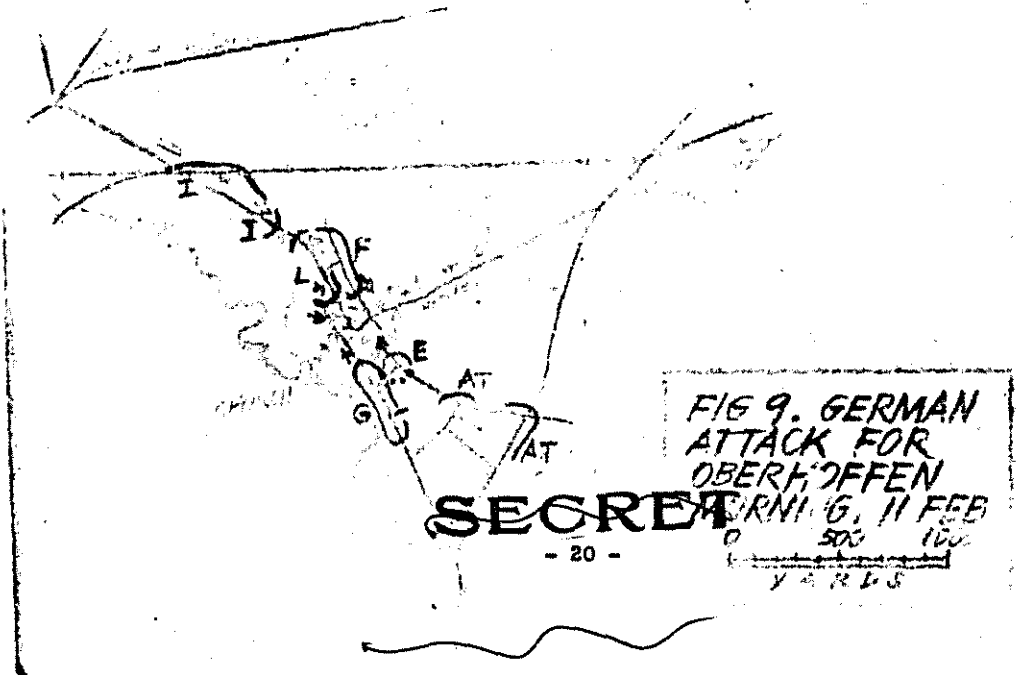


FIG 8. STACK OF
AT 8-10 FEB
CO, NIGHT, 9-10 FEB



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During this same day (10 February) in OBERHOFFEN, Company "C" still working in the Northwest corner plucked out forty-three (43) more prisoners from the same houses that had been won and lost the night before. The Germans had a covered approach, probably a trench system, leading to this edge of town and thus were able to feed more men onto the scene even after they had apparently been cleaned up. Company "L" made but little progress moving toward Company "I".

The Second Battalion relieved the First Battalion in OBERHOFFEN after dark of 10 February. Company "B" was placed under Third Battalion control and trucked to KALTENHOUSE to relieve Company "K" on position, Company "K" being alerted for movement in support of Company "I" should that be required.

At midnight (10-11 February) Companies "I" and "L" renewed their efforts to join, but enemy resistance continued strong. The enemy pocket between them was narrowed by several houses on either side, but a few hundred yards still measured the object of the attack.

Three (3) prisoners taken by Company "I" along the railroad late on 10 February gave warning of an impending counterattack of which they had been told. This was to include at least their company of infantry and be supported by six (6) self-propelled guns, three (3) of which the prisoners had seen. Our units were promptly notified of this though such attacks had become quite common by then.

First news of a more-than-unusual German attack was contained in the rather startling radio message intercepted from Major HUGH W. ROBERTS, JR., Commanding the Third Battalion's ROBERTS TASK FORCE (Company "L" plus armor) at 0745A (11 February): "Enemy tank and infantry outside my Command Post. Need help immediately". This Command Post was located just North of the church in Northwest OBERHOFFEN (Figure 9, page 20).

Lieutenant Colonel A. WARD GILLETTE, Commanding the Regiment in Colonel LYNCH'S absence, tried to verify this situation through the Second Battalion Commander since Second Battalion troops were defending the bulk of the town. But aside from the knowledge of a slight infiltration between Companies "E" and "F", the situation appeared to be under control. It was nearly 1000A when a clearer picture could be had. At daylight a battalion of Germans with three (3) self-propelled assault guns, under cover of the morning haze and light snow flurries, had driven across the three hundred (300) yard open

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space between the point of woods at R-097206 and the town. A platoon of Company "E" guarding the junction at this approach was driven in, some of them being captured. The Germans hastily seized the buildings at this junction (R-095205), then thrust through the center to the church--this was where Major ROBERTS reported the enemy self-propelled at his Command Post--and fanned to right and left to control an area about four hundred (400) yards square. This virtually split our forces in two, Companies "L" and "F" being on the North, the rest of Second Battalion with Antitank Company to the South. The support platoon of Company "E" was sent up to restore the position of the Company "E" platoon rendered ineffective. Two (2) platoons of Company "G" moved North along the main road to gain contact with rearmost elements of Company "L". Company "F", to the right of Company "L" along the street at R-094207, turned South to meet the new threat. The enemy was thus contained by elements of four (4) companies who pressed upon the aggressor to destroy his gains. At noon Private THEODORE W. KARAU, 37269569, from Rochester, Minnesota, of Company "L", knocked out one of the self-propelled guns by bazooka fire in front of the church. His platoon had come to the relief of Major ROBERTS' Command Post. Private KARAU at the moment volunteered to be bazooka man and after working into position aimed and fired at the enemy self-propelled. He missed with the first try, then sweated out two (2) return blasts of the self-propelled gun. Still exposing himself, Private KARAU let loose two (2) more bazooka rounds and scored hits on the turret and hull, killing the crew. A second self-propelled nearby withdrew. All afternoon the enemy pocket was compressed until finally at around 1600A the Company "E" platoon broke through to round up the last enemy elements including the German battalion commander directing the attack. A second enemy self-propelled was destroyed by Private KENNETH G. WELKER, 37406714, from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, of Company "F", by bazooka action at the crossroads where the enemy had first entered. Two enemy tanks which had infiltrated into the town then attempted to leave by moving out across a field. Private WELKER on seeing them move only one hundred (100) yards from his position, again exposed himself and opened fire from the doorway of a house. Firing two (2) rounds, one hitting the turret and one the side of the tank, he successfully knocked out one (1) of the tanks.

Technical Sergeant EDWARD C. DAHLGREN, 51261623, from Worcester, Massachusetts, of the Third Platoon, Company "E", performed outstandingly in the action of his support platoon; It was the Second Platoon of Company "E" that had felt the brunt of the German attack. Reporting the critical nature of his situation to the Company Commander, the Second Platoon Leader asked for help. Arrangements were made for the Third Platoon, in company reserve, to contact and aid the Second Platoon in repelling the enemy attack. Upon receiving his

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order, Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN, Third Platoon Sergeant, quickly organized his men and moved out to contact the Second Platoon. Splitting the platoon, he led half of the men along the right side of the street, while the remainder advanced on the left. After advancing two hundred (200) yards without enemy resistance, he suddenly observed a group of Germans, one hundred (100) yards away, crossing a field near the cemetery on his right. He immediately dashed into a barn and opened fire through a small window on the enemy with his Thompson sub-machine gun. He succeeded in killing six (6) Germans, wounding several others, and completely disorganizing this force. Realizing the importance of contacting the Second Platoon as soon as possible, he ordered a BAR man to remain and cover the field, then again led his platoon forward. A few minutes later, after encountering only scattered enemy fire, the Third Platoon contacted the Second Platoon at its Command Post. The two (2) platoons were quickly reorganized for a counterattack and Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN continued to advance on the right side of the street. He moved around the rear of one of the houses occupied by the Second Platoon and started toward the next house, when suddenly enemy machine pistol and rifle fire from the house was concentrated on the group. Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN dashed toward the house, twenty (20) yards away, and hurled a grenade into the door. Following up, he leaped into the door, spraying the room with his tommy gun fire. The badly disorganized and frightened Germans, eight (8) of them in all, immediately surrendered. After clearing the house, Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN started to the next house, but an enemy machine gun set-up in a window of the building opened fire upon him. Jumping back into the house, he grabbed a rifle grenade launcher from one of his men and moved to a window and began firing grenades at the Germans. The enemy machine gun continued to fire upon Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN, but he courageously remained exposed in the window to fire the rifle grenades until destroying the enemy weapon and killing its two (2) crew members. After silencing this, he moved to the rear of the house and while exposed in the doorway, another enemy machine gun, set-up in the barn, opened fire upon him. Here he hurled a hand grenade into the barn, then rushed the position firing his tommy gun. Within the barn, two (2) Germans quickly raised their hands, and in addition, he captured three (3) others who had been wounded by his deadly fire. He then reorganized his group of men to continue the assault and moved toward the next house. This time the group was fired upon by German riflemen, and Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN worked his way between the two (2) houses, entering the enemy occupied houses by a window. As he opened fire, the Germans ran into a cellar where he quickly hurled several grenades into the midst of the foe, wounding several and capturing ten (10) Germans. After clearing all houses to the street junction, Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN and one other man moved down the other street to the right, to see if any Germans occupied the houses. They were not fired on as they moved along the street, but German voices were heard in the





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next to the last house. Telling his comrade, who carried a rifle grenade launcher, to fire a grenade into the house, he immediately dashed forward as two (2) grenades were quickly hurled into the house. Entering the house he found that the enemy had run to the cellar. He dashed to the cellar door, kicked it open, and fired several bursts into the cellar. Calling for the enemy to surrender he heard the Germans yell "Kamerad", then begin to file out with their hands up. Sixteen (16) Germans were captured by Technical Sergeant DAHLGREN in this house. He then joined his group of men and led them in clearing the remainder of the houses on the street. During the action, he destroyed two (2) enemy machine guns, killed at least eight (8) Germans, wounded an unknown number and personally captured thirty-nine (39) of the enemy.

Meanwhile Companies "I" and "L" had pressed their effort to join each other in the North. The last enemy strongpoint was blasted out by armor with Company "L" and a junction was made at 1455A.

A last small enemy-action struck at the North flank of Company "F" at 1700A but was quickly beaten off with the added fire support of Company "L".

In the course of the day's fighting heavy casualties were inflicted on the Germans, over two hundred (200) prisoners having been taken, while our own were very light. OBERHOFFEN was definitely and finally cleared and the enemy's attitude from that time on turned wholly defensive. His 257th Division had been further mauled and reduced by the loss of nearly five hundred (500) which passed through our prisoner of war channels alone. Our own positions were further consolidated and strengthened. Company "I" on the North, after thirty-six (36) hours of sustained fighting, was relieved by Company "K". Armor and supplies could now easily roll to this northern sector and the precariousness of that position was reduced. The factory North of the railroad was pounded with white phosphorus artillery, setting it afire and making it of no use to the enemy. Likewise the railroad station, an exposed position, was abandoned and left to be covered by fire and patrols only. The new line of defense ran from KALTENHOUSE East along the railroad to include the houses South of the railroad along the OBERHOFFEN - CAMP D'OBERHOFFEN road, then all of the rubble ruins of OBERHOFFEN itself.

Action around the factory occurred the morning of 12 February when a Company "K" attack supported by direct tank destroyer fire seized it at daylight and captured twenty-two (22) prisoners. By 1000A the Germans had come back. Then it was that this was decided to be destroyed by artillery and burning, rather than to occupy it.

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Quiet reigned in OBERHOFFEN for the remainder of the Regiment's stay there in defense. Artillery was exchanged in lighter quantities. Our patrols probed the woods nightly and reached half-way to SCHIRREIN, finding the Germans still maintaining outposts at the edge of the nearby woods.

During afternoon and evening of 15 February, the Regiment was relieved by elements of 143d Infantry and motored back to a reserve and training area near BRUMATE; First Battalion at BERNOLSHHEIM; Second Battalion at NEIDERSCHAEF-FOLSHEIM; Third Battalion and Cannon Company at WEITERUCH; Antitank Company at WALENHEIM; Service Company at ERAUTWILLER; the Regimental Command Post at ROTTELSHEIM. Here ten (10) full days of rest and training, the first of such length free from any impending rush order or tactical move. Training was carefully planned and carried out according to schedule.

At dark 25 February, the Regiment returned to the line, taking up the defensive positions held by elements of the 101st Airborne Division along the South bank of the MODER River West of HAGUENAU from the road junction at coordinates Q-937271 East to include SCHEWIGHAUSEN. This had been the scene of the German penetration over the MODER in their full scale attack of 25-27 January when they were intent on taking STRASBOURG. But since the restoration of the line along the river the front had been a quiet one. It remained so during the last days of February. The sector was held with the First Battalion on the left, the Second Battalion on the right, and Antitank Company (as infantry) in the center. The Third Battalion in reserve was able in this situation to carry on a training program in the rear at BERSTHEIM, NIEDERALTDORF and HUTTELDORF.

Hard, tiresome fighting had occurred for nearly half of February with the action centered mainly at OBERHOFFEN. The Germans put up a grim resistance including several strong counterattacks. Portions of the town were fought and won two and three times, while heavy concentrations of artillery, mortar and frequent tank blastings reduced most of its structure to rubble. The use of armor with infantry was most necessary and effective. Its lack at an early stage proved costly and was cause for prolonging the winning of this objective many days. Our casualties for 1-15 February amounted to two (2) Officers and forty-one (41) Enlisted Men Killed in Action; fourteen (14) Officers and two hundred and seventy-six (276) Enlisted Men Wounded in Action; four (4) Officers and seventy-five (75) Enlisted Men Missing in Action; and eight (8) Officers and one hundred and forty-four (144) Enlisted Men Non-Battle Casualties. This compared favorably with previous records in view of

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the heavy fighting involved. The weather was unusually mild for the whole of the month, with the number of clear days about equal to the number of cloudy. In the latter part of the month the Regiment profited by the period of training and rest allowed from 16-25 February. Reinforcements to the number of four hundred and sixty-eight (468) were received during the month. These were given a special training program under the direction of Major SETH J. SPITLER, Executive Officer of the Second Battalion. In the one offensive operation of the Division during February, the Germans were forced from the salient below IRUSENHEIM West of the RHINE, and OBERHOFFEN, where fierce battling raged, was taken by the men of the 142d Infantry Regiment.

Richard A. Huff

RICHARD A. HUFF
Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

L-1044

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE AND GERMANY FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 1945.

Ten days of gruelling, aggressive action snapped the long-quiet MODER River line, smashed through the German WESTWALL, and chased the enemy from West of the RHINE. In early March the Regiment maintained defensive positions along the MODER from NEUBOURG to East of SCHWEIGHAUSEN, near HAGUENAU. The great push of 15 March opened quietly in the early morning hours, developed in intensity until the MODER line was broken and MERTZWILLER cleared. Exhausting pursuit followed the enemy into his powerful SIEGFRIED defenses above WISSEMBOURG. Three days of hard pillbox-to-pillbox fighting under intense artillery and rocket fire, and a deep flanking maneuver opened a hole that allowed elements to slip into DORRENBACH and achieve a breakthrough. A fast sprint to the RHINE on 25 March, fanning dust in stunned civilian faces, completed the rout of the enemy from West of the RHINE.

Defensive positions along the MODER River West of HAGUENAU, which had been assumed the night of 25 February, were maintained the first eleven days of March. The sector was unusually quiet, far from the scene of raging First and Ninth Army battles to the North. But our patrols, nightly searching out enemy positions across the river, provoked storms of protest from the Germans who lay in waiting for any offensive action on our part. We were not particularly concerned about any German attack in our direction, as mounting pressure elsewhere was driving him from West of the RHINE in the North. In early March the Ninth Army closed up to the RHINE near DUISBURG. The First Army took COLOGNE and seized its historic bridgehead at REMAGEN. The Third Army crashed through SIEGFRIED defenses near BITBURG and raced to the RHINE above COBLENZ. It was inevitable that Seventh Army, facing the WESTWALL all along its southern approaches from HAGUENAU to SAARBRUCKEN, would swing into action to reduce the remaining German holdings West of the RHINE--that area within GERMANY bounded by the SAAR, MOSELLE and RHINE Rivers known as the SAAR - PALATINATE.

In preparation for the pending event, the Regiment was withdrawn from the line to the vicinity of HOCHFELDEN on the night of 11 March for a brief

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rest and for organization. Three (3) days of intensive planning, issuance of orders, etc. there followed. But the accustomed tenseness which usually grips men before a jump-off known to be in the offing was not apparent. Perhaps it was the confident air of other allied successes rumbling along the Western Front. The weather promised fair. The point of attack and routes to the assembly were familiar. Even the enemy ground and at least its general character were known by many who had visited it while on patrol. The carrying out of the necessary details which prepare, and in careful coordination, transport and guide three thousand (3,000) men to their appointed places just prior to H-hour of a mass-attack, were done with the casual but efficient manner of men who knew their job.

The part the 142d Infantry was to play in a broad Seventh Army offensive scheduled for the night of 14-15 March was planned as follows: The initial mission of the Regiment was the capture of MERTZWILLER, a focal point of German resistance within the sector (See Figure 1, page 5). German gun positions located there had been a frequent target of our own artillery. MERTZWILLER is set within a natural cover, the HAGUENAU forest, and served as a base of operations for the enemy's MODER line.

From an existing bridgehead at UBERACH, two (2) companies of the Second Battalion were to attack into the woods and Northeast astride the UBERACH - MERTZWILLER road. The third company would assault the river line at the mill crossing North of DAUENDORF, join with the other two companies in seizing the North portion of MERTZWILLER (the town being distinctly divided by the KINZELLE River); more to the East of the Second Battalion's one company river crossing, the Third Battalion by direct assault would storm the river line, force through the forested area at its slightest depth, then, from cover of the woods at near the UBERACH road, close on the southern half of MERTZWILLER from the West. The First Battalion would assemble as Regimental Reserve at DAUENDORF.

With the divisional effort headed toward WISSEMBOURG and the approach to GERMANY through the WISSEMBOURG gap, in this first phase the 141st Infantry, on the right, would be thrusting North from HAGUENAU, while on the left, the 143d Infantry, from the bridgehead at LA WALCK, would make a sweeping end run through BITSCHHOFFEN, MIETESHEIM, GRIESBACH and East to GUNSTETT. From here in successive stages the Division would press into GERMANY.

Resistance was expected to be considerable at first, until the MODER defenses had been broken. Then it was assumed that the Germans, in a series

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of delaying actions, would fall back upon their SIEGFRIED LINE (WESTWALL) defenses. It was hoped that an overpowering effectiveness in our initial assault at the MODER, followed up by a rapid and aggressive pursuit, would prevent the Germans from properly manning their intricate and stalwart WESTWALL positions. Once before, in middle December, American troops of the Seventh Army had tested the SIEGFRIED defenses above WISSEMBOURG. But these had been ordered withdrawn in January when German designs on Alsace became apparent and German troops concentrated for a thrust to unbalance Seventh Army positions. Now, with Seventh Army geared to push on through the WESTWALL, the Third Army on the North, having cleared German soil above the MOSELLE, would in conjunction strike southward well behind German fixed defenses. A double menace was thus posed on the whole SAAR basin. The rout of enemy forces from West of the RHINE was imminent.

Breaking The MODER Line.

The night (14-15 March) was quiet, as usual. Only an occasional boom of artillery spoke an occasional harassing mission. The moon was not out, but a diffused light from the sharply defined stars of a cloudless sky allowed objects in the dark to be faintly distinguishable. At small NIEDERALTDORF, less than three (3) miles from the MODER, a low drone marked the approach of friendly convoys which paused at the single turn-around. From 2030 hours until midnight troop-carrying trucks arrived according to schedule. Men, with weapons and battle equipment, dismounted and marched off quietly into the night; the Second Battalion, Third Battalion, Antitank Company, First Battalion. Empty, the trucks returned the way they came. NIEDERALTDORF had not been disturbed. But the silently marching columns had an important mission to perform and the time was rapidly nearing. Expectantly the watchful foot soldier looked to the front--for a flare or any unusual activity that might suggest undue warning, and trouble. But no, all remained quiet.

At the Third Battalion river site, between midnight and 0100, engineers laid two (2) footbridges across a twenty-five (25) foot gap. When it was seen that a third bridge could not be completed on time, the order was changed to accommodate the battalion crossing in two (2) files instead of three (3). Promptly at 0100, H-hour, in a column of companies with Company "I" leading, followed by Company "K", Battalion Headquarters Company, Company "M" (less attachments), and Company "L", the Third Battalion moved off into the attack. There was no artillery preparation. Lead elements waded one stream (after crossing the bridge) waist deep and were in another hip-deep, at the edge of the enemy woods, before German fire was drawn. In a short time the whole

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scene was ablaze. At least eight (8) enemy machine guns, cross-firing into the flat, open ground, were identified. This did not deter the head of the column, now almost into the woods, who unhesitatingly charged forward according to previous instructions with terrifying and raucous cries. The success of the attack depended upon this rushing of the enemy positions and rapid follow up of all elements before effective fire could be brought to bear on the exposed column.

The initiative and sterling example of Sergeant ROBERT L. DE LAMARTER, 42023827, then Private First Class, from Greene, New York, under this stress is noteworthy: Sergeant DE LAMARTER, of the Fourth Platoon, Company "I", finding that his squad leader was missing, assumed the responsibility of leading and guiding his mortar squad. At the rear of the company column, his squad had to pass through the open field beyond the river crossing after the enemy machine guns had opened fire. While the other members of his squad sought cover he remained upright in the face of the enemy fire so that his men might guide upon him in the black of the night. Disregarding his own personal safety he made numerous trips back along the file to check his men and encourage them to move along to the protective cover of a ditch at the edge of the woods. Upon entering the woods the squad's left flank was endangered by enemy small arms fire, killing one of the men and throwing the others into confusion. Sergeant DE LAMARTER, shunning cover, immediately proceeded to calm the men and reorganize them, returning many times along the file to check their presence and rapid movement. His courageous action and aggressive leadership materially aided in the protection of the company's rear and as a result unity and contact was maintained.

But, while all of Company "I", most of Company "K" and part of the Battalion Headquarters, were able to push through the outer fringes of the woods, the rearmost elements of the column were caught in a volume of enemy fire. Soon enemy mortar fire was dropping incessantly upon Company "L" which had not yet crossed the river. The company was disorganized and became detached from the rest of the battalion. After reorganization, a second attempt to make the crossing was unsuccessful. Finally, a group of about eighteen (18) men, with Captain ALBERT F. FISHER, Commanding Headquarters Company, Third Battalion, whose mission was to organize the stragglers, did get across in the face of heavy fire, and later joined the battalion main body. Company "L" was brought around by way of UBERACH in the morning after daylight and given another mission.

The two (2) leading companies and a party including the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel EVERETT S. SIMPSON, forged on through the woods

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until the corner of the clearing at objective "F" was reached. Leaving one platoon of Company "K" there as a strong point, Company "I" and the remainder of Company "K" moved on to the North, where, from the cover of the woods, they struck East into MERTZWILLER. It was before daylight at approximately 0500. Some resistance was encountered by Company "I" on the North, as it moved in to seize the bridge site at the main road crossing of the ZINZELLE River.

The bridge, from photographic studies, was known to be blown, but a false transmission of Company "I" reports during the day gave an insistent impression that the bridge was in. A later attack based on this assumption, had to be hastily redrawn. The Third Battalion was on its objective, though in reduced force, at first light of day. Morning and afternoon were required by other elements of the Regiment to establish physical contact and open a route to them.

Antitank Company, acting as infantry, had been assigned the mission of following the Third Battalion across the river and establishing a road block defense at the junction of the main road and trail not far into the woods. Only a portion of the company got across in the confusion--Captain VERNON M. SCOTT, Commanding Antitank Company, with twelve (12) men--but by daylight they had settled upon their objective and in the hours following, warded off several enemy attempts to come in upon them. An errand of mercy assigned to Company "L" early in the morning was the relief of Antitank Company's tenuous position by driving East along the railroad from UBERACH. By then supporting armor could accompany Company "L" across a newly constructed bridge between NIEDERMODERN and UBERACH, completed at 0855.

With the Second Battalion, progress had not been as far-reaching. Companies "E" and "G" broke into the HAGUENAU forest East of UBERACH but became involved in cleaning up enemy bunkers and trench positions along both sides of the main road. This was not easy. Many times Germans had to be forced out of their dug-outs by point blank tank fire. The Second Battalion armor had crossed the MODER soon after H-hour on the bridge at LA WALCK and by daylight was operating with the rifle companies.

Company "F", attempting to assault the river line at the mill site North of DAUENDORF, a point often used previously by patrols, was prevented from making headway by extremely heavy concentrations of fire upon it. Seventeen (17) of the company were killed and many more wounded in three (3) efforts to cross. Finally, with but two (2) reduced platoons over, and these still facing determined resistance, the company was ordered to withdraw to join Companies "E" and "G" by way of UBERACH.

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Company "G" was diverted for a time to the Company "L" mission of pushing out along the railroad toward Antitank Company, until Company "L" with its armor could reach and pass through Company "G". Company "F", upon its arrival, began working along the right side of the MERTZWILLER road with Company "E" on the left. Company "G" after Company "L" had passed, went into battalion reserve behind Companies "E" and "F".

By 1130, Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Commanding the 142d Infantry, had decided to commit the First Battalion, passing it through the tiring Second Battalion, to hasten the capture of MERTZWILLER and the establishment of contact with the Third Battalion force in South MERTZWILLER. While the Second Battalion continued to press forward encountering scattered opposition deeper into the woods but taking many casualties from anti-personnel sub-mines, the First Battalion began marching from DAUENDORF to follow up and pass through the Second. At 1500 elements of the First Battalion took the lead about halfway through the forest on the MERTZWILLER road. Resistance increased when the Battalion reached the wooded edge. Here a German heavy weapons company was assembling preparatory to moving back to LAUBACH, when the First Battalion struck. Thirty (30) prisoners were taken and the Germans were forced to abandon four (4) 120mm mortars and two (2) 150mm howitzers. Upon emerging from the woods, a very heavy enemy shelling greeted the First Battalion and a number of casualties were suffered. Darkness soon obscured enemy observation, however, the First Battalion moving on in to contact the Third Battalion in South MERTZWILLER.

Meanwhile, Company "L" had joined with Antitank Company, and afterward turned North on the original Third Battalion route to objective "C". Antitank Company was ordered to push East to establish a defense at the NEUBOURG road junction.

Resupply was of immediate concern to the Third Battalion force within MERTZWILLER. During the day they had been continuously engaged with groups of Germans among them and with enemy forces fighting from the North end of town. Three (3) self-propelled guns were believed to have been destroyed in the day's fighting and more were known to be operating in North MERTZWILLER. Prisoners indicated that the Germans were attempting to fall back upon a defensive line at the ZINZELLE River that same night. For that reason strong opposition was expected to be met as our troops attacked to secure a bridge-head into North MERTZWILLER.

The First Battalion prepared to jump off on this attack as soon as practicable. Rubber boats were ordered up from the rear. Patrols

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investigating the main road crossing site where the bridge had been reported intact found the discouraging fact: only abutments standing, the bridge out. However, careful examination disclosed a fordable site not far to the left which the Germans had been using for their heavy vehicles.

Five (5) battalions of artillery were massed for a devastating preparatory fire--approximately nine hundred (900) rounds in five (5) minutes. Immediately following, at 0430 (16 March) Companies "A" and "B" crossed by the ford and by rubber boat. The enemy reacted with small arms, mortar, and artillery on the crossing site. Sergeant DAVID R. JONES, 39911720, from Malad, Idaho, a member of Company "B", was ordered to lead his squad across the river and attack a group of houses offering the principal resistance. In the face of the heavy fire, Sergeant JONES led his men through the icy waters, at places shoulder-deep, to reach the far side. He then reorganized his men and led them in an attack on the nearest house, taking it and driving the enemy back from the river. The remainder of the company was able to cross without drawing small arms fire. Several Germans were wounded and several taken prisoner in the group of houses and the company mission completed.

By 0600, with progress good, the engineers were given the go-ahead to begin work on laying a bailey bridge. Also, a footbridge, on which the reserve company, Company "C", crossed, was placed in position. An attempt to ford the First Battalion armor across was unsuccessful, but unlike a similar situation at OBERHOFFEN in February, the Battalion was able to do well without it. The engineers located a second suitable site for bridging and began work on placing a treadway here, hoping it would be completed in less time than that required for the bailey.

But in crisp morning sunshine, German artillery scored a direct hit on the specialized equipment used in installing the treadway bridge. Though forced to halt work on the bailey bridge because of the accuracy of the German artillery, this bridge was completed at 1400, allowing the First Battalion armor to roll across. By then, Companies "A" and "B" were both well beyond the fork on the East and West roads. Company "C" moved up through the center. The principal resistance consisted of self-propelled fire coming from the woods to the East of Company "A" (on the right road), while a small group of enemy fell back before the advance of Company "B" and eventually held out in the factory area at the West end for some time. The Battalion continued to work out to the edges of town during the afternoon. Before dark Company "C" attacked East from MERTZWILLER to the wooded edge at objective "E", where the retreating Germans were seen to have gone, but no opposition was met.

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On order of the Commanding General, the Second Battalion had been sent before noon to an assembly point in the tip of woods East of MIETESHEIM, and from there Company "G" crossed on a 143d Infantry bridge to relieve at 1430 a 143d Infantry company on objective "A". To the Southeast contact was made with the 141st Infantry and patrols covering the HAGUENAU forest roads determined that it was virtually clear of enemy.

The first phase of the Divisional attack had now been completed. The Germans, though prepared to fall back, had been overrun in many places and suffered heavy losses in men which they could not afford. The 142d Infantry captured three hundred three (303) during this period, the Division total being well over six hundred (600). Several thousand were suddenly lost on the long-time quiet front. The enemy was also forced to yield ground more rapidly than he intended and it was questionable whether he would be able to delay at any point before the SIEGFRIED line.

Now, from captured GRIESEBACH, the 143d Infantry was mounted on armor and moved East to exploit these initial gains. With MERTZWILLER cleared, the 142d Infantry was ordered to assemble, prepared to follow through with a like armored and motorized column.

Pursuit Into GERMANY.

At noon the following day, 17 March, the 143d Infantry was engaged with strong enemy rearguard action at GUNSTETT. Fighting there continued throughout the remaining daylight period while the 142d Infantry was held in readiness at MERTZWILLER, prepared to pass through as soon as a necessary bridge across the SAUER River could be put in by the engineers. Construction was late getting started, the site being under direct fire from the hill to the North.

At dark, with GUNSTETT about to be cleared and the Germans effecting a disengagement, Major General JOHN E. DAHLQUIST, Commanding 36th Infantry Division, ordered the 142d Infantry to pass through the 143d starting at midnight, when the bridge was due to be completed; from there on foot to get into position to attack at daylight what appeared to be, and prisoners declared to be, the enemy's next delaying line; the little SELTZBACH stream running through FREUSCHDORF and MERKWILLER-PECHELERONN (See 1/100,000 Map, page 20).

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According to routes of advance assigned for the previously proposed motorized march, the attack of FREUSCHDORF became a mission of the Third Battalion, and MERKWILLER the First Battalion. Artillery was held available, ready to fire on call but no preparation was planned.

Starting at 2330, the Regimental column with Third Battalion leading, moved out from MERTZWILLER. The bridge at GUNSTETT had been completed ahead of time and the town, except for holed-up German stragglers had been cleared. At GUNSTETT our troops dismounted, and marching the rest of the night, proceeded to their assembly points as planned.

Closing in on FREUSCHDORF at daylight, the Third Battalion entered without enemy contact, and, what was of first importance, found three (3) bridges intact. When this was reported, the Battalion was ordered to move on foot immediately to its next objective, armor and transport to catch them enroute. The First Battalion, in the dark got off on a wrong trail and was therefore late in attacking its objective. Similarly, no opposition was offered at MERKWILLER, though bridges had been blown.

WISSEMBOURG became a likely objective for the day, for now it was apparent that the Germans had withdrawn a considerable distance, probably to the SIEGFRIED line. Motorized columns within the battalions were organized without delay. Dozers and bridge trains were an integral part, as physical road blocks, mines, and bridges blown were to be frequently encountered.

The Third Battalion, on the left, advanced through LAMPERTSLOCH, LOBSANN and along the road on higher ground at the edge of the LE HOCHWALD forest to ROTT, entering ROTT and gaining enemy contact at 2200 hours. Nine (9) physical blocks, some of them heavily constructed had to be removed or a by-pass found. The First Battalion was slowed by bridges blown at MERKWILLER and East of LOBSANN. On a route through KEFFENACH, BIRLENBACH, BREMMELBACH and CLEBOURG, the First Battalion reached and took OBERHOFFEN in a night skirmish just after midnight. Here an enemy tank offered some opposition.

A patrol from the Third Battalion going forward from ROTT to investigate WISSEMBOURG drew machine gun and self-propelled fire from both sides of the road a short distance out, between 2300 and midnight. It appeared likely that the Germans would make some stand South of or at WISSEMBOURG. Both the Third and First Battalions were well fatigued at this point, having been on the move for more than twenty-four (24) hours, after only a few hours sleep; and a major engagement had not yet been joined.

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At ROTT and OBERHOPFEN the Regiment was less than three (3) kilometers from WISSEMBOURG. A halt was called for the night.

In the morning the Second Battalion left from its bivouac at the encampment near DRACHENERONN at 0600 to pass through the Third Battalion and attack WISSEMBOURG. Some resistance and a road block was met and fifty (50) prisoners were picked up. Both the Second and the First Battalions, which advanced from OBERHOPFEN at 1030, got into WISSEMBOURG at about the same time, noon. Since the First Battalion route into town was the most direct and passable, the First Battalion was ordered on to BERGZABERN, with a platoon of the 36th Reconnaissance Troop to precede the battalion column. The Second Battalion would assemble in WISSEMBOURG and follow.

The advance was on foot now. Here, at the crossing of the border outside WISSEMBOURG, German WESTWALL defenses would begin. The First Battalion moved into GERMANY. A reported enemy concentration at SCHWEIGEN proved false. RECHTENBACH was passed, and lead elements neared OBER OTTERBACH without contact at 1515. But within the next hour German guns spoke, raining heavily upon the First Battalion, shelling WISSEMBOURG, and covering the road from WISSEMBOURG to OBER OTTERBACH. The battle to break the WESTWALL had begun.

Crashing The SIEGFRIED Line.

A glance at the map will show that the ground is only slightly rolling and open at OBER OTTERBACH, whereas to the West, forest-covered hills rise sharply. The main defense belt in the flatland is at the DIERBACH stream above OBER OTTERBACH, where the monster dragon's teeth and an anti-tank ditch are located. Into the hills West of OBER OTTERBACH a complex network of heavy concrete pillboxes, set into the ground and cunningly camouflaged, with interlocking schemes of fire, elaborate trench systems and wire obstacles, constituted the vaunted main SIEGFRIED defenses (See Figure 2, page 14).

The First Battalion did not hesitate to attack OBER OTTERBACH, and, despite a heavy volume of rocket fire received at the approaches and intense small arms from the heights above it, cleared the town of enemy by nightfall. After reorganizing, the First Battalion moved forward to test the enemy defenses at the dragon's teeth. Meeting fierce resistance it was ordered back to the cover of OBER OTTERBACH before daylight.

Meanwhile, the Second Battalion was committed into the hills West of town. At midnight, with the outcome of the First and Second Battalion attacks

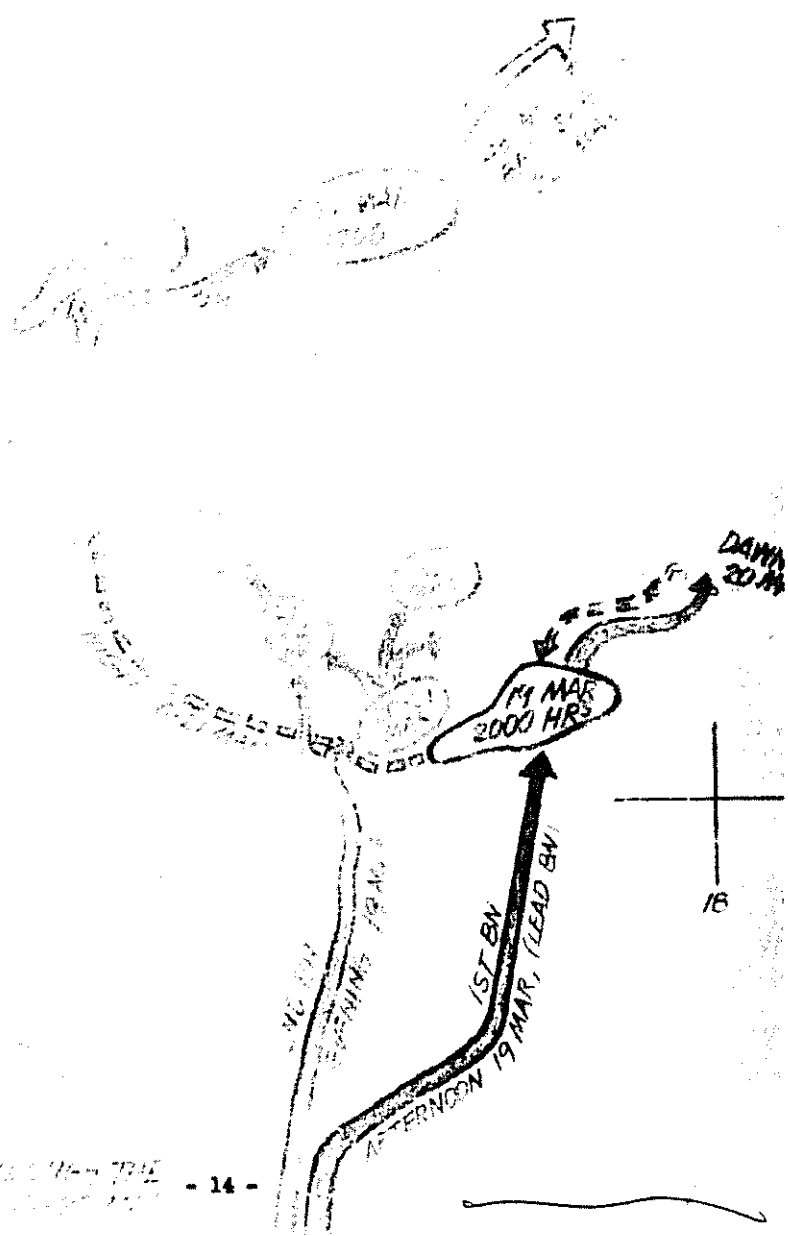


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not certain, Colonel LYNCH ordered the Third Battalion on a deeper flanking mission to seize the dominating GRASSBERG height. Its route, however, was winding and slow--the road West from below RECHTENBACH, following the base of the PITZBERG and HUMBERG hills.

The Second Battalion was stopped on the slopes of the EBNUNG hill, the men at dawn finding themselves, on occasion, dug in within a few yards of a cleverly disguised massive pillbox. During the night heavy artillery and enemy infantry provided a determined defense.

It was necessary for the Third Battalion, before mounting the GRASSBERG hill, to cross the deep valley at its base, purposely made barren by the felling of trees. The felled trees, on the steep slopes of GRASSBERG, also supplied an additional obstacle in the enemy defense.

The Third Battalion main body reached the deep draw at about noon (20 March) and prepared for a crossing at its narrowest open stretch. Across this, while a lone enemy machine gunner, from the head of the draw at a range of an estimated nine hundred (900) yards, pecked away at each individual, the battalion infiltrated to climb the slopes of its objective.

A lead platoon of the Battalion, from Company "I", had, without knowledge or direction of the battalion commander, attacked the GRASSBERG hill in advance of the main body. It succeeded in gaining the top by surprise but was driven off by counter-action after the platoon leader was killed.

It was therefore remarkable that this large force, should on the second occasion, obtain an element of surprise, but it appears that the Third Battalion did. The Germans were caught in their trenches, many of them dying there in the brisk battle that ensued. It was late afternoon when GRASSBERG was secured. Germans attempting to infiltrate back onto the hill after dark were severely cut down. With forty-five (45) of the enemy taken prisoner, and a count of enemy dead after the battle totaling fifty-seven (57), the estimated strength of the Germans in this action may be assumed to be near two hundred (200).

A critical point had been won. Desperately the enemy attempted to throw back this wedge into their line, but to no avail. The Third Battalion was ordered to go on, down into DORRENBACH, but could not because its ammunition supply was shortening gravely and enemy counter threats were still being driven off.

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Colonel LYNCH ordered Antitank Company to relieve First Battalion at OBER OTTERBACH after dark. The First Battalion during the night was then marched the short way around to the Third Battalion on GRASSBERG for an attack to seize DORRENBACH. At 0715, after completing the grueling climb up the GRASSBERG slopes, the First Battalion jumped off astride the trail to the North. This became a slugging match from the start, very strong fire being received from the ridge line to the Northwest. Little progress was attained all morning. The delay also held up an attack of Third Battalion elements, ordered to pass behind the First Battalion over this ridge and to the West, to contact the 103d Division on the left, and meet with a 143d Infantry Battalion attacking Hill 489 (FARRENBURG) from the Southwest. After noon the Third Battalion sent one company due West to attack from the South, the resistance holding the First Battalion. But this force became tangled with pillboxes covering the objective from further West.

The First Battalion planned a strong artillery preparation in another effort to shake loose and were calling it down, when suddenly, Company "B", to the front and on the right, broke away and crashed into DORRENBACH. This was the punch that carried through the WESTWALL. Company "A" remained engaged on the ridge West of DORRENBACH while the rest of the battalion quickly cleaned up within the town. Then followed a night and a day of most intense nebelwerfer fire upon the town. That evening a battalion of the 143d Infantry passed on with the mission of seizing BERGZABERN but missed its direction and at daylight was somewhere Southeast of DORRENBACH. All of next day was required before BERGZABERN was taken before dark of 22 March by the 143d Infantry.

While this more spectacular ground gaining was going on, the Second Battalion, in the hills West of OBER OTTERBACH, bucking head-long into the strongest of the massed pillboxes, claimed a record of its own in cleaning out a total of fifty-four (54) of them during the operation. In a sudden spurt at 0600 of 21 March, eight (8) of the strong points were overrun before the Germans could realize their helpless state. All but two (2) of the little fortresses buttoned up and refused to heed the urgent appeals to surrender that our men called through open ports and air vents. Experiments with hand grenades, bazookas, and the pouring of gasoline into openings were ineffective in trying to pry out the obstinate defenders. Special explosive charges known as "beehive", because of their shape, which are designed to throw their force downward, were brought up by the engineers. Engineer and infantry teams, working together placed the charges on roofs, at doorways and apertures, wherever weaknesses were apparent. Usually one or two blasts was sufficient

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to encourage the inside occupants to surrender. One pillbox, however required the placing of thirteen (13) charges before the desired results were obtained.

On one occasion, with Captain JOE W. GILL, O1702996, from Canyon, Texas, leading the way, Company "E" proceeded up a draw to attack a series of enemy pillboxes. Approaching the enemy position from the left, they encountered intense enemy machine gun fire coming from two (2) enemy machine guns emplaced East of the pillboxes, halting their advance. There were four (4) pillboxes in this series, situated in a rectangular pattern so that each could fire on troops that attempted to approach either of the other pillboxes. Selecting five men to accompany him, Captain Gill proceeded across a ridge, exposing himself to intense enemy small arms fire, moved by one pillbox and on to a position approximately ten (10) yards from the Southeast pillbox. Using his M-1 rifle, he fired upon the two (2) enemy machine gun positions, that were approximately fifty (50) yards away, silencing both guns and killing their crews. After directing his men's fire upon the pillboxes, he dashed to the door of the nearest one, and set off a beehive charge that blew down the door, killing one (1) German officer, and forcing five (5) enlisted men to surrender. Quickly moving to the Southwest pillbox, he forced seven (7) more Germans to surrender. Leading his company in assaulting the other two (2) pillboxes, he blew the door of one, capturing one (1) German officer and seven (7) enlisted men. As they approached the next pillbox, six (6) more of the enemy surrendered.

The Second Battalion cleared the EBNUNG hill up to the DIERBACH stream bed, and also took HOHENBERG hill when enemy there continued to bother Third Battalion on GRASSBERG. During 22 March a battalion of the 141st Infantry passed through the Second Battalion to sweep defenses behind the dragon's teeth and on SPRINGENBERG. This day also saw the Third Battalion, 142d Infantry, link up with Third Battalion, 143d Infantry, on FERRENBURG to open a trail route for motors to DORRENBACH.

With Division elements in BERGZABERN, enemy defense within the WESTWALL crumbled on the morning of 23 March. White flags waved from remaining once proud fortresses. American tank and motor columns streamed endlessly past, up the mountain road, on the main highway, rolling once again.

Race To The RHINE.

A twenty (20) mile dash East from BERGZABERN to close up to the RHINE concluded the month's combat activity. Congestion of the newly opened roads

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into BERGZABERN hindered an early organization of a motorized team. It was 1330 (23 March) when the First Battalion, mounted on tanks, moved out on a prescribed route to the Northeast (See 1/100,000 Map, page 20). A bridge out at NIEDER-HORBACH was easily by-passed. INGENHEIM, MUELEHOFEN and BILLIGHEIM were reached. At ROERBACH the column ran upon a 14th Armored Division unit which had come from KLINGENMUNSTER and was heading for the same objective, HORDT. But it was at the time stopped by an enemy block at the West end of HERKHEIM.

Colonel LYNCH ordered the First Battalion to try a route to the South, passing around this opposition and the 14th Armored column by way of STEINWEILER, HAYNA, HATZENBUHL, RHEINZABERN and RULZHEIM. Though it was after dark before a clearance on this road could be made, the First Battalion reached RULZHEIM at midnight, and ahead of the 14th Armored column. Some enemy resistance was encountered here, forty (40) prisoners being picked up. The Battalion turned East and mistakenly attacked KUARDT in place of HORDT. Enemy tanks which opened fire from KUARDT were driven off by the combined fire of our own tanks lined up as skirmishers before the town. HORDT was also entered and cleared at daylight.

The Second Battalion, following, moved into BELLHEIM and from there attacked East to the RHINE. The Third Battalion assembled in RULZHEIM.

Marshy, wooded fringes of the RHINE West bank were laboriously cleared and outposts established by night of 25 March when the Regiment was relieved and assumed Division reserve status.

The fury of the last rush died quickly. Other Third and Seventh Army troops had completed the clearing of the Germans from West of the RHINE and within a week had made deep inroads on German heartland across to the East. The Regiment, given new duties for the time, turned its attention to military government, policing and problems of civilian control. The entire German structure of armed resistance appeared to be crumbling under the might of Allied power. Though shrewd enough to know that German resistance would be bitter until the end, the average soldier hoped that the last great battle, one against such stout fixed defenses as the vanquished SIEGFRIED line, had been fought and won.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN GERMANY FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 1945

After clearing the Germans from West of the RHINE in late March the Regiment (as part of the Division) was given the mission of supporting Military Government in newly won German territory to the rear of advancing Seventh Army troops. This, distinctly, was a unique role for the veteran doughboys of the 142d Infantry who, after more than a year and a half of purely combat duty, now found themselves well to the rear, securing safe passage for the mighty stream of supply flowing steadily to the front, policing and controlling the civil population, and gathering stocks of military equipment left in wake of the retreating enemy. At the same time, with an eye to future operations, limited training was conducted and reinforcements absorbed to restore the Regiment's fighting strength.

KAISERSLAUTERN, in GERMANY'S WESTMARK, became the hub and headquarters of the Regiment's activity, controlling an area that eventually comprised some one thousand two hundred (1,200) square kilometers. This was broken down to battalion sectors of responsibility, the 132d Field Artillery Battalion serving as a fourth battalion in the same capacity. In an area so large control measures were necessarily elastic. Outside of troop bivouac areas, motorized patrols, twice daily, at odd intervals, covered the greater part of the battalion sectors, making close inspections summarily along the line. Items of military equipment, when located, were brought to a battalion collecting point and from there passed to a higher echelon.

The exercise of civilian control required a curfew of from 2000 hours to 0600 hours nightly and traffic check points at certain places. Civilians were allowed to travel up to six (6) kilometers without a pass. Violators of these basic Military Government laws were promptly punished. Civilians apprehended by elements of the Regiment for violation of Military Government regulations, 2 April to 23 April, were as follows:

Breaking travel restrictions	92
Curfew violators	25
Suspicious persons	32

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No serious civilian disturbance developed, nor were the important supply channels interfered with during the Regiment's period of occupation and control. There were several reports of German stragglers hiding out in the wooded hill sections, but investigation of these reports revealed nothing. On the other hand, constant vigilance in routine control netted two hundred thirty-four (234) persons definitely identified as enemy soldiers.

One of the biggest problems faced by the Regiment was that caused by the liberation of thousands of Displaced Persons, the slave laborers brought from conquered lands by the Germans. Poles, Czechs, Russians, and Allied ex-prisoners of war had been suddenly freed from Nazi domination. Nearly all wanted to get home right away, but for the moment food and housing were important. Some were intent upon revenge and robbery from their German masters who had enslaved them. Thus criminal acts were provoked and had to be controlled. Because of the number involved it was impossible to adequately meet the needs of these people, though aside from minor instances their behavior was patient and reasonable. Several Displaced Persons centers were established but the few governing offices available for handling this situation were taxed to the limit.

On 22 April elements of the 28th Division began relief of 142d Regimental Combat Team in the KALERSLAUTERN Military Government mission. Two (2) days later the Regiment moved one hundred sixty (160) miles to an assembly area East of the RHINE near KUNZELSAU, prepared for immediate renewal of combat operations.

The War in Europe was now in its final stages though no one knew just how long the end would be in coming. There was much talk of a "National Redoubt" in the South BAVARIA and AUSTRIA hill country where fanatical resistance of last German elements planning to hold-out for an indefinite period was expected. NURNBERG had fallen. On 24 April the Seventh Army crossed the DANUBE Northeast of ULM. From this point resistance faded rapidly and Allied columns penetrated deeply into the so-called Redoubt.

With the onrushing tide sweeping forward, the Regiment's assembly area near KUNZELSAU no longer served its purpose. On the 26th the Third Battalion and the 132d Field Artillery Battalion were moved South fifty (50) miles to AALEN. The Regiment's heavy transport had returned to West of the RHINE to assist in bringing up the remainder of the Division so that the Third Battalion made this move entirely on jeep and quarter-ton trailer transport. Next day the Regiment leap-frogged the Third Battalion at AALEN to close along the

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DAUBE river, another thirty (30) miles beyond, in the vicinity of HEDER-STOEPFINGER. On the 28th, in drizzling rain, the Regiment caught up with advanced elements of the 63d Infantry Division at the LECH river near LANDSBERG. That evening the Regiment took over the mission of the 255th Infantry (63d Division), following columns of the 12th Armored Division spearheading the drive southward. A railroad bridge had been secured across the LECH river and a pontoon trestle was under construction but crossing of the bulky armored division equipment over the two bridges consumed another day.

During night of the 29th the Second Battalion had crossed on foot to East LANDSBERG. Regimental columns obtained clearance on the two bridges the evening of the 29th, pouring over until after midnight. No difficulty was attached to rolling twenty (20) miles south in the night to WEILHEIM since Armored Division columns had passed it without resistance at noon of the 29th. The Regimental Combat Team, less elements, closed into WEILHEIM at 0530B of the 30th. At 0800B, the Second Battalion leading, the 142d Infantry columns were on the move again and, in a follow-up role, reached the base of the BAVARIAN Alps at ESCHENLOHE (Y-5944, the Second Battalion). The First Battalion closed in at MURNAU (Y-6003). The Third Battalion, prevented by a blown bridge from reaching its assigned objective at KOCHE (Y-7302), halted at KLEINWEILER (Y-6704) instead.

April was a rare month in the 142d Infantry operations. Not a battle casualty was recorded. At first hand the men saw hard-bitten German soldiers admit utter defeat, and knifed easily into the supposed BAVARIAN stronghold. The long road from SALERNO to ROME to North ITALY, from Southern FRANCE to the VOSGES, through the SIEGFRIED LINE to the RHINE, and now South through GERMANY was nearly ended.

(Sketch of the Regiment's operation for the month of April is attached.)

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Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 36, U. S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA FOR THE PERIOD 1-10 MAY 1945

The War in Europe ground to its inevitable crushing end on 6 May 1945, with the 142d Infantry Regiment high in the Austrian Alps compressing German remnants into a fruitless mountain retreat. Aware of their fate, the Germans offered little resistance in the last days, the Regiment covering two hundred (200) miles to search out and occupy the last trace of German territory before the Italian border. The rescue of famous French persons imprisoned at ITTER castle and the conduct of surrender negotiations with the defeated German army highlighted the period.

On 1 May, the Regiment, after rolling South from LANDSBERG and WEILHEIM had reached the base of the BAVARIAN Alps at ESCHENLOHE, where the Second Battalion had halted. Other elements were at MURNAU and KLEINWEIL. The mission of the Regiment had been to follow spearheading columns of the 12th Armored Division which from LANDSBERG had encountered no opposition. The capture of INNSBRUCK and junction with Fifth Army troops from ITALY through BRENNER PASS was near at hand. But while the Regiment faced South, prepared to move further in that direction, other Seventh Army troops, coming from the West had passed across the front and were well up the pass leading to INNSBRUCK

On 2 May reconnaissance was begun on the road South from KOCHTEL past WALCHEN SEE. The Third Battalion was ordered to make contact with 103d Division elements at MITTENWALD. But this steeply rising and narrowly confined route was easily blocked by the Germans. A first bridge South of KOCHTEL found blown was by-passed but no way around a second thirty (30) foot open gap could be determined. Engineers were put to work to construct a bridge while foot patrols furthered the reconnaissance South to URFELD, finding the road intact but also exchanging fire with enemy there.

At evening of 2 May, the Regimental Combat Team was consolidated in the vicinity of PENZBERG. On the 3d plans were made for a Regimental advance East toward RADSTADT in the Austrian Alps. It was still hoped to make use of the KOCHTEL pass road to WALLGAU, thence East toward JENBACH, then STRASS, where forces would split into two parallel columns--one North by way of WORGL and KITZBUHEL, the other South through ZELL AM ZELLER--to MITTERSILL, thence East through BRUCK to ST. JOHANN-IM-PONGAU.

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Reconnaissance elements accomplished the mission of contacting 103d Division South of WALLGAU after noon of 3 May. A short distance East from WALLGAU a bridge was found to be out, then five (5) more similar obstacles following. That evening the reconnaissance platoon returning was ambushed near URFELD by SS troops, who destroyed an M-8 armored car by antitank fire and caused eight (8) casualties including the platoon leader.

With the Regiment due to begin movement in force up KOCHERL pass at early morning of 4 March word came at midnight changing the tactical plan. This was advisable in view of the number of obstacles encountered in reconnaissance. The new plan sent the Regiment East through BAD TOLE and MIESSBACH to the INN River valley. Its mission was to make relief of and pass through elements of CCR of the 12th Armored Division which had proceeded up stream South to a point above KUPSTEIN. By late afternoon, after the long seventy (70) mile drive, KUPSTEIN had been occupied and relief of 12th Armored Division elements accomplished. The Regiment was now in AUSTRIA. That evening at ZELL, after only token resistance, the Second Battalion picked up three hundred (300) prisoners. At morning more Germans motored to our rear cages by convoy on their own battered transport.

5 May was to be the last day of fighting and fittingly, a melodramatic touch was provided by an event of the day. The Third Battalion was blocked in an effort to go Southeast at the fork below KUPSTEIN, first by enemy resistance which was reduced, and again by a blown bridge about half-way to the junction of the SOLL-ST. JOHANN road. The Second Battalion had to await filling-in of a crater along the INN valley road South of KUPSTEIN, after which it moved without opposition to the junction of the next main road to the East.

Here at about noon, a Frenchman, JEAN BEROTRA, famed as a former world tennis champion, contacted Second Battalion troops and explained that he had just escaped from nearby ITTER castle where important French personages had been imprisoned. The German guard had surrendered to an American tank crew and four infantrymen (Company "E", 142d Infantry) during the night but in the morning SS troops, hearing of this, attacked to regain control of the castle. Would the Americans please help?

Company "E" was diverted to this mission, and then the whole Second Battalion. BEROTRA led Company "C" to the high castle site. Moderate resistance was quickly overcome by Companies "E" and "G", freeing ex-Premiers (of FRANCE) EDOUARD DELADIER and PAUL REYNAUD, Generals MAURICE GUSTAVE GAMBLIN and MAXIME WEYGAND, a sister of General DE GAULLE, and a son of GEORGES CLEMENCEAU, the "Tiger" of the VERSAILLES Treaty.

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This mission accomplished, the Second Battalion reassembled and was ordered East toward SOLL and ST. JOHANN. Before SOLL was reached two (2) of the leading tanks were destroyed by German 88mm gun fire at a turn in the road. The exchange of fire here was the last of the war with GERMANY, for simultaneously orders were received to halt in place, not to fire unless fired upon, pending German Army surrender effective at noon of the 6th.

By the time this could be transmitted, the Third Battalion had closed in FUGEN (Z-1069) and the First Battalion at SCHLITERS (Z-1073). The Second Battalion held fast at SCHEWENT near the scene of the last fighting.

The Regimental Command Post was established at ITTER castle. Before dawn of the 6th a representative of the German commander facing us had come to arrange a meeting of his General with Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, 142d Infantry Regimental Commander. The meeting took place at SOLL at 0900 hours of the 6th. The German commander Lieutenant General VON HENGL asked only a tentative armistice while awaiting orders from higher up. He had no definite word of the surrender such as Colonel LYNCH had been informed and wanted nothing more than a halt in place until further word had been given him. Both parties agreed to another meeting upon receipt of orders from above.

At 1230 a telephone message from Division was received giving the terms of surrender as stipulated by the American Sixth Army Group Commander in accepting the surrender of the German Army Group "G". They were as follows:

1. Surrender unconditional.
2. All arms will be surrendered intact and stacked in RR stations or commercial highways. Points to be designated by local commanders.
3. Ammunition will be stacked at stipulated places away from the arms - points also to be designated by local commanders.
4. All aircraft will be left on the ground. Air Corps personnel will remain in places.
5. There will be no destruction of property or weapons.
6. Allied personnel will be turned over to the American forces.
7. Information will be given of major obstacles in area.
8. All German units will remain intact under control of their own officers with mess equipment, substantial transportation and maintenance.
9. All local American Commanders will prescribe the assembly and concentration areas.
10. These terms are subject to modification by higher headquarters.

Upon receipt of a written copy of this order Colonel LYNCH asked for a second meeting with Lieutenant General VON HENGL at SOLL at 1830 hours. At

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this meeting Lieutenant General VON HENGL accepted the terms. Details of the assembly of German troops and collection of arms were worked out. A significant fact brought out in course of the meeting was that Lieutenant General VON HENGL, a corps commander, could now in the crushing defeat of his troops, only account for an approximate total of one thousand two hundred (1,200) men under his control.

That same evening, Captain CADER C. TERRELL, Regimental S-2, with a party drove to KITZBUHEL, twenty (20) miles into the enemy "line", to contact German Headquarters there. Lieutenant General VON HENGL'S command did not include this area. At KITZBUHEL the German commandant, a colonel, was expecting receipt of surrender instructions from German First Army Headquarters. A meeting of General (Brigadier) HAUSER, Chief of Staff, German First Army, with Colonel LYNCH, for 1000 hours at ST. JOHANN the following morning was arranged.

It was assumed that General HAUSER would speak with authority for the German First Army troops involved in the 36th Division area of occupation but at the meeting in the morning more than an hour was consumed without any conclusive results because of the German general's inability to act on his own initiative and because of the confused situation and communications of the German First Army.

A third meeting with Lieutenant General VON HENGL followed immediately afterward at ELLMAU. The working details decided on at the second meeting had to be entirely revamped as Lieutenant General VON HENGL'S command had been extended overnight to include ST. JOHANN and KITZBUHEL. This was satisfactory inasmuch as Lieutenant General VON HENGL could speak and act authoritatively and appeared to be earnestly cooperative, though carefully correct militarily, in complying with the terms of surrender. At the same meeting a General KLESS, as representative of Generaloberst DESLOCH, who had been designated commander of the SALZACH valley area to the South, made agreement on terms.

Separate points of collection for arms and for munitions, and places of assembly for German troops were mapped out. A time limit--midnight of the 7th in Lieutenant General VON HENGL'S area (since the work was already under way in his case) and 1500 hours of the 8th in General DESLOCH'S area--was set for completion of these details but allowances for the broken state of German transport and communications were considered. Hospitals, of which there were several in KITZBUHEL and a large one in ST. JOHANN, were to remain in operation as before.

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Other particulars were covered at this final meeting which lasted two (2) hours. Interest was aroused at one stage when, as one of the requirements Colonel LYNCH asked the LUFTWAFFE general to clear all German troops from an area within a two (2) kilometer radius of MITTERSILL for the purpose of American bivouac. His mouth open and eyes popping, the young LUFTWAFFE General, who formed his speech with nervous muscular strain, revealed that the MITTERSILL castle had been the German High Command Headquarters in the South since GERMANY had been split in two. He then attempted to put a telephone call through to Fieldmarshal KESSEIRING but learned that the high headquarters had since departed.

Next day, the 8th, American troops, in a day-long convoy, streamed in to accept and control the German surrender. Elements of 141st Infantry occupied the area East to include ST. JOHANN and KITZBUHEL. 142d Infantry Regimental Combat Team motored East and then South during the afternoon to scenic SALZBACH valley, occupying three (3) troop areas in the vicinity of MITTERSILL, BICHELN and NEUKIRCHEN.

On the 8th also, the Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon was given the mission of guarding the HERMAN GOERING family at a castle near ERUCK. GOERING had surrendered to the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General STACK, after negotiations.

Between three and four thousand German soldiers, a figure which varied daily, the bulk of them stragglers and loose ends from many organizations, were in the Regimental area of control. A general scouting-out had to be made and organization applied, a task that required all of the time the Regiment remained in the valley.

Before the surrender had become effective the Regimental Military Police handled four thousand three hundred ninety-seven (4,397) prisoners during the first days of May. Three thousand (3,000) of these were evacuated to the rear, after proper searching, in one twenty-four hour period alone, the Germans sometime coming in in complete organizations, merely being directed to the nearest collecting point.

Our own casualties for the ten-day period amounted to three (3) enlisted men Killed in Action and two (2) enlisted men Wounded in Action.

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Thus a final chapter of World War II with Germany was written by men of the 142d Infantry. The end had not come suddenly nor was it celebrated with wild excitement. Its motor march into the SALZACH valley at MITTERSILL on Victory-in-Europe Day, 8 May, was its victory parade. That night the lights shone freely in the valley, and soldier's faces relaxed, the bitter job now done, men thoughtfully calculating chances of an early trip home.

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Staff Sergeant, 142d Infantry
Author

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ANNEX TO HISTORICAL REPORT, 1-10 MAY 1945

The Liberation Of French Notables From ITTER Castle, 5 May 1945

The Regiment arrived in the KUFSTEIN, AUSTRIA area during afternoon of 4 May 1945 and relieved elements of Combat Command "R", 12th Armored Division there, having the mission of continuing the attack southward in the INN River Valley.

At 1900 hours, a German Major contacted our Second Battalion at KUFSTEIN, and explained that a garrison under his command at ITTER Castle, near WORGL, approximately ten (10) miles South, was prepared to surrender to the Americans upon the arrival of American troops at the Castle. However, retreating Germans under another command, were located near the Castle, and might be inclined to oppose the surrender of the Castle garrison.

One (1) platoon of Company "E" with seven (7) tanks--five (5) of attached 753d Tank Battalion, two (2) of 12th Armored Division--left KUFSTEIN and, less two (2) tanks left behind when a bridge gave out enroute, reached WORGL after dark and set up a defense there. At 2200 hours, unbeknownst to Battalion or Regimental Headquarters, one (1) tank with a 12th Armored Division Captain in charge and four (4) Company "E" infantrymen, guided by the German Major, moved on up to ITTER Castle past many German transports and troops on the road, and accepted the surrender of the castle. Anticipating interference from German troops in the vicinity, a defense was posted during the night, the German garrison of about fifteen (15) men that had surrendered also being utilized.

ITTER Castle was situated on a high knoll with bluff sides one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) mile East of WORGL. The castle was an old stone structure, four (4) storeys high with a surmounting square tower. It was reached only by a narrow road which crossed a deep depression on a stone bridge, passed under two (2) small archways and entered a walled courtyard at the castle door. Another enclosed space at the rear completed the castle grounds, an area less than normal deck space of a medium-sized ocean liner. The steep descending slopes on all sides and a thickly wooded covering afforded excellent protection.

Upon learning what had happened during the night, the German troops around the castle opened fire upon it beginning at 0900 hours in the morning. With an 88mm antitank gun firing from a railroad tunnel they both shelled the castle and knocked out the American tank which had parked to cover the entrance at the bridge. American and German soldiers within the

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castle, fighting side by side, and several of the French notables too (mention was afterward made of DELADIER'S return to the castle arsenal several times to replenish his ammunition) warded off attempts of the German troops outside to come in upon them.

Company "E", which had closed into WORGL during the morning, was diverted, when Regimental Headquarters learned of the presence at ITTER Castle of a party of French political prisoners consisting of REYNAUD, etc., from WORGL to open the route to the castle and rescue the besieged. Two (2) enemy machine guns opened fire from the hill on the right shortly after elements had started out of town. Tank fire was brought to bear upon them and silenced the guns. After being sniped at while advancing a half-mile further up the main road, the column turned off onto the trail leading up to the castle. Resistance increased.

Meanwhile, during the morning, from within the castle, one of the Frenchmen, JEAN BEROTRA, famed tennis player, had disguised himself in shabby civilian clothes and slipped down through the surrounding hostile Germans. Though occasionally sniped at, he played the part of a peasant munching a piece of bread and cheese without concern and succeeded in hobbling his way until making contact with our Second Battalion near WORGL. There he informed them of the situation at the castle and offered to guide a rescuing party to the castle. Company "G" had already begun, in conjunction with Company "E's" mission, to close on the castle from the opposite direction. BEROTRA'S offer was accepted and he accompanied lead elements of the company in the attack. Company "G" waded a swift flowing stream at the base of the castle hill, leaving its tanks behind. Several enemy machine guns and automatic weapons were encountered in the ascent through deep woods on the slope. Four (4) of the enemy were killed and twelve (12) captured without a casualty to Company "G", when word was received that Company "E" was in the castle.

Company "E", advancing up the Castle road, had overcome spotty resistance, killed six (6) and captured sixty (60) of the enemy, destroyed one (1) half-track and several cargo trucks.

In some of the last shooting the German Major within the castle was killed.

The Frenchmen, twice freed, were overwhelmingly jubilant. The prisoners who had been at the Castle for an average of two (2) years included ex-Premiers DELADIER and REYNAUD, Generals GAELIN and WEYGAND, a sister of General DE GAULLE and a son of CLEMENCEAU. General WEYGAND said the GI's could have

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anything they wanted in all of FRANCE. DELADIER was all smiles, posed for pictures with his familiar black hat. REYNAUD, a little more reserved, was nevertheless extremely happy. BEROIRA bounded about from person to person with all the agility of his former tennis days.

Within a couple of hours, after picture taking and due celebration, the party had packed and dressed for departure, and a waiting Military Government officer escorted them off in five (5) American jeeps toward INNSEBRUCK.

Conduct Of Surrender Negotiations, 6-8 May 1945

The Regimental Command Post was established at ITTER Castle while the Second Battalion reorganized and pushed on up the road toward SOLL. Before SOLL was reached, however, at a turn in the road, the Germans opened with surprise "88" antitank fire to disable two (2) lead tanks. This skirmish was the last of the war. As the Second Battalion halted in preparation for an attack to reduce the strongpoint word was simultaneously received ordering all troops to remain in place and not to fire unless fired upon. Sixth Army Group had accepted the surrender of German Army Group "G", to be effective at 1200 hours of the 6th--noon the next day.

Accordingly, instructions were dispatched to all elements immediately. Night soon came, with troops holding their positions.

Before dawn at 0400 hours, a German officer emissary appeared at ITTER Castle urgently requesting that the American commander meet with the German commander at a neutral location between the lines. The Gasthaus at SOLL, just beyond the American outpost, was designated. The time: 0900 hours.

Colonel GEORGE E. LYNCH, Regimental Commander, and his party anticipated that the German commander would make a formal gesture of surrender. But the German commander, a Lieutenant General VON HENGL, arrogant at first, wanted only an armistice to await developments of the report of surrender he had heard solely by radio (and knew was inevitable, anyway). Both parties agreed to the armistice and to contacting each other upon receipt of definite instructions from higher headquarters.

Colonel LYNCH returned to ITTER Castle, then went on an inspection of troops farther South in the INN Valley. Troops at their scenic Austrian posts, relaxed easily, knowing that something was astir, confident that it was for their good.

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During afternoon a true copy of the surrender terms as stipulated by Sixth Army Group Headquarters to German Army Group "G" was received at ITTER Castle. Colonel LYNCH called for a second meeting at SOLL at 1830 hours.

The American party arrived at the SOLL roadhouse a few minutes before the designated hour. Soon General VON HENGL drove up in an open top civilian touring car, got out, took a few steps toward Captain CADER C. TERRELL, aide to Colonel LYNCH waiting at the entrance, exchanged a snappy army salute, and entered the conference room.

The German commander agreed to the terms, though he still had not received further word from his own headquarters. Working details were then covered in detail specifying the concentration of German troops and collection of arms and munitions. At the conclusion, General VON HENGL declined to discuss political implications with regard to concentration camps, atrocities, etc. He was a soldier, not a politician. With the disclosure that his command, a German Army Corps, had dwindled to a pitiful twelve hundred (1200) troops, by desertions, surrenders and casualties during the retreat, his pride vanished and the stiff arrogance declined. General VON HENGL was ordered to complete the collection of troops and munitions by 2400 hours of the following day.

That same evening Captain TERRELL, with a party, was ordered to contact German Headquarters at KITZBUHEL. General VON HENGL'S command did not include that area.

The two (2) American jeeps, proceeding under white flag, halted at the German outpost, a gasoline station at the main road intersection beyond SOLL. While arrangements were made for an escort guide, German and American soldiers talked a little amongst themselves. The Germans remembered SELESTAT where the 142d men had fought against them in December. The Germans admitted the jeep was a good car but "used too much gasoline".

In the fading evening light the three (3) vehicles traveled the winding road toward KITZBUHEL. There was much activity behind the German line - troops in bivouac along the road, dilapidated transport carrying their last loads, many staff cars heading eastward. A commotion greeted the party at ST. JOHANN where a concentration of German Army Headquarters troops milled in the streets and town square, many celebrating last dates with their girl friends. It was now fully dark. German Military Police stiffly directed the party onto the South road to KITZBUHEL.

At KITZBUHEL the German headquarters was located in a store on the main street. Blackout still covered the large plate glass window. They

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asked if American planes might now have concluded operations. It was thought so. The Germans were in a cordial mood but wondered intensely what would become of them. After awhile the town commander, a colonel who had assumed command only a few days earlier, arrived. He appeared to know very little about his command, except to state that conditions were very crowded, the normal population of six thousand (6,000) having swelled to near seventy thousand (70,000) by the influx of refugees, stragglers and army casualties. It was a hospital town. Army hospital trains remained in the railroad yards servicing the wounded as there was no room within town. Since the German Colonel could make no definite commitment, a meeting of the German First Army Chief of Staff with Colonel LYNCH the following morning at ST. JOHANN, was arranged.

At 1000 hours of the next day (7 May) when the American party arrived, a cordon of German Military Police was drawn in a circle at the public square in ST. JOHANN. The party was directed to a building at one corner. Presently the German General HAUSER an unimpressive little man, arrived. Courtesies were exchanged but Colonel LYNCH declined a proffered handshake from the German General. Seats were taken on opposite sides of the room by the two parties. More than an hour was consumed without any conclusive results because of the German General's inability to act on his own initiative and because of the confused situation and communications of the German First Army.

A third meeting with Lieutenant General VON HENGL followed immediately afterward at ELIMAU. The working details decided on at the second meeting had to be entirely revamped as Lieutenant General VON HENGL'S command had been extended overnight to include ST. JOHANN and KITZBUHEL. This was satisfactory inasmuch as Lieutenant General VON HENGL could speak and act authoritatively and appeared to be earnestly cooperative, though carefully correct militarily, in complying with the terms of surrender. At the same meeting a General KLESS, as representative of Generaloberst DESLOCH, who had been designated commander of the SALZACH Valley area to the South, made agreement on terms.

Separate points of collection for arms and for munitions, and places of assembly for German troops were mapped out. A time limit--midnight of the 7th in Lieutenant General VON HENGL'S area (since the work was already under way in his case) and 1500 hours of the 8th in General DESLOCH'S area--was set for completion of these details but allowances for the broken state of German transport and communications were considered. Hospitals, of which there were several in KITZBUHEL and a large one in ST. JOHANN, were to remain in operation as before.

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Other particulars were covered at this final meeting which lasted two (2) hours. Interest was aroused at one stage when, as one of the requirements, Colonel LYNCH asked the LUFTWAFFE general to clear all German troops from an area within a two (2) kilometer radius of MITTERSILL for the purpose of American bivouac. His mouth open and eyes popping, the young LUFTWAFFE General, who formed his speech with nervous muscular strain, revealed that the MITTERSILL Castle had been a part of the German High Command Headquarters in the South since GERMANY had been split in two. He then attempted to put a telephone call through to Fieldmarshal KESSELRING but learned that the high headquarters had since departed.

Next day, the 8th, American troops in a day-long convoy, streamed in to accept and control the German surrender. German soldiers stood by at their collecting points, and Austrian families lined the front of their homes, all watching silently, if not awesomely, at this military spectacle. Elements of 141st Infantry Regiment occupied the area East to include ST. JOHANN and KITZBUHEL. 142d Infantry Regimental Combat Team motored East and then South during the afternoon to scenic SALZBACH Valley, occupying three (3) troop areas in the vicinity of MITTERSILL, BICHELN and NEUKIRCHEN.

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HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDRED FORTY SECOND INFANTRY
APO # 56, U. S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN GERMANY FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 1945

The 1st of June found the Regiment still in occupational control of the HILDELSHEIM and SCHWAB LINDLACH Landkreises in SCHWABEN, supporting the Military Government.

The troops were settled in a semi-garrison type of soldiering. In addition to duties of occupation, guarding and policing, a light training program was conducted. A broad sports activity was organized, regimental softball and volleyball leagues continued, and swimming pools in the Regimental and Battalion areas continued to operate for the soldiers' use.

On the 13th of June the Regiment was relieved by elements of the 50th Infantry Division and began a motor movement to a new area southwest of ULM, Germany. The Regiment assumed responsibility of sections of two Landkreises along the Danube and Iller Rivers after completing the relief of elements of the 100th Infantry Division. The most difficult problem that confronted the Regiment in this area was the actions of approximately 600 Russians in SCHWELINGEN. Due to lack of the mere necessities of life, they gathered in groups in the small towns surrounding and committed acts of loot and terrorized the German civilians.

The 1st Battalion was given the responsibility of organizing the group of Russians and establishing law and order. The local Burgermeister was contacted and a food ration of 2100 calories per day was provided. Billets were inspected frequently by medical personnel. A few lice-ridden cases were uncovered and combated against by thorough spraying of the individuals and their quarters with the DDT disinfectant. Arms found in their possession were collected and evacuated through the proper channels. By the end of the month arrangements had been completed through AIF for the evacuation of the Displaced Persons to Russia, and the major problems with them were solved.

A Regimental award ceremony was held on 21 June to present awards to soldiers for heroism and gallantry during combat operations. The following awards were presented:

Distinguished Service Cross	1
Legion of Merit	1

Bronze Star Medals	38
Silver Star Medals	39

The month of June also continued redeployment for personnel of the Regiment. The veterans of the Italy, France, Germany and Austrian campaigns were being transferred to other units scheduled for redeployment to the United States. Following is the number of Officers and men transferred from the Regiment during June:

<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>EN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESTINATION</u>
	14	10 June	14th Reinforcement Depot
	150	27 June	63d Infantry Division
7	150	29 June	63d Infantry Division
6	250	30 June	63d Infantry Division

I and S. Activities

Preparations for the inaugural day of the Battalion and Separate Company Unit Schools were begun in the early part of June by appointing full time duty Battalion I and S Officers who conducted a survey to determine in what subjects the men were interested. The results of the Educational Interest Survey were compiled and from this compilation plans were begun to establish the Unit Schools.

A need for an agency from which Regimental news and activities could be disseminated to all members of the command was solved by replacing the Rotate news sheet formerly edited and distributed in combat, with a four page paper, the "Rotate Review". The first issue was printed at DISTENHAIN, Germany, and distributed throughout the Regiment on 27 June.

On the 25th June some 55 men representing practically every company in the Regiment were congregated in a schoolhouse in OBER-KIECHLING to begin daily four hour classes in the Principles of Basic English and Arithmetic. This was the first attempt of the I and S Section to eliminate illiteracy from the Regiment. Tests were given and the men were placed in three separate classes to administer to their needs for a reading, writing and arithmetic knowledge comparable to a grammar school education.

On the Company level the Orientation Hour was stepped up to five hours a week and Company I and S Officers and enlisted assistants devoted that time to informing their men about the significant incidents in the world concerning politics, war, sociology and education.

Through out the month some twenty-two movies were shown weekly with an estimate of attendance of eight thousand troops. U.S.C. shows and P.C. follies were attended by some 3500 soldiers. About twenty Day Rooms, three U.C.C. Clubs and four Officers' Clubs were established in the Regimental area. Oriental volleyball and softball league games played totalled twenty-eight. The Regiment was taking all available measures to broaden the Education and Sports program of the individual soldier.

Security

Upon entering the ULM and WERNIGAN Landkreises guard posts already established by the 10th Infantry Division on certain war material and food storage dumps were taken over by our troops. A canvass of the entire area was immediately instituted to uncover hidden or unreported items. The following is a list of enemy material and equipment located in the Regimental area:

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION AND QUANTITIES</u>
POST LA CHEROISE (Y-250532)	Warehouse - 150 bales (leaves and weeds for medicinal use); tool shop for auto repairs; 200 barrels resin; 50 bags rozen; 1000 barrels oil (believed cooking oil - is not motor oil); 100 bars spices (cinnamon, pepper, cloves); 25 bags flax seed; 300 bags leaves and herbs.
(Y-171532)	Glider hanger - parts of gliders and glider.
ALLIED QUARTERS (X-7247)	20 old rifles and shot guns. German bazooka - located in schoolhouse. Machine shop for making airplane parts; 100 work suits; 150 pair socks; 100 trousers and jackets.
Castle ULM - BLACH (X-5972)	2 large rooms of museum pieces from museum in STUTTGART. (Drums, shields, idols, statues, numismatics, paintings, furniture). One large room of new clothing, bolts of material; one room of rugs - all from stores in ULM. One room German Army furniture (87 double wall lockers, 21 tables). This inventory is as of 18 June 1945 when we had guards on castle. Since then Military Government has taken it over and may have moved some of the material.

LOCATIONDESCRIPTION AND COMMENTS

On Schuller St.,
S of Arsenal St.,
ULM

Truck factory for German Military vehicles. Bombed but 80% of equipment is in operational condition. Now repairing vehicles for Military Government. Repair 3 or 4 vehicles per day with 12 civilian employees.

Soflinger St.,
S of Peter Schmidt
St., ULM

Large factory and warehouse built around large square, the north wing badly damaged by bombs. East wing contains machine shops which formerly rebuilt and repaired small arms, at present committed by AMG to repair work for railway. Operated by former civilian owners. Contains approximately the following:

EAST WING:

500 3a Machine Guns, Breda, Mod 37 Rome, 1933-XVI
1100 Ea barrels for above machine guns
500 Ea Machine Guns, 1924 Mod 29
1500 Ea barrels for above Machine Guns
1000 Ea rifles, Hemburg, Mod 1906, 1916 & 1917
650 Ea rifles, Stezer, Mod 1895, 1896 & 1900
200 Ea machine guns, Herstal Mod, Belgium. Also large mixed lots of Machine Gun and rifle parts, Austrian, Spanish, Italian, British, American and Russian rifles. Small amounts of Machine Gun ammunition scattered about place.

NORTH WING:

Although badly damaged by bombs, two rooms contain a saddle repair shop which in turn contains various saddler's tools of unknown description and some saddles in a bad state of repair. Another large room contains a large amount of signal equipment, radio receiving sets, etc; also in a very bad condition.

WEST WING:

This wing has several rooms that contain signal equipment that is no more than junk, as it has been destroyed by persons unknown. Also several rooms containing the following: short cables, rolls of wire and insulators.