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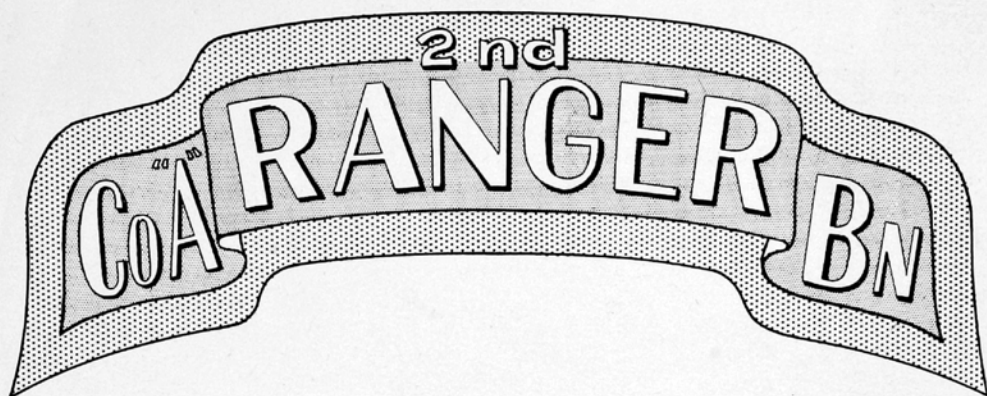


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**Overseas**

**And Then —**

**Over The Top**

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### Foreward

There has been placed into my hands certain facts and information concerning the planning, training, operations and social actions of Co. "A", 2nd Ranger Battalion. Armed with these, plus my own personal observations and memories, I am prepared to write the history of Able Company from the day the outfit left the States until the day of total capitulation of the Nazi Regime.

### Acknowledgement

I would like to thank and to express my gratitude to our C.O., Captain Arman, for his permission to write this history. Without his consent this book would never have been written. Also, I wish to acknowledge the splendid cooperation given to me by othersmembers of "A" Co., who so thoughtfully abetted me by volunteering all the available data they possessed on the history of our outfit.

A special bouquet is thrown to my very capable assistants, "Duck" Lupin and "Stay-in" Murphy, for their astuteness and for their menial labors in the writing of this story.

The Author

MAY 4 1948

## DEDICATION

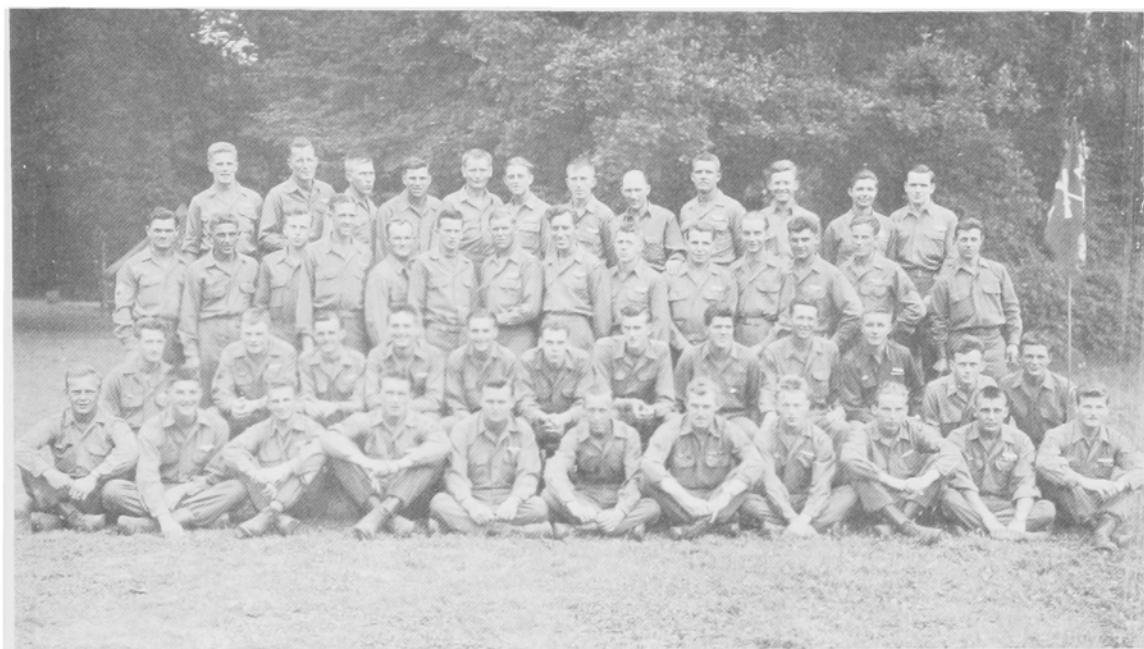
This book is dedicated to those brave men of Co. A who died on the field of battle.

Those men gallantly stormed the beaches and hills of Normandy, France. Those men heroically assaulted the impregnable Siegfried Line defences.

Those men truly gave a full measure of devotion.

### "In Memoriam"

Name	Rank	Place	Date
Joseph Rafferty	Capt.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Edward L. Sowa	1st Sgt.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
John C. Biddle	S/Sgt.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Robert G. Davis	S/Sgt.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Frederick D. Smith	S/Sgt.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Charles E. Rich	Sgt.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Charles E. Bollia	T/5	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Robert L. Dailey	Pfc.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Joseph V. Daniels	Pfc.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
John C. Shanahan	Pfc.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Earl W. Shireman	Pfc.	Verville-sur-mer, France	June 6
Joseph R. Trainor	Pfc.	Pointe-du-hoe, France	June 7
Percy Hower	T/5	Pointe-du-hoe, France	June 7
Robert Meltzer	2nd Lt.	St. Renan, France	August 23
Constantine Anagnos	Pfc.	St. Renan, France	August 23
Seymour Goldman	Cpl.	St. Renan, France	August 23
Peter H. Bolema	Pfc.	St. Renan, France	August 23
Alfred Haluska	Pfc.	St. Jean-de-daye, France	August 1
Julius S. Remmers	T/5	Huertgen Forest, Germany	November 24
Fred L. Anderson	Pfc.	Huertgen Forest, Germany	November 24
Raymond K. Ferguson	Pfc.	Simmerath, Germany	December 21
John Lazar	Cpl.	Anteiler, Germany	March 6



This picture was taken after VE-Day in Dol Lukavice, Czechoslovakia

#### 1st Platoon

Top row standing, left to right

Virgin  
Lansome  
Ware\*  
Murphey  
Korb\*  
Anton  
Schobee  
"Kitty" Carr\*  
Tolson  
Sinbine\*  
"Doc" Guerra  
Drake

"Gabby" Hart\*  
"Potts" Cerwin\*  
Taylor  
McCaleb  
Jackson  
Carroll  
Sargent  
Simon  
Cooper  
Dassaro  
Carmen  
Devito  
Wilson\*  
Lt. White\*

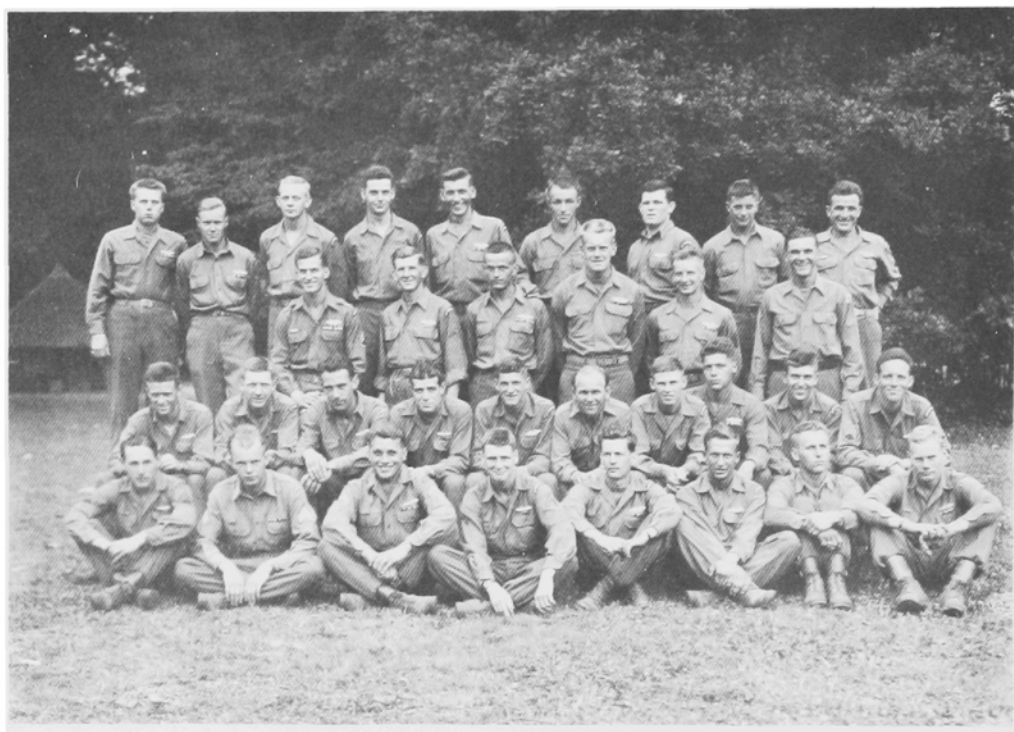
Seated top and bottom rows

"Dusty" Donovan\*  
Courtney\*  
Klieve  
Steele  
Silagy  
"Duck" Lupin  
"Slim" Hart  
Lt. Edlin\*  
Lt. Porubsky  
Capt. Armin\*  
Lt. Roquemore  
Lt. "Bobbysocks" Wilson

"Pete" Ruta\*  
Noland  
Toth  
Dreher\*  
Hurley  
Serrette  
May  
Cory  
Knight  
Lavandowski\*  
Klaus\*

\* D-Day veterans





# 2nd Platoon

Top rows standing, left to right

Schroeder*	O'Connor*
Jacobus	Rachabinsky
Andrews	Nassett
Janistek	Kohl
Ewaska	Sorger*
Mabbitt	Mickewiecz
Freeman	
Kwasnicki*	
Drobick*	

Seated top and bottom rows

Celles	Bodnar*
Bruce	Ferguson*
Gary*	Gutowski*
Prince*	Douglas
Pulski	Fagan
Pisz	Schouw
Barnard	Days
Stater	Conner
Freisen	
Robertson*	

\* D-Day veterans

Absent from company picture

Ramos  
Macaluso



**BOOK I**  
**ENGLAND**

## Chapters

1. The Boatribe
2. Bude
3. Titchfield
4. Folkestone (Beachburrow-House)
5. Bude, Again
6. Braunton Camp, assault training
7. Dorchester, Marshelling Area
8. Swanage
9. Dorchester, Staging Area
10. The Invasion Ship

## THE BOATRIDE

### Chapter 1

The day of November 21, in the year of 1943, was no different than any other day, but yet in the lives and fortunes of 65 men and 3 officers this day was different and did have a meaning to these soldiers. Perhaps there was no difference to be noticed in the attitude of their doings, I believe a similar scene would have presented itself if these men were embarking on or preparing for some field maneuver somewhere in the States, instead of the hazardous and dangerous journey across the ocean they were preparing for. A boat ride which was destined to take these men thru seven foreign countries, to bring them greater fame and glory. A trip which was to bring death and destruction to the enemy while bringing about misfortune to some of these brave Rangers.

Word had come down to us that we were to embark on our ship that day and that we were ~~leaving~~ our homeland to visit new and distant lands. We had been working, training, and planning for that ever coming day of reckoning with the enemy, so that now we were ready to depart. We were confident in our abilities and we were most anxious to go forth to prove ourselves.

The train ride from Camp Shanks to the ferry boat which awaited to bring us to the shores of New York from the banks of Jersey, was an uneventful trip. It was a rather uncomfortable journey as we were laden down with all our earthly Army possessions. We had carried full field packs, while the remainder of our equipment, which lay in duffle bags, had been thrown into a special baggage car.

Our conversations were the usual Army bull sessions which made for a lot of slang and unfunny wise remarks, but in general provided good material for passing time. We joked and talked about our forthcoming trip as a young girl would talk to her girl friend while waiting for her best beau to arrive to take her out. We were all enthused by our coming voyage, but we didn't display too much concern or nervousness. We tried to hide our enthusiasm thru a veil of indifference.

There were no bands on hand to greet us that early morning, we set foot on the pier to board our ship. I suppose it was a bit too early for the musicians to be up

and about as it was an ungodly hour to be up.

Our ship to be was that great boat the "Queen Elizabeth" which looked as gallant and as majestic as the old lady whose name she bore. She towered so much above us and was so gigantic in size that upon our entrance, we looked like tiny ants carrying our burdens of life on our backs, only to be swallowed up into the huge bowels of the ship.

Aboard ship one gained the impression of being in a hotel. Our surroundings were so immense and the boat so stable that one could hardly realize that he was on a movable object. The huge messrooms and neat staterooms plus the immaculately clean lounge and deck rooms, gave one the feeling that this boat was more suited for royalty than for the 15,000 troops that filled up every cubic inch of space on the ship.

Our first day aboard (we didn't pull out, due to loading, till the third day) was one of exploration and orientation. The boat being so large was an easy place in which to get lost. The more we became acquainted with the ship, the more we marveled at its structure and greatness. Everything was of such stature, that it was hard to believe that this huge monster could cross the ocean, and so rapidly.

The giant engines and turbines which ran the ship were always a spectacle to gaze at. The huge steam pumps, the giant boilers and other equipment that were contained in this room were always interesting to behold.

There was a special recreation room where you could smoke, write letters, sing and pass away the tiresome moments while on ship. Laughter, song, and rattle of dice against the floor boards could always be heard coming from this room. The thick hazy smoke that arose from the pipes, cigars, and cigarettes gave this place the appearance of some honkey tonk back home.

The boat being of English origin was composed of a Limey crew. These sailors were most capable and knew their jobs well. They had made more crossings over this ocean and in this ship than I have years. Then, also, there were some American personnel aboard who were in charge of the anti-aircraft protection for the ship. These men were excellent soldiers and many an interested hour was spent watching them go

through their paces in gun drill.

It wasn't till the third day that our boat weighed anchor and prepared to sail. The engines started to tune up their songs of life and away we went. We could experience that feeling of something new and adventurous about to happen, but what this emotion was, we never could ascertain.

The Rangers attitude toward this new mode of traveling was one of indifference. You would think that these men had been experienced sea-goers and that this crossing was just another one they were partaking in, instead of the first they were actually making. I guess you could have noticed some difference in their conversations and jokes, as the English way of speaking became ridiculed, and slandered, not to mention imitated.

I felt proud of these men, these Rangers, proud to be amongst them and proud to be one of them, as here they were embarking on a voyage that for many w s to be their last. Yet their spirit and morals was never better. They looked and acted like a bunch of kids going on a picnic cruise up the Hudson.

It was hard to visualize that we were leaving our native land, as everything seemed unreal. When the Statue of Liberty was passed, realization began to set in. Many a throat had a lump in it and some guys even had tears in their eyes. We couldn't help but think that we were departing for lands unknown, and that we were headed in a direction that led only one way--the way to Victory. A way that had many traps and pitfalls in its course, where there w s no turning back until the final objective of Victory was obtained.

Our ride across the ocean was uneventful in itself, but it was novel and entertaining to us strangers of this mode of travel. We hadn't fared too well in the obtaining of our quarters. We had one large room for the entire battalion, and to say we were cramped and crowded would be putting the facts down gentle. Our bunks were arranged, or I should say stacked four high, so that every time we tried to sleep, we'd have a good climb to reach our beds on top, if we were on the bottom, the odds were fairly even that we would be stepped on and trod over by someone trying to get to his

den above us.

Added to this misery were the affairs at chow time. Long mess lines caused our nerves to be frayed and longer wash kit lines, learned us the virtues of patience. On board ship we drew the assignment of being the Military Police. This was both good and bad, as although it gave us some work to do, to help pass away the monotonous hours of the journey, it greatly interfered with our hours of leisure we would have had otherwise. It greatly imposed itself on the sleeping hours we would have been able to have taken advantage of. It was ironical, I thought, to draw this job, as after all the affairs and run-ins we have had with the M.P.'s during our infant days at Camp Forrest, and Fort Dix. Now, it was our turn to learn the headaches that this fine branch of service has to undergo.

We did our tasks to the best of our ability, giving directions, taking care of the exits and stairways during boat drill, making sure that the blackouts were on the windows during the hours of darkness, and the making sure that no trouble or friction occurred on deck.

For the length of the trip, which was five days and nights we worked on this job. These days flew by as swiftly as the waves themselves. We always managed to do something to occupy ourselves during the ride. We were most fortunate that we were hardly affected by that harsh malady of seasickness. I guess our extensive training in cooperation with our naval and amphibious forces at Ft. Pierce, Florida, had stood us in good stead.

We did have some sickness, but from another cause. This was the dread malady of pneumonia. We were continually subjected to a draft in our quarters, so that when one man caught a cold, it was easily spread around and several boys developed the stern illness of pneumonia.

These men were well taken care of by the ships trained medical staff, and were given the best of care and attention. They were immediately transferred and rushed to a hospital when we hit land.

Our ship docked in the great naval harbor of Grannock, Scotland on December 1.

Our ride had been a routine one, although at one time during our journey we were supposed to have been under the surveillance of a submarine. I personally never saw any signs of this menace. Our ship constantly took so many different twists and turns in its voyage, that I never knew if we were being chased or this was the usual method used in avoiding enemy craft. We had traveled unescorted as our ship was supposed to have been speedy enough to out run any German vessel. The large guns which were on deck, stood always ready and handy just in case there was a need to use them.

Once more no bands came forth to greet us on our arrival to this new continent. All we had was the view of the hustling and bustling of the dockhands and other operators, who were occupied in seeing that everything that was carried on the boat would be unloaded and put into its proper place.

It was a good feeling to walk down the gangplank and place our cramped and muscle-bound feet on solid terra firm. We marched down to a large warehouse which was a couple of squares away; we were supposed to mess there. I guess the people of Scotland were well used to the sight of the American G.I.'s as no curious eyes or flocks of people crowded about to view us.

A couple of kids did run up to us and in a shy manner and thick Scottish accent made the famous and well-known inquiry of "Any gum, chun?" Some were fortunate in receiving the article requested while the others had to continue their quest of gum in other parts of the column.

We entered the warehouse, unloaded, and prepared ourselves for our first feed on foreign soil. The meal was substantial and good. We ate our chow, washed our plates and returned to our places to light up and relax.

We could look back even then and dream of the happy days we had spent in the States. Those days were all behind us now, gone for the time being. So we gazed ahead and imagined ourselves already on the return trip. We had traveled 3,000 miles across a span of water that separated the evil land of Germany from the blessed land of America and we were prepared to travel that many more miles if need be, to convert that evilness into goodness, and believe me, we did.



That night we stayed in that warehouse in Scotland. When morning broke we prepared to go forth to a new destination somewhere in "Merrie Old England." We had come through our sea voyage in good shape. We had won our sea legs, and now we were ready to regain our land legs. What the future held in store for us then was a mystery, but I'm positive there wasn't a one of us who lacked the confidence or the courage of solving it.

## BUDE

### Chapter 11

Our first home in sunny England was to be the summer resort town of Bude, in the county of Cornwall. It had taken us approximately twenty hours of riding to bring us to our new location from our starting point in Scotland. We had traveled along the entire western sea coast of the United Kingdom. We had passed through many a village, town, and city. We had chance to see the lovely countryside and the beautiful scenery of the country that is England. It was most refreshing to view the pretty landscape and to gaze over the greenness of the hills and dales which are so remarkable enchanting to behold.

The quaint old villages, and towns which our train passed through gave on the feeling of being in another world. The babbling brooks and streams were plentiful and effervescent in appearances. The monotony of the trainride was vanquished by our acquaintanceship with this new land.

Our train was small and puny looking in comparison to our huge affairs back in America. It was a wooden job, that would never have been able to stand the gaff that our trains have to. The smallness of the train gave it a more homey taste though. It had lots of speed, but due to wartime conditions, it wasn't put to the test.

On the whole, we had been fairly comfortably quartered. Each platoon had one car to itself. We made ourselves as comfortable as was possible and took advantage of going sight-seeing. There were the usual card games being played, and the same boys who never did catch up on their sleep, tried their darndest to do just that on the ride.

Our arrival into Bude, was a heralded affair. A local G.I. band from an artillery outfit was on hand to welcome us. Also, at the station were other members of our battalion who had left the States weeks before we did, as a quartering and billeting party. It was a warm affair, and a swell reception. It felt good to see more G.I.'s about and it was nice to see those other Rangers, as some of them were old friends.

We then proceeded to march up (and in every respect of that word, as the town is on a hill with the station being at the foot of it) through the winding and spiralling

streets that led from the station to the center of the town. It was quite a climb for us, as we had all our possessions right on our persons. The heavy overcoats we wore and the steel helmets that sat on our craniums didn't add to our ease.

We reached the place we were headed for, which was the battalion mess house. This hall was originally a garage which had been converted into a dining salon for us. We dropped and unloaded our equipment in the alley on the outside, and prepared to engage in our noonday dietary ritual, which was to be our first meal in England.

After chow we lined up in the street just outside the mess hall. There we were formally introduced and greeted by some English officers. We were given a few hints on matters pertaining to our new mode of living amongst our new neighbors and we were told what to expect and how to behave.

The strangest part of the session came though when we were told of the novel manner of housing we were to have. It seems like there weren't any barracks or Army camps about and being it was too cold for outdoor life, it had been decided to put us into private civilian homes, where we were to become similar to boarders in these private homes.

It appears that the English government had gone out of its way to solicit these billets for us from the civilian populace. The people had been requested to give up a room or two or as much space as they could spare and they had complied. When that day came to its end, we found ourselves billeted in civilian homes, living the life of Riley.

This was a fine gesture on the part of the British people and it showed the spirit and enthusiasm these people have in their pursuit of the war. They had made many sacrifices previously but now they were actually giving up parts of their own homes, so that we could be billeted. A friendlier gesture than this could never be made by anyone, anywhere.

Bude is a peaceful, small town on the southwestern coast of England. Its normal population in peacetime couldn't have run over 5,000, but then being on the west coast and removed from the danger vicinity of air raids, its population had naturally in-

creased a great deal. It was a lovely resort town, fairly modern and up-to-date. The main occupation of this community as derived from the fact that it was a resort town. Hotels and homes for tourists did a flourishing business here.

We were all very fortunate in the securing of good billets and homes. I was most lucky as I was in a house, all by myself, while most of the other guys were grouped in homes by two's and three's. I was alone with just an old man and his wife, plus a maid. I had a swell room and I never lacked for room service as the maid was really on the ball. There wasn't anything these kind people wouldn't have done for me and the same was true with the maid.

It didn't take long for us to get over our first doses of shyness and bashfulness. At first it was a bit awkward to get friendly with the people we were living with, as we didn't want to over-do taking advantage of them; but as time wore on, these people got to know us and we to know them. The bonds of friendship that grew up out of this relationship has never been severed, and even today our correspondence with the people of Bude continues to go on, on a most amiable level.

Our billets had been secured at the outskirts of town about a square above the railroad station. Our company area consisted of approximately two blocks of houses as that was as many homes we needed to billet us. We were fairly well bunched-up, so that it was possible to hold formations whenever the need for one arose.

Our mess hall was still located in the center of town, so that every chow call was a period of road marching for us. Our Battalion headquarters was situated on the other end of town so that we always had a nice hike to get there. We could either go thru the center of town to reach the place or we could take a short cut across the town's golf course which was very hilly and appeared to be more of an obstacle course than a golf course.

I'll never forget the trouble we had the first time our Company had reveille formation. It looked like although we were fairly grouped together, that it was a difficult task to assemble us all at one time and at one place. Then there was also the matter of clocks and timepieces. Few of us owned individual wrist watches so that we

had to depend on the clocks that were in our homes. We were to learn strange as this may seem, that there were no two clocks which read the same. So that when morning rolled around and our formation which was scheduled for 6:45 a.m. approached, there were only a handful of men present.... This situation couldn't last long as our first Sgt. (then 1st Sgt. Sowa) took the necessary precautions to insure that this farce wouldn't occur again. A formal statement was handed down concerning this status. The contents read we'd either be on time or else suffer consequences that implied many an unpleasant and ugly hour to be spent on some detail. That next day at reveille found us all present and accounted for, with the exception of the 1st Sgt., who it seems was absent, himself.

It was here at Bude that not only did we become acquainted with, but we became part of the British. Such food combinations as fish and chips, cheese and jelly, tea and crumpets, etc. etc. became ritual with us.

Then at night and during our free evenings, we learned to dance the English way. We became adept at doing the Lambeth-Walk, the Bumps-a-daisy, and other steps that are danced in the British Isle. Many an enjoyable evening was passed doing these terpsichorean steps.

We saw for ourselves from very close range the effects of the war upon these people and on their country. We began to learn the extreme hardships these people were enduring. We learned what rationing really was, the darkness of a total black-out, the shortage of petrol, and the absence of motor vehicles. We could fully appreciate the many sacrifices that were being made by these people on their home front. Added to all this there wasn't a home that didn't have a close kin in the Armed services, or a one that didn't have an active hand in some home defense organization.

During our first days here a light training schedule was drawn up for us. This was merely to give us a chance to recuperate and get over the effects of our sea voyage and also it gave us the opportunities to fix ourselves up in our new homes. Then as the days passed by our training increased. An arduous physical training program saw that we kept trim and in good mental shape. The weapons training that we under-

went saw that we didn't forget our basic training as far as arms were concerned. Compass and map reading courses, which were laid out for us kept us on the beam and in constant preparedness in those subjects and the inevitable night course we ran brought the fact home to us that we were Rangers, and as Rangers we had to perform our missions in either daylight or darkness.

It was funny to us this new and novel manner in which we were being billeted. We felt as though we were back in our own homes, working on a civilian job. For when our working day was ended and retreat formation over, we could do whatever we pleased. We could either go home and pass away the evening with our people we lived with, or we could go to town without a pass and spend the evening there. All that was required of us was that we remembered that we were gentlemen and that we were Rangers. There were many things we could do in town. There was a local movie house that was fairly up to date and which featured American film. The cafes and pubs always welcomed our entries into their establishments, and the fish and chips places was a good place to go to always satisfied our appetites. Then there were dances held quite often in the large dance hall that stood in the rear of the movie hall. Lots of girls would attend these affairs. This more than attracted us Rangers, this lured us there. We ran into competition for the hands of these fair damsels from the local artillery unit, which was still in town. This competition didn't worry us in the least, as it wasn't long before we had all the women we desired.

Our morale during our pleasant stay in Bude was of the highest quality. Everyone seemed happy and pleased from the way things had turned out. I never heard any complaints or saw any down hearted looks on the men. There may have been a couple cases of homesickness but you could never tell it or notice it from the features of these soldiers.

Yet, with all the merriment and recreation we had in Bude, we never lost sight of the reason why we were on this side of the ocean. We continually prepared ourselves for that ever coming day of reckoning with the enemy. We put our entire efforts into our training, never bitching about the most grueling and killing of speed marches,

never complaining about the tiring night problems we ran ever so often and never saying a word about anything that gripes the average soldier.

Our first Christmas over seas was spent in the town of Bude. By now we had fully gained the honest respects and confidence of the towns people. Many of us received invitations to attend family gatherings for Christmas dinners, and some gladly accepted this honor.

Our own Christmas day meal was a real affair. Turkey with all the trimmings, all the beer we could drink and such delicacies as cake and candy decorating our tables. That afternoon after we had finished eating, we arose from the table and found that we had picked up a few pounds.

That day we also threw a X-mas party for the kids of Bude, and of the the surrounding towns. We had been chipping in our weekly candy rations for the past couple of weeks so as to enable the laying of a sweet table. We had fixed up and decorated the local dance hall for this affair and had a beautiful tree set up. This was a real treat for the kids. There isn't a thing in this world that pleases the youngsters of England more than candy and gum. It did our hearts good just watching them enjoying themselves.

That night for our own X-mas entertainment, we had a show and dance. We had obtained the services of a U.S.O. group, that had been touring our section of the country, to perform for us. They put on a gala performance. The dance too, was a lively affair, with alcoholic beverages flowing freely. The dance didn't break up till early the next morning. When we went back to our homes, to get a little sleep that a.m., we were all merry from an evening well spent.

It was only three days later that we received the order to move out. We packed our belongings and prepared ourselves for the coming journey. We said our farewells and bade our dear friends of Bude adieu for a while. Hands were tightly grasped and heavily shaken. There were some tears flowing from the eyes of the weaker sex. Whoever said that the English were cold and aloof must have been in a different part of England than I had been.



I can't help but to look back and to think how grnd these people were to us. They took complete strangers into their private homes and cared for us tenderly. They never complained about anything we did and always went about their tasks cheerfully. No wonder these Britishers have earned the respects and admiration of the entire world. I knew then how these people had the courage to stand off their enemies in the worst days of Dunkirk and of the Blitz. I knew then which side was going to emerge victorious from this conflict.

## TITCHFIELD

### Chapter 111

The next leg of our itinerary that was to bring the 2nd Ranger Bn. half way through the continent of Europe via the trespassing of six countries, was to be the small insignificant town of Titchfield, in the county of Dorset, which is situated on the southern coast of England. Ancient Titchfield with its cobbled streets, historical Church and cemetery. The narrow lanes, worn-out buildings and the many old fashioned pubs and hotels.

Our train ride from Bude which brought us to the city of Southampton had taken us nearly seven hours. Hours which were spent in rapture, drinking in the wonderful endowment of Mother Nature upon the lovely English terrain.

At Southampton, we boarded trucks, and after an hour's ride we reached our new area. Titchfield, like many other small towns of England had been built in a valley. There were many roads that led into the main street which bisected this community and formed the main square. This main street continued until it joined the main highway that led to the city of Fareham.

It was to be our misfortune to have to march over these roads in our training. Many was the time a sweating, cursing Ranger could be seen traveling over these thoroughfares at the double time pace, half bent for election.

To gain a fair idea of our doings in this area, I must run back the pages of our Battalion history, and relate to you readers a basic idea of the fundamental principles of the Ranger Battalion of its organization and of its operations.

The Ranger Battalion was organized as a small, fast, hard-hitting, and compact unit. We were patterned after the style and fashion as our brethren from England, "the Commandos." A lot of information had come down to us concerning the training, and experience of this famous outfit and we tried to mold ourselves into an organization similar to theirs.

Our training was continually stresses and emphasized along these lines. We were especially proficient to work in small bands of squads and sections. To work independently from other units, using our own initiative, hitting hard and striking fast.

We were experts in the use of demolitions, small arms and automatic weapons. In fact, we were all familiar with every known gun and explosive which is to be found in an Infantry division, and we knew how, where and when to use this equipment.

We were now in our present location because of this specialized training. Our company was operating by itself, away from our other companies of the Battalion. We were now on our own, responsible only to ourselves for our maneuvers and training.

Before we had left our last station our Battalion Commander, Colonel Rudder, then Major, had given us some inkling of our doings in this vicinity. He had informed us that the work we were about to undertake was not to be new to us, but what was to be novel was to be the manner in which we were to operate.

It seems that not only was the company to be on its own, but every individual was to be on his own. The Army was experimenting and they were prepared to learn from experience. They had given each of us sustenance money, which amounted to four dollars per day. We were to go out and find our own billets, buy our own food and other purchases, and to pay for anything we may have a need for. To make the purchase of food legal we were issued regular civilian ration cards, so that there wouldn't be any trouble in obtaining the groceries required to exist upon.

That meant upon our arrival, we had to seek out our own private billets, or homes, and seek for a place to shop and cook. But, thanks again to the fine cooperation and collaboration of the people and the police force, we were most fortunate in obtaining the requirements we were searching for.

Practically all of us found houses where the people did the shopping and cooking for us. The mercenary end of this deal was very profitable to us, as many of the good civilians of Titchfield refused monetary payment for the use of their houses and labors. When we did have to pay for our room and board, we found it didn't amount to one half of what the Army was paying us. So, we pocketed the extra money and went about the various pubs, and celebrated.

Most of the fellows were billeted in fine houses. All the homes had the luxuries and comforts that a soldier in the field dreams of. Radios, laundry, libraries, etc. etc. It was just like being home. Unfortunately, fifteen of us men got a dirty deal

and were stuck in a filthy house about a mile out of town. While the others were sleeping on warm feather beds, we were reclining on Army cots and trying to keep from freezing under G.I. blankets.

It didn't take us long to get situated and set up in our new homes. We became acquainted with the people we lived with and made their friendship. By our fine and exemplary behavior we won the respects and plaudits of the townfolks.

A daily training schedule was drawn up for us. Each day saw us going through the paces that makes the average soldier a Ranger. Strenuous physical exercises, exhausting speed marches, compass and map courses, night problems, and amphibious work, all became part of our labors. The most outstanding and stressed work here was our training in conjunction with the Royal Navy. Many was the evenings we'd return to our respective homes, wet cold, and miserable from our practiced landings off the Isle of Wight. We'd sometimes be set to wade ashore from a point 100 yards off shore. We'd have to wade through this January, icy, waist-deep water to assault imaginary beach defenses.

Our operations with the Royal Navy gave us faith in their ability. We learned that these Limeys were on the ball and knew what they were doing. I'm also sure that we left a positive impress on on these birds minds in the way we handled our assignments, either on board ship, or in the assaulting of the beaches.

Our outfit was beginning to shape up in good fashion; we were operating and functioning in a true Ranger style. Our organization was good and our leadership was excellent. We were acting and thinking as a team. We had that confidence and cockiness that makes the Ranger the outstanding soldier, that he is.

With all this arduous and rough training our morals and spirit were never higher or better. The harder we worked, the louder we sang. The more fatigued we were the more we joked and the rougher the problem, the more we enjoyed our homes and the trips to the pubs in the evenings.

We sang all the time, we were here. "Roll Me Over In the Clover" that famed English ballad became synonymous as our battle cry. We Rangers, must have presentedda

queer picture in this quaint and peaceful town. We were just about the opposite, lively, noisy, and playful all the time, never once serious.

We really got ourselves familiar with beers and bitters while we were here. There were beaucoup of pubs and bars and they always had drinking substances on hand. Being we were well heeled with dough from the sustenance deal, we could afford to indulge in alcoholic refreshments quite often. The name of "Wheatchief", "Carriers," "Horse and Carriage" became as well known to us as Joe's beanery is back home. If you were lonely in your home, all you had need to do was to make the rounds of these places, and you'd be sure to meet up with some of the boys.

For our social life, we had a local NAAFI place, in the middle of town which would attract the ATS and WRENS from the nearby English camps and airfields. These girls were really alright, and in every sense of that word. When we had to say good-bye to Titchfield, many a romance was shattered and many a heart broken.

There was a slight hitch to these romantic affairs, though. It seems as the girls had to be back in camp quite early, and although these camps were nearby (nearby meaning anywhere from two to ten miles in England) a Ranger indulged in a bit of footwork, each time he had to take his girl back to camp. I guess a lot of the boys must have needed the exercise since they did it every night, and truthfully, if the opportunity should ever present itself again, I'm sure we would gladly, cheerfully, and willingly travel over this same courses without griping.

When the time came to move out, Co. "A" received a job to do. It didn't surprise me or the others, in the least. We had been working hard and preparing for just that sort of mission, so when orders came down that we were scheduled to make a guerrilla raid upon the coast of France, sometime near the end of the month, we were fully ready for it.

So, when the day of January 10 rolled around, it saw sixty-four men and three of- ficers prepared to go forth, once more. With regrets, we said Au Revoir to our friends of Titchfield and boarded our train for a new destination in England. We knew our days of dry-running were behind us. We were now heading for pay dirt, as our ex-Company Commander, Captain Lytle, so aptly put it. It was no wonder that the last night spent in

Titchfield was one of celebration and toasting. This was to have been it!!

## FOLKESTONE

### Chapter 1V

About the most vivid and exciting moments, not to mention jolly and frivelous times, we've spent in the land of England, took place during our reign in the famous Commando house of Beachborough (known as B.B. house) which is situated on the English battle ground about four miles outside the city of Folkestone, a county of Kent.

It was from this base that we were to set out to make that attempted Ranger raid, somewhere on the enemy-held coast of France. But due to weather conditions and circumstances beyond our control this raid was never to be carried out. We came so close in pulling off this stunt, that even today debates and discussions are heard from the boys who were there, about what the outcoming results would have been had we pulled the raid off.

Our arrival to this well-known place was one of great momentous, since our being there marked the first time in the annals of the Commando's history, that American troops were to be billeted in this house. It was a great honor and privilege to us, and we were enthralled by its prospects.

It was from this headquarters that all the arrangements, planning and operations of the No. 4, No. 10 and the Marine Commandos had been made. It was from here that these illustrious and brave men set out to make their raids and assaults upon the German defences off the coast of France. And it was to this place that these daring men returned after their exploits and adventures on the other side of the channel. It is no wonder that we look upon our residence here with the greatest of pride. It isn't anyone that can call this place of such noble heritage home, even for the short period of time we had the delight of staying there.

Our company strength, upon our arrival, was sixty-four enlisted men and three officers. Our Company commander not being with us, as he had gone to some school in London. Our 1st platoon leader, (then 1st Lt. Joe Rafferty) was in charge of the outfit. In addition to our own company, we had the added personnel of the kitchen, one section of headquarters communications, and a few men from our Battalion supply.

We didn't waste any time stripping for action. We were here on business purposes



only, and we meant to get down to brass tacks, as immediately as was possible. We really put in some real licks in our training. We were very fortunate that we had the capable assistance and instruction from some of the commando officers themselves, in our work.

We learned a great deal from these artists, who were skilled in the art of silent death. Strict attention was applied everytime these men held classes and we tried to absorb all we could from them since we knew that what these men told us didn't come from any field manual, but from actual experiences.

It was only natural that during our stay here that we would become acquainted and friendly with the Commando personnel, that still remained on the grounds. These men, for the most part, were non-operational troops which were due to certain misfortunes obtained during their fighting days. These fellows were great sports and as swell a bunch of soldiers I have ever met. They were as typically British, as the grounds themselves. They were shy, modest, and quiet. A bit cool at first, but when we broke them down, they were most friendly and warm. Although the bull was thrown around quite a bit, especially after a few bitters had been downed at the local NAAFI. They were most modest in their story-telling. It was like pulling teeth to get anything from these soldiers. They who had participated in many an action against the enemy. I learned that these fellows were by no means braggarts or showoffs, although they had done enough to spout off about.

Folkestone, being a large city had many facilities and centers for amusement and entertainment. There were several movie houses, many eating places, cabarets, night clubs, a few dance halls and innumerable pubs. Many was the night we visited this city and enjoyed ourselves to the utmost.

We were about the only American G.I.'s in this area. Since Folkestone, is only a stones throw away from the enemy across the channel. This city wasn't exactly healthy or a suitable place for soldiers to be stationed at. This had its advantages and also its setbacks. On the good side was the fact that we had the run of the city. Being there were a great many pretty girls about, we had the pleasure of sharing their leisure time without competition from other G.I.'s. There was also lots to drink,

and being the rich Americans, we were able to participate in alcoholic orgies, ever so often. On the bad side of the ledger was the fact that we were so near the enemy. We were nightly subjected to air-raids. This, wasn't too bad, as the Luftwaffe generally passed over Folkestone to head for the inland cities, such as London, Birmingham, etc. What was dangerous and hazardous to us was when there was allied shipping in the channel. Everytime a friendly convoy would attempt to run the gauntlet along the coast, there was bound to be enemy long range shelling and rocket firing. This shelling was very inaccurate. Many shells instead of hitting the ships in the convoy landed on the shores and in the city proper. Many a scar and an empty lot stood in defiance to prove the ineffectiveness of this fire. Also, there were too many graves and hospitalized persons to show what a menace to the civilian population, this shelling was.

The day rolled around that put an end to our training. Now our work was to be operational. Our mission had come down to the company and we were to be briefed and oriented. Our task, or our mission, was quite a simple one. All we had to do was land somewhere on the coast of France and pick up one prisoner, that was all. The raid was to be essentially reconnaissance, but we were to be prepared to fight if it was necessary to complete our job of bringing back the prisoner.

Now that we knew what we were to do, all we needed was the planning and training to put this deal on ice. Our S-2 gathered up all the available data concerning the enemy situation, and we were thoroughly briefed on this subject. Most of our information was derived from the latest aereal photos, which were obtained for us daily by the air corps. We had special ground maps prepared for us which were very skillfully made up, so, that we had a fair picture of the terrain and of the enemies defences in the sector we were to attack.

Being our mission was of an amphibious nature, a great deal of coordination and timing had to be effected between the Royal Navy, which was to bring us to the coast of France, and ourselves. We did this by drawing up time schedules and setting up a system of signalling which coordinated our efforts. It was upon these factors, that

we base our battle plans.

Our plan of operations as worked out by the staff was a rather simple one. We took certain things for granted and if these things weren't what we supposed them to be, we sort of had an alternative plan. The master plan ran along this line. The company was to split up into four groups, with each one having a definite mission. The first group was to be the one that actually nabbed the prisoner. Whenever they got one, our job was to be completed and no matter what the other three groups were doing, they were to stop and to return to a prearranged assembly area. The second group was to act as protection for the first one. They were supposed to be the ones to do the actual fighting if it were necessary, while the other group went after the prisoner. The third group was also to be a body guard for the first group. They were supposed to protect the flanks of the other groups by taking up a defensive position. While the last section had the task of defending the beach landing to keep the escape route open and to make certain enemy infiltrations didn't endanger the rear of the other groups. They were also responsible for signalling and other bits of information we were to bring with us concerning the enemy beach defenses and also of the ocean tides.

There was also included in this master plan our coordination and timing with the Royal Navy. We had to be well versed in knowing about the administrative details, such as what we were to do in case we incurred casualties, and what we should do if perchance one of us were cut off and couldn't effect an escape. These and a million and one other minor details were taken care of in our planning.

The job was to be run off in the following manner: we were to have two L.C.A.'s (landing craft assault) carry the company. The boat carrying groups one and two was to be the first to touch down on the field with one man carrying a mine detector and another man equipped with a roll of white tape in the lead. To follow behind and in single file, were to come the two groups. They were to come to a path that ran parallel to the ocean, follow that path until it led into a road that ran perpendicular to this path, and which led into the community where a known garrison of enemy troops

were stationed. Meanwhile No. 3 group was to come in right behind the other two groups but instead of going up the main road as the other section had supposed to have done, they were to cross it and take up a defensive position in this sector, covering this road junction and protecting the rear and flanks of the other groups. While No. 4 group was to remain at the beach where they had originally landed and take up a defensive position; send out a couple of men to study the enemies set up, and send out a couple of men to widen the tape path in the minefield. This was so as to facilitate matters in case there were a need for a hasty retreat. We wanted to make sure that more than one man at a time could get back through the mine field without getting blown up. How the first group was to capture the prisoner was let up to the leaders initiative and to the situation which might present itself.

Now that all that had been taken care of, we had to do some training on this score. We studied all the available data, we had on the enemy defences. We built a course on our grounds and made it as similar in terrain and appearance as was possible to that which we had seen in the aerial photos and ground maps. Many a daylight hour and evening were spent on this course. We got ourselves so well familiarized that each man could have gone through these dry runs blindfolded. Our timing meanwhile was being synchronized and our teamwork coordinated.

Besides our training on our built-up course, we had to undergo more training in conjunction with the Royal Navy. Although we were considered experts in the field of amphibious work, we still needed the practice. Also our operation called for something a bit different than that what we had gone through previously. In the past, we had worked with L.C.A.'s and L.C.I.'s that made the run into the beaches directly, but now we were to operate with a mother ship. We had to sail out into the channel on this ship and to transfer to our assault crafts from this boat, then, we were to make the run onto the shore. That transferring at sea business was the part that was a bit different to us.

Added to this training, we got special instructions from the Commandos in enemy mines and booby-traps. We learned their nomenclature and we were taught how to neutralize

lize them. We were shown how to safe them under various combat conditions and we were versed in the art of avoiding wires and booby traps. Very ticklish and nerve-racking studies.

Our raid was to be pulled off at night, so we underwent night firing problems, night compass courses and other night exercises. We became proficient at this kind of work. We all realized and knew that this was it. We wanted to make sure that we'd put on a good show, so we toiled hard and long putting our best into our dry runs.

All the while our morale and spirits were never better. I never saw such a happy and carefree bunch of guys in all my days. More playful and babyish than a hatful of kittens. About the place we had lots of small firing devices which were used to set off charges. They were harmless gadgets, but when set off, made a loud bang. Well, to make a long story short, you couldn't touch a thing or take an unwary step, as these do-cads were planted all over the place. Many a gray hair was added to our heads because of the pranking of some of the boys.

We underwent a couple of dry runs off the coast of Dover with our mother ship and L.C.A.'s. We functioned smoothly and performed our jobs without mishaps. It was an experience to be operating in these waters as this part of the channel was an integral part of no-man's land.

While we were undergoing these runs, off Dover, we got the opportunity to view for ourselves the famed chalk cliffs of this city. We also saw at close range the damage wrought by the German Luftwaffe during the hectic days of the Blitz. Although a great deal of the ruined structures had been repaired, too many scars and bare places existed to escape our attention.

A couple days before the date set for the raid, we had to go through our paces before an inspecting general and his staff. It seems as though we needed the approval and permission of these high officials before we would be allowed to participate in the assault of the German-held coast.

It was a cold, crisp, and starry night when we reached our starting point. We were now on alien terrain as they wanted to see how we could operate in an area that wasn't familiar to us. Our task was to be similar to that of our coming raid. So

that all in all it was a fair trial.

We went through our paces in a manner which gained us the wanted permission, besides winning the plaudits and the praises of the general. He was well pleased with our showing and he wasn't the least backwards in his fine opinion of us. We were proud and happy Rangers that evening.

The problem hadn't taken long to run so that it was fairly early in the night. The skies were clear and the light given off by the stars radiated the area, making it an ideal night for an air raid; and an air raid is what we did get. We were just about organized and prepared to move back to our awaiting vehicles when the heavy drone of bombers were heard. Inquisitive searchlights turned the skies into day. The planes were immediately identified as enemy and all hell broke loose. Ack-ack and machine-gun tracers filled the air, putting on as brilliant a display of fireworks I've ever seen. We could distinctly ascertain a direct hit on one of the bombers and we could see it burst into flames and watch this flaming pyre twisting and spiralling earthward. We could feel the earth shake under us; as the bombs released by the Heinies hit the ground, the large flashes which arose told us that incendiaries were being used. Being we were in the midst of an open field we felt fairly safe and immune from the danger of being bomber, as no enemy objective or target was anywhere nearby. We casually watched the ensuing battle as interested spectators at some sporting event. Another huge flash, plus more flames told the story of another plane lost to the Heinies. The searchlight continued to form wierd patterns as they criss-crossed and searched the skies. Ack-ack and machine-gun fire were increasing in crescendo. Falling pieces of shrapnel made us seek cover. More incendiary bombs were dropped and we could see the bonfires arising from this sort of bombing. This was an unforgettable experience for us. Although we had undergone many air raid warnings and had gazed at the Luftwaffe as it passed over our heads, this was our first taste of actual aerial warfare.

The scope of the battlefield was immense as at one time the flak and tracer fire would seem to our front, then this would cease and all the firing could be seen in the skies to our rear, then to our left, and then to our right. No matter how or where we turned, the battle seemed to be raging.

The best part of this show came when the beams of two criss-crossing searchlights caught an enemy plane in its midst. We could so plainly see the Heiny plane doing its fantastic dance of death. The pilot was using all his ability and maneuvering skill to escape from this trap, but was unsuccessful. The work on the part of the batteries operating the giant rays were brilliant, they never once lost track of the Jerry with all its diving, climbing, rolling, and twisting. This looked so unreal like being home at a vaudeville show watching the star actor going through his paces as the spotlight accents his every movement. I felt a same thrill as I did when viewing that actor.

We were all awaiting to see the flashes of the ack-ack and ground machine-guns fire blast this plane from the sky. But we were to be rudely shaken from our trances, as from out of the dark skies above the light beams came the clear traces and flashes of machine-gun fire from the wings of an English night fighter which shattered the large bomber into nothingness. Before the plane fell to earth we could see the enemy crew bailing out in the far distance. The heavy rumbling sound and the quaking of the earth about us gave evidence that the pilot had ridden the plane of its bombs, which had fallen into an empty field in our near vicinity. The paratroopers were falling away from our positions so that there was nothing we could do about them. I'm certain that other persons took good care of them.

The entire air raid hadn't taken long and it ended as quickly as it had begun. We boarded our respective trucks and returned to B.B. house where we turned in to get a good night's sleep, which we had well earned for ourselves.

The next day's account of the air raid said that of an approximate fifty planes sixteen had been lost to the enemy with no losses to us. Damage had been light due to the ineffectiveness of the bombing and due a great deal to the skills of the men operating the air defenses of England. They really had given a good exhibition and had gotten a good toll for their work. It is no wonder that England managed to best the Luftwaffe in the great German aerial offensive of 1941.

Before the scheduled day of the raid, our Captain returned to us. It was good



seeing him back. It gave us added faith and confidence. He took over the company and found himself a role in the raid with no actual change being made in the original plan.

The eventful day of the raid finally rolled around. A heavily clouded sky forewarned us of nasty and stormy weather conditions. We were all prepared and ready. Our morale and spirits were excellent and there wasn't the least sign of nervousness to be seen. We were all confident and had all the faith in the world, in ourselves, and in our leaders. We were set to show the world that the American Rangers didn't believe in the Nazi myth of supermen and we were ready to prove that fact.

The skies still hung heavy when we prepared to board our vehicles, which were to take us to Dover. A last minutes cancellation put an abrupt stop to that, so we stayed in and sweated it out till the morrow. Reports of turbulent conditions in the channel the following morning put a conclusive crimp in our operations in that body of water for the rest of the month. This marked a finis to our hopes of ever making the raid.

It was sort of a let-down to us as we had planned and put our everything into the making of this assault. We had set our hearts and minds on making this attack and now it was all over, ended, and in no way our fault. Oh well, maybe it was for the better, we hadn't lost anything by our labors, in fact we had gained. We had benefitted from our contacts with the Commandos. Our friendship with these men never slackened, and in fact, it tightened now that we had more time and opportunity to go out together. We received many commendations from the commander of B.B. house for our fine behaviour and sportsmanlike spirit while we were there. So, although, we didn't do the job that time, fate saw that we weren't to be let down again, and the day of June 6, 1944, more than proved that.

We really went to town after this failure. Three days passes were issued, and daily passes were continually in effect. So, we went to town, drank bitters and ale, and danced away our troubles.

When February 13 rolled around, we received our moving orders. We packed our equipment, and said our farewells. We headed for the station to catch a train which

was to bring us back to Bude. We departed with a load of memories, while we left behind the firm and already established reputation of us Rangers as being fighting soldiers and gentlemen.

## BUDE AGAIN

### Chapter 5

Our return entry into Bude on the 14th day of February was one of mixed feelings and emotions. We were disappointed in a minor sort of way because we had once said goodbye to these good people of this community, and now, we were returning like bad relatives that had no other place to go. While on the other hand, we were happy to be back, happy to pick up the shreds and bonds of friendship we had knitted the first time we were here.

It took us no time to get back into the swing of things. Most of the boys, including myself, got their old billets back and took up their living habits as though they had never left in the first place. The people were as jovial and cordial as ever, and they were only too happy to have us back. In fact, it became so that we got to know these civilians so well and became so familiar with them that the names of Mom, Pop, Aunt and Uncle were bestowed on them.

It was nearly two months now since Able company had been put on its own to operate as a separate organization away from battalion. Now we were back again under the folds of Battalion. It was nice to be back as this gave us a chance to acquaint ourselves with the other guys in the unit and to renew our friendship with our buddies in the other companies. Inter-company bull sessions were held frequently, with members from each company trying to relate a better story of their company's doing than the others.

A vigorous training schedule was drawn up for us here. This was to make certain that we kept in condition and that we didn't forget all that we had learned. Hikes, speed marches, and physical training made sure that our bodies didn't become soft and lumpy. While squad, section and platoon firing problems saw that we knew how to use our weapons in cooperation and coordination with our buddies. Night problems, map and compass courses kept our mental facilities alerted. Also it gave us the needed skill and adeptness for the battle we were endlessly preparing for.

To further prepare us for the coming invasion, we were given a specialized course in overcoming hilly and mountainous obstacles. This came to us under the cognomen of

cliff scaling. Many was the afternoon that saw us Rangers weary and tired, going up and down the hilly cliffs that bordered the ocean at Bude.

We had done this sort of training before in our infant days back at Camp Forrest. We had been given certain practical demonstrations on the usage of ropes entwined about the body to overcome an over-hanging cliff obstacle. Then we also had been taught certain other principles in ascending and descending the sides of steep hills. We had been given the opportunity to test our skills on the sheer cliffs (80 to 100 feet high) which were situated in the vicinity of Tullahoma, Tennessee.

We had come thru this rough training with flying colors, so that now we stood ready to tackle the cliffs of England or anywhere else on the European continent, for that matter.

In Bude due to the facilities and different kinds of cliffs, we had nearby, we could experiment with many different ways of surmounting this kind of obstacle. We would climb certain cliffs without the use of rope, some with and then for others we used little steel ladders which were four feet in length and which had ends which could be connected to one another. We built up ladders which extended in length to 80 to 100 feet. With these all we had to do was place the ladder against the cliff, and walk up. Very simple, all you had to do was just hope and pray that the ladder wouldn't break or that the construction rods weren't loose and would give away while you were going up or down.

While we were here, we had the good fortune, socially speaking, to have the Red Cross open up a Donut Dugout. The place was situated right in the midst of our camp area, so the Able Co. had almost a complete monopoly of the place. It was a treat and pleasure to go visit the Donut Dugout to drink down a coke or engage in the art of dunking donuts in coffee. Besides, there were other facilities handy such as writing tables, reading material, checker boards, a large ping pong table, a good radio with phonograph attached, and many other things that can be found in such places. Then, also the pretty hostesses that took care of the Dugout were an added attraction that lured the Rangers into coming.

Our Battalion underwent a reorganization while at Bude. A few men and some officers were released and transferred to other outfits. It appears that although these men had put out to the best of their ability, it didn't quite meet the rigid standards and moral requirements of the Rangers. In exchange, new men and new life were added to the Battalion. Our company was fairly well affected by this move as we lost a couple of men and an officer. But, in return we got Lt. Edlin and several other swell soldiers, who some are still fortunate to be well and around even today.

It was during our stay here that our Battalion issued out five day passes. We could go wherever we wished to go as long as we didn't become A.W.O.L. doing so. The boys took advantage of this break and took off. (The passes were issued so that an entire company would be on leave at one time.) Some went traveling over the land of England and some even went as far as Scotland. Many were attracted by the glamour of London, so they went there. While others, including myself, went to look up buddies of ours who happened to be stationed in the British Isles.

There were a few men who never even left Bude. These few were content to just loaf around, relax and catch up on their sleep, and do a bit of sightseeing in the immediate vicinity, which was full of historic views.

We came back from our leave with new vigor and added energy. We tackled our training schedule with fresh life, and we clambered up and down the cliffs like a handful of monkeys.

The Ranger Bn. celebrated its first anniversary while we were at Bude on April 1. 1944  
A party was thrown for us to commemorate this occasion. It was a grand affair and a huge success as each company put on command performances on certain subjects and persons which have or have been the butt of innumerable jokes ever since the Battalions activation.

This was all done in a sportsmanlike manner, and in the spirit of good humor. Everything and everyone was ridiculed and satired from our Battalion Commander down to the lowly mess sergeant; no officers escaped a dirty dig, and no sergeant got away unpunished about. It was lots of fun and everyone had a swell time. Even our Colonel,

who was the butt of many a witty remark gave out with mighty guffaws everytime he was slandered. A swell sport and a swell leader was our Bn. Co., Lt. Colonel Rudder.

After these skits came a few speeches from various officers of the staff and of the companies. Nothing new or great was said, but all that was spoken came from the bottom of these men's hearts. It's no wonder we hold our officers in such high esteem.

It was here that our own Co.<sup>A</sup>, Capt. Lytle, gave birth to the name of the Ranger as a character. I plainly remember his famous words distinctly, I quote him, "You fellows have about broken every rule and law that there are in the Army regulations manual, and not only that, when you ran out of rules, you made up your own and then went out and broke them. You men are a bunch of characters and its these characters that I can't help but like and admire. Their manner their willingness, and their fighting spirit. That is why I'm so proud to be amongst you and to be one of you."

From then out, the Rangers became Characters with no two individuals the same. What a fine bunch of soldiers these characters were. I can't help myself when I think of their loyalty, courage, and gumption. I get a large lump in my throat, everytime I recall those good old days and remember the names of those men. Then I look about and see new and different features and realize that those brave Rangers who participated in the merriment of that evening are no longer with us, many gone forever left behind to stay eternally on foreign soil with only a cross to mark their places and to remind the world of the heroism and sacrifices of these characters.

It was just two days later that we were packed and prepared to move. We bade our dear friends of Bude farewell and then took off for our new location. We were off to learn new skills, to make more friends, and to work hard so as to prepare us for that ever coming day of accounting with our foe across the channel.

## ASSAULT TRAINING SCHOOL

### BRAUNTON, CAMP

#### Chapter VI

Of all the training, maneuvers, and operations we Rangers have undergone about the most interesting and radical we have ever encountered was done at the Armies assault training school, which was situated outside the village of Branton, in the county of Dorset.

It was here that we learned the most modern of techniques and plans of conducting warfare against a stable enemy's defensive position. It was here that we furthered our acquaintances with such up-to-date firing devices and weapons as the bazooka, flame thrower, bangalore torpedos, beehive charges, rifle grenades, etc. It was here too, that we had many practical demonstrations in the use of demolitions and where we took part in man a problem with the mission of destroying huge fortified pillboxes. The work was most instructive and educational, not to mention exciting and interesting.

The school thoroughly felt that when a soldier had completed the course at this school that he was more prepared for actual combat than at any other time of his Army career. And now, having been through the grind there, I certainly approve of that statement.

Our new homes here were to be Nissen huts on the Army grounds, on the outskirts of Branton. This was to be our first time since we came to England that we were to be actually billeted in a real Army camp. It almost felt strange to be among all the Army personnel that was housed at this base.

Our new homes were dirigible-shaped affairs, with tinning all around, except for the front and rear, which was of a wooden construction. These affairs were supposed to hold approximately twenty men and that was about the number of men we had in ours. We had concrete floors and we slept on Army cots. To provide the heat for these shacks, we had two pot-bellied stoves that were supposed with emphasis on "supposed" to keep the hut warm.

Our company strength at our arrival was sixty-four men and three officers. Our

Co., Capt. Lytle had gotten himself a job at Battalion as executive officer, so Lt. Rafferty became the old man of the outfit, while Lt White had the 2nd platoon and Lt. Edlin took over the 1st. First Sgt. Sowa was the headboss as far as the enlisted men were concerned.

It didn't take us long to buckle down and to get our teeth into things. We got ourselves straightened out in our huts and we started to fraternize with the nearby towns and with the females that inhabited them.

ALL the while we were here, we toiled hard at day, but when evening rolled around and passes were issued out, we Rangers went to town and played harder. The cities of Ilfracombe and Barnstaple were places of paradise as far as we were concerned, and we took the greatest of advantage of these havens.

Our home town, Braunton, wasn't much of a place, although it did have a cinema, several pubs and a few fish and chip joints. About the best thing that the town could boast of was the railroad and the highway that linked this village to the cities of Ilfracombe and Barnstaple. It was these transportation facilities that gave us an outlet to these cities where merriment and entertainment via wine, women and song could be obtained.

Our training program for the first couple of days consisted of elementary fundamentals and basic principles. After that came the actual school courses which began by breaking the company down into individual groups with each group a different class of instruction. The sections were placed in the following categories--demolition and explosive group; mine and booby-trap class; barbed wire obstacles; and a weapons group that combined the bazooka, flame thrower, anti-tank grenades and individual arms into one class.

These specialized groups were coached and instructed by experts in these subjects. More was learned from these qualified teachers than in all our previous training put together.

The barbed wire group learned every known way of breaching and crossing that obstacle. The demolitions and explosive group were taught formulas and were shown how



to formulate them. The mine and booby-trap class got the latest and most up-to-date information of laying, blowing, safing and neutralizing minefields. They were shown how to use mine detectors and became versed in the job of probing and seeking by eye and hand for enemy booby-traps. While the weapons groups absorbed all the knowledge and data these experienced teachers could throw at them concerning firearms. They learned how to use their weapons and when to use them. They got to know the functioning of their arms and they were made experts on the firing of all guns.

During our courses we found time to improve our physical bodies and to build up excess stamina. The hilly and sandy terrain which bordered the beach at Branton was an excellent route to hike and speed march over (so our officers thought) so we Rangers carried our tired and weary bodies over this prescribed route while our rears dragged the ground and our tongues hung down to our toes.

After we completed our individual group courses, we reorganized and started to run problems where we could combine our skills and trades we had picked up, so as to run platoon and company problems.

Many was the morning you could see our company hiking up the hilly road that led to Baggy Point fully loaded down with weapons and equipment, sweating, cursing, and singing, but ready to run through these dry runs and wet run problems.

(Note-to give you readers a better idea of our doings, I'd like to write up one of these typical wet run problems.)

Generally, we'd have a defensive position set up on this hill called Baggy Point. The defense was a simulated affair, but which had several pillboxes controlling all the entrances to this point. Dummy targets represented the dug-in emplacements which were protecting the pillboxes and actual barbed wire surrounded the entire defense. There were also more wire between the positions, themselves, so that gave us more than one wire obstacle to breach. There were no mine fields or booby-traps involved in these problems.

Our mission would be to take, destroy, and hold this position, to reorganize and either hold or prepare to move out to a new objective or else to be prepared if the

case need be to beat off an enemy counter attack.

The plan we used to carry out our task was plain. The wire cutting team (barbed wire breaching) was to lead off. Following and covering their movements by fire was to come a squad of riflemen. Then spread out and further in the rear came the bazooka team, flame thrower team, demolition team and anti-tank grenadiers, in that order. Our initial advance was to be aided by an artillery and mortar barrage plus the direct fires of our own 75's (which we had mounted on half-tracks) upon the enemy position. These fires were supposed to neutralize, and knock out some of the open emplacements which covered the enemy positions while making the defenders of the pillboxes button up.

We were to advance forward to the first line of wire. Here the wire cutting party was to breach the wire in any manner they saw fit, either cutting, blowing, or bridging while being covered by our riflemen. As soon as the wire was taken care of, the bazooka team and anti-tank grenadiers were to take up positions covering the slits in the pillboxes, making sure they kept buttoned up. Meanwhile, the flame throwers and demolitions teams were to advance under the protective fire of the bazooka. The wire party by this time would be breaching the last wire obstacle in front of the pillbox. Riflemen would be pinning down the enemy in the open emplacements. Our own mortars, artillery and s.p. guns would quit firing as they were then masked by us, and start to displace forward. By now the assault of the pillbox would begin. With the riflemen still covering, plus the bazooka and anti-tank grenadiers, the flame throwers would come forth and squirt the openings of the box. These bursts of flame didn't last longer than thirty seconds. When the last flash burned out, the demolition team was to run forward and place a pole charge in the same slits, retreat a distance and await the big blowoff. When the explosion came, our job was nearly over. A bayonet charge plus the throwing of hand grenades made sure that any enemy playing dead would stop acting. We would overrun the position and take up a defensive position. Generally the problem ended here and we would reassemble and get ready for the critique, that was sure to follow.

We won all honors in the running of these problems. The commendations and praises heaped upon us by the schools officers were most gratifying and more than atoned for the honest and arduous labors we exerted in the undertaking of these exercises.

After this course was completed, we began a new phase of training. Already the big dealers at Battalion headquarters knew the part that we Rangers were to play in the coming assault on Fortress Europa, so that we started to undergo problems that were to be similar to those to the coming invasion plans.

We ran several problems in conjunction with the Royal Navy and then we underwent exercises concerning a simulated flank protection of a division.

To finish off this phase of training, we underwent a two day and night exercise. We combined our amphibious knowledge with our fighting skill on land. It was a tough, rough problem and very realistic. This problem gave us our first inkling of what we were to expect when the day of invasion rolled around.

It was during this exercise that we first boarded our mother ship which was eventually to bring us across the channel on that fateful day of June 6. It was there we struck up our first friendship with this boat and got our first taste of being aboard a ship of this type.

A couple days later or on April 27 saw us on the move again. We were still sixty-four men and three officers strong, and strong in every sense of the word. We had trained and worked hard. We had had our fun, and now we were prepared to tackle anything the Army threw our way. Our cockiness and confidence had taken on new life. This school had presented us a difficult and obstinate course to go through, but in good Ranger style and fashion we had overcome this. We had gone on to a greater success than any other unit who had ever attended here had ever obtained. No wonder we were so proud and sure of ourselves.

## DORCHESTER--STAGING AREA

### Chapter VII

Our next destination in the travels and exploits of the Rangers was to be the pleasant country site just outside the city limits of Dorchester, county of Dorset. Previously, we had always been billeted in buildings or struct res, but here we were to taste the famed way of Army life, life in a tent. Since we had left the states, we had hardly seen a tent less live in one, so that now we were getting reoriented to this old way of Army living.

It wasn't hard to renew this style of living, as weather conditions made this outdoor life ideal. The immediate countryside with its pretty prim-roses, shady trees, running streams, didn't detract in the least in the joy of leading this primitive type of existence.

Our area was in an open field, which was hemmed in by tall trees, under whose cover our tents were pitched. We were fairly crowded in our homes as space was limited. The first couple of days we stayed there, we didn't have much to do. So we relaxed, refreshed and soothed our nerves by absorbing the beauty of the land.

The 29th Inf. division was also bivouaced in this vicinity. We became friendly with these men and struck up a friendly relationship. These doughs were a swell bunch of G.I.'s. It wasn't hard to get chummy with them. It seems as though they too were here for the same reason we were. It appears that we were to pull off a gigantic amphibious exercise with both our units participating. Our outfit was to give them flank protection, which was similar to what we had trained for in the overnite problem at Braunton.

Up till now, our training and operations had been done by ourselves, alone. We had always simulated troops to be on our flanks, etc. Now these make-believe soldiers were to be reality and our days of simulating were to be ended. This gives one a fair idea on the workings and plannings of the entire Army, as it starts progressing from the lone individual up to the division and then still farther till corps and armies are reached. For example, first the individual soldier is given basic training. When he completes that, he is put into a squad, then this squad takes its place in the sec-

tion, then, the section into the platoon, etc., etc until the end of the line is reached where divisions become an integral part of the Corps and a complete picture of the Army is painted.

We had a slight misfortune a day before we ran this giant amphibious problem. A few of our boys came down with stomach ailments, a slight touch of ptomaine poisoning. They had to be hospitalized. Otherwise, when time came to entruck, we were all in good shape and in the pink of condition and ready for the task at hand.

We boarded our mother ship at the great channel port of Weymouth. It was the same ship we had during that overnite exercise at Braufiton. We took our same places that we had originally to avoid new confusion and disorder. That completed phase one of the problem.

Our ship was a modern Belgian passenger craft. It had been completed about a couple of ye rs before the war had starte so that there had to be some work done on the boat in order to convert it into a landing craft infantry. It held from 200 to 250 troops plus its crew in its towholds below the deck. Attached to the upper deck there were eight craft for assault landings (L.C.A.'s) which by means of pulleys and ropes, lowered and raised these craft to and out of the water. The ship w s manned by a capable and experienced crew of English sailors who had already seen action with this very ship at Anzio, Sicily, and Africa and who had come out of these conflicts with very light casualties and no damage done to the craft, itself.

We spent three full days on the ship before we loaded into the L.C.A.'s to make the assa lt landing on the beaches somewhere off the southern coast of England. We hadn't moved, we had just lain anchored in the great bay of Weymouth, surrounded by similar craft and protected by an ever watchful and ever alerted line of cruisers and destroyers.

while on board ship, we didn't do much. Some physical training, a couple of boat drills and a lot of gabbing and eating. Our chow was Limy food which wasn't exactly the best of nourishment, but was sustaining and satisfying. To supplement this, we had several cases of our own ten-in-one rations, which gave added balance to the diet.

A P.X. aboard ship received a good deal of our business, as there we could obtain chocolate, canned fruits, cookies, and other articles of eating that pleased our palates.

We managed to while away our leisure hours by sun bathing on deck, sleeping, reading, writing, shooting the bull or any other way we saw fit. Physical exertion was held down to a minimum as the days were too beautiful to be spent laboring.

We struck up friendships with the crew members and many hours were spent in exchanging tales and stories. They had a decided advantage over us in this relating business, as they had already tasted combat while we as yet were strangers to warfare.

The third morning aboard saw us loading into our L.C.A.'s in preparation to make the assault run onto the shore. We were gently lowered into the water, with no motion being wasted. Our crafts then took off for the beach. We launched a successful attack as we overran the beach defenses and took up positions on the flank of the 29th division. We coordinated our efforts, and continued to press forward. We had to hold up when the 29th Inf. stopped, as we had to await further orders from them. That evening found us bivouaced in a field some five miles from our point of landing. The first phase of the problem on land was now completed. The exercise was called off for the night and we became "administrative." We had done our part that day, and we had done it well.

The next morning we resumed the attack. We continued our line of advance, by tactically advancing over a prescribed route using the roads as much as was permissible. The terrain was exceptionally hilly and the roads we traversed over were very steeply inclined. Our loads became burdensome and difficult to carry. A blazing hot sun, added to our discomforts. All the time during the march men were ridding themselves of their ammunition and equipment. At first, one would throw away a clip of ammo, then a hand grenade, until finally full bandoleers were being discarded. By the time we reached our final objective, the men were only carrying the very essentials needed for a fight.

That night, when the problem ended, we were bivouaced in a field, several miles from our initial starting point. We were all tired and exhausted by the ordeal of that

day. We were very happy that we had become administrative as I doubt if we could have done anything of importance that night.

The exercise was a huge success, the teamwork and cooperation between the units had been good, the staff work and brain work responsible for this coordination had been brilliant, and the efficiency of the soldier himself who had participated was excellent. It is this combination of skills that marks victory in combat. The big brass and high officials responsible for this display could congratulate themselves for this operation.

The experience we had gained from this amphibious maneuver was invaluable to us. Mistakes had been made and corrected so that we had benefitted from our errors. An idea was gained from this operation as to the greatness and immensity that such a problem entails, of all the planning, coordination and organization that must be worked out and it showed the responsibilities of the individual to keep his place in the picture and not to add to the confusion and turmoil by getting lost or misplaced.

We had spent five days in the running of this maneuver and now finally it was completed. On the sixth day we boarded trucks which brought us to the local railroad station from where we entrained for a new station for our Battalion.

Our trainride was spent in reviewing the results of the exercise and also in deep meditation. We began to realize that time was growing short for us. That things were beginning to add up and point in the direction of invasion. Our air offensive was sharply increasing in both volume and intensity. The weather was gradually becoming suitable for operations in the channel. And these large scale maneuvers meant only one thing--a dress rehearsal for the coming real McCoy.

## SWANAGE

### Chapter VIII

Our entry into the city of Swanage, county of Dorset, wasn't much of an affair. We detra ned and proceeded to make our way to our new home which was to be a school house that sat on the crest of the hill overlooking the bay at Swanage.

Our brother Co.'s D.E.F.,<sup>4</sup> who preceeded us to the town, were on hand to welcome us. It was good seeing them. As we didn't get much opportunities in those days to see the other companies in the Battalion. Greetings and formalities were exchanged as we wended our way thru the town to reach our new billets.

We were rather well billeted in our new home. The school house was a spacious building and it had all the facilities and accomodations of modern housing. We were comfortably quartered, so we made ourselves at home without making any fusses or wasting any time about it.

Battalion Headquarters was set up in a building at the foot of the hill while our kitchen was situated in the same house. It was alright for us to go to town for chow, but the trip back caused many of us to cuss the fact that we had been chowhounds at the dinning table.

I'll never forget our first run in with the people of this town. It seems as though the American troops who had been billeted in this town before us and had just departed from the area had warned the local residents that The Rangers were a bunch of hoodlums, gangsters, and prisoners who were ojt on parole. They had said they had assembled us out of volunteers from state and Federal institutions and were letting us do the dirty and dangerous work of the Army. So that when we first started to walk around town during our leisure time we began to receive funny and inquisitive looks. The weaker sex particularly didn't have anything to do with us, shunning us as though we all had B.O. Well finally the truth and reason for this snobbing leaked out and it didn't take long until we straightened things out and proved to these people the kind of soldiers we Rangers were. Things were patched up and amended and the whole thing was written off as a farce. I have to chuckle to myself everytime I recall this affair. Rangers being gangsters and prisoners! why it's a know fact that no member



in the Armed services can enter our elite group who even has the slightest mark or demerit on his service record.

The city of Swanage was a typical commercial and prosperous looking resort town on the south middle coast of England. It's lovely beach and the majestic hills enclosing the town attracted many tourists and visitors to spend his or her vacation here. The cool clear ocean and the white sandy beaches were delightful part of the towns features. The community itself could boast of several hotels, a couple of movie houses, innumerable pubs, cafes and other such businesses as one would expect to find in such a city.

Swanage being a coastal town and having a bay suitable for harboring ships was a natural target for the enemy Luftwaffe. So far, except for our stay in Folkestone, we never had much trouble from the Luftwaffe. Here, though, every night we were to undergo an actual air raid. About 2 or 3 a.m. our sleep was to be surely interrupted by the warning sirens if that didn't do it then the thunderous noise caused by the firing of the ack-ack and machine gun units on top of our hill certainly would. Most of us never left our beds just pulled the covers over our heads and hoped and prayed that the Jerries wouldn't drop any bombs around our place and they didn't. We were too lazy and tired to run for the air raid shelters. In fact, no one ran for the shelters, not even the civilians. A lot of trust and faith was had in the English air defenses and after having seen some of their work, I can easily see the reason for that.

We continued on with our training with emphasis being placed on cliff scaling. The nearby cliffs were very adaptable to this type of work so we practiced and improved our skill in overcoming this obstacle. A new method was uncovered to surmount this handicap, that was the amphibious duck with automatic ladder attached. We used to make beach landings in this vehicle, press the button and watch as the ladder shot skyward 100 feet, place it against the cliff and then clamber up.

Stress was also placed on the amount of ammunition we were to carry during our attack. We finally reached a sort of a compromise and it worked out so that each rifle-

man would carry sixteen clips of M1 ammo. Two hand grenades and two anti-tank grenades. The B.A.R. man would have his separate individual load, while each man would have a basic load for the weapon he was armed with.

Invasion was in the air as basic loads were tested and improved. New supplies and equipment were issued and a close check was made to insure that everything that was to play a part in the coming assault was in good working order.

Yet with all this hustle and bustle we still found time to visit town each evening. The local Red Cross with its inviting cokes, coffee and donuts sort of attracted us more than the other places of town. I can also say that the pubs and cafes also fared well, thanks to our patronage. The local amusement center also did a thriving business as Rangers took their girlfriends out to have a big time.

Our complete stay in Swanage lasted twelve days, but now as I look back it seems as if we were there for a longer period of time. It doesn't appear reasonable that we crammed so much into so little time.

On May 19 we departed from Swanage to reach our new area. We were in trim fighting condition and ready to tackle the German Supermen. We couldn't help but feel that it was now just a small matter of time before we made the Channel crossing that was to bring us into mortal conflict with our sworn enemy. And we were right in that assumption for the next stop in our journey brought us to the marshalling area just outside of Dorchester from where we made our final preparations to take up the challenge of the fanatic nazis, who sat so smugly and contently in fortified positions on the high ground covering the entrances of the beaches just daring us to come over.

P.S. We accepted that dare!

## MARSHALLING AREA

### Chapter IX

Our final base of operation in "Merrie Ole England" was to be the marshalling area outside the city limits of Dorchester. This camp site was in the immediate vicinity of the staging area we had previously visited, so that we had a fair idea of the situation and setting we were to become a part of.

Nothing had changed the status of calm serenity that shrouded this place with peacefulness. The ordinary hum-drum, easy way life that had existed in days of yore was unaffected by the modern busy, stepped-up pace of life. Although the war was strangely present here, it didn't interfere with the works of nature. It was rapturous to sit back and to admire the scenery that confronted us. It was to this setting that the final curtain in the play of death was beginning to rise.

If England seemed peaceful and calm at this time of year, it had nothing on us Rangers. We relaxed and took life easy. No signs of tenseness and alertness could be seen in our actions, or manners. We went about our functions in the same routine style as we did when back in the States; we were untroubled and unperturbed by the vastness of the coming events.

We had come a long way since our first day overseas. Bude, Titchfield, Folkestone, etc. They were milestones in the road we had traveled. We had trained, worked, drilled, and played hard, and now these days were ended as far as we were concerned, as from now on we were no longer administrative soldiers. We were combat men. We were only a stones throw away from our enemy and we were now anxiously waiting to bridge this gap.

We did very little training in this area as we were like fighters on the night before ringtime. We were in the pink of condition and in the best of physical and mental stature, resting as it were like the fat Thanksgiving turkey before the kill. Our morale and spirit were excellent. We never forgot to joke and kid one another. Singing and whistling was heard all the time. We were the same bunch of Rangers here as we were in any other place we had been. Just because we were to undertake the greatest mission in our lives, we didn't let a thing like that affect us in the least.

What little training we did do was to retain ourselves physically and to keep us in the best of condition. We did some close order drill and body exercises. Small hikes and some double timing around the area would conclude our training. Generally, the entire afternoon was given to sports with softball leading all the other games.

Our pleasant stay in this area was quite often interfered with by the Jerry Luftwaffe that came over nightly to visit us and also the nazis P-38 air base which was situated to the rear of us. I guess the nazis were making a last desperate but futile attempt to do as much damage and destruction as was possible to hamper our efforts in the coming invasion. It was during one of these air raids that we came closest to being bombed out in our entire stay in the E.T.O. and that includes our combat days.

I can't remember that exact day of the bombing, but I do recall it was sometime during the dark hours of early morn. We had all retire and were sleeping soundly, when out of the clear skies came the throbbing and deafening roar of airplane engines over our bivouac area. Being asleep and senses dulled, our first reaction was that some plane was out of control and was heading earthward in our vicinity. No time was lost in seeking cover. The noises had aroused the entire area and everyone was making wild and mad dashes for the trenches we had dug for cases such as this. The whistling of bombs as they hurtled through space made us realize that we were in the midst of an air raid. The thunderous crash of the bombs as they hit the ground proved the proximity of the danger to us. The ground about just shook and quivered for a moment. Stoves, coats, equipment, and loose material that hung on the sides of the tents and huts fell down or were turned over. Loose gravel and dirt plus shrapnell litterally filled the air. It was a big bomb and to say that we weren't scared would be telling an untruth. The enemy plane continued to circle our area. The bursts of ack-ack and machine gun fire that were sent after it did our hearts good. The drone of friendly aircraft coming to the rescue didn't hurt our feelings and when the Jerry plane took off never to return again for that evening, we all gave a sigh of relief and went back to sleep.

The bombs had landed in our motor pool across the road from us. There had been

one dud of two that actually fell. This dud had buried itself about ten feet into the earth in about the same place as where the first bomb had gone off. We were lucky that we didn't sustain any casualties that caused hospitalization, as some of the boys did receive minor cuts and wounds. An M.P. outfit which was billeted in the motor pool did have a few of their men killed and some seriously wounded. We also lost a couple of vehicles, but on the whole, damage to equipment was slight. I hate to think what would have happened had that missile of death landed about a hundred yards to the left and had gone off in our immediate area. I'm afraid that there wouldn't have been much of Able Co. or Baker Co. for that matter as they were billeted next to us to make the initial assault on D-day.

Before we were oriented and briefed on our mission, we were allowed to visit the cities of Weymouth and Dorchester. Both these places are fairly large and therefore have many recreational facilities to entertain the G.I.'s, so we found out. Although these places were crowded with Army and Naval personnel, we always managed to do alright for ourselves. Our main trouble lay in getting transportation. Since these cities were four or five miles away from our camp site, and being most of our vehicles were either red-lined or being prepared and waterproofed for the coming invasion, this was a task in itself. Many was the road march we were forced to take because of the lack of motorized conveyances.

It was at this place that we made our final preparations for the invasion. We stripped down our equipment and supplies to the barest of essentials. We put all our belongings plus that of four other men into one duffle bag, while the rest of our possessions had to be either given away, turned in or carried on our backs. We were issued our basic loads of ammo plus an extra first aid kit, which had a morphine syrette and tourniquet in it. Two like preservers were also handed to us for emergency use on the channel.

We moved from our original field to another area a bit farther down the road. What had been the cause for this exodus I'll never know, except maybe the bomb dud which had as yet not been removed marked our former area as a danger zone.

It was in this new area that we received a fighting talk by the commanding general of the famous 1st Inf. Div. He didn't speak long and didn't say anything new. He did heap his praises on us for our fine reputation and splendid showing. He called us the finest bunch of soldiers in the entire Army and that he was proud that we were going to operate together in the same area when we crossed the channel. The speech was most flattering and heartening.

I'll never forget that day in the last week of May when our platoon leader (then Lt. White) gathered us together in one of the pyramidal tents and simply said "Well, men, this is it." Then he calmly proceeded to enroll the maps and charts he had been carrying under his arm and began to orient and brief us on the coming invasion.

(Note--due to the high secrets of these documents and maps, plus the danger and hazardness of our mission, these papers had to be destroyed lest perchance they fell into enemy hands, so that now my records are very incomplete concerning the plans which were handed down to us about the part our Battalion was to enact in the coming invasion. Please bear with me and forgive me if any discrepancies appear in the following paragraph.)

well, it seems like the Battalion mission was to occupy the high coastal ground at Pointe Du Hoc, France ( vicinity of Insigny.) This vital piece of terrain commanded all approaches to the beaches in this area and was heavily fortified and able to meet out destruction to our crafts in the nearby waters. In order to insure our assault landing, this piece of heavily fortified ground had to be captured. Pointe Du Hoc became the target for the Rangers, there and then.

The Heinies had built up a formidable and practical defense here and had considered it impregnable to attack. There was a battery of six huge 155's long range guns which menaced the sea entrances and shipping in the surrounding waters. These huge guns were casemented in large concrete pillboxes, whose thickness exceeded six to eight feet in depth. These structures were further protected and covered by anti-aircraft defenses, a series of tunnel-like communications trenches, and open emplacements for both their automatic weapons and riflemen. To supplement this, there were light artil-

lery pieces and mortars, plus an intricate arrangement of minefields and deceptively placed booby traps. Encircling the entire position were large bands of barbed wire, both of the concertina and double-apron fences kind.

The Pointe itself was a massive fortress which lay on top of a cliff. This cliff was surrounded on three sides by water and was a sheer drop of over 100 feet from the top to the rocky beach below, so that now as we studied the enemies situation, we could well realize why cliff scaling had been of such importance in our training. No wonder Hitler, himself, had boasted of the impunity of this position and of the foolishness of the allies to ever think, less try, to break thru this impregnable fortress.

The exact number of enemy personnel operating all the guns and batteries here were unknown to our G-2, but it was estimated that a good guess would place the enemy's troops at 150 to 200 men. The morale of the enemy was known to be good, while the calibre of the Jerries only fair (because, I suppose, of the exertion the Russians placed on the eastern front, which needed the best troops of the Nazis to meet that threat.)

Now that we had a complete picture of the enemy's situation, we could visualize the problems and tasks which would confront us in our attack. We saw that we'd have to overcome a position which was defended in a manner which the military genius of the Nazi had so strongly erected. While to top this off, they had selected the most inaccessible piece of terrain to construct this defense on, so that not only had we to fight our way forward once we touched shore, but we first had to overcome the obstacle of a sheer cliff that mother nature had so fortunately provided for the Germans in order to get into the fight.

On the other side of the ledger, on our side of the fence, we were to have the following support: an aerial bombardment on the Pointe a few minutes before touchdown or H hour, which was to be the greatest concentration of bombs ever rained down on one area at one time in the history of aviation. (Now that I look back on this and after seeing all the damage done by this attack, I know that no exaggeration was made in that statement.) The direct fire support of the navy in our zone of action with the disposal of the great battleship Texas, plus a couple of destroyers and cruisers to be

at our beck and call. Then we were to have and we did get, our air force to give us fighter cover support all the time and all the while we were attacking. Secret and new fighting tanks were also to hit the beaches at the same time we were, and they were to aid us so that we weren't to be out there by ourselves. Meanwhile paratroopers and glider troops were to have chuted and glided to earth somewhere in the rear of the enemy, cut off his communications, cause disorder, chaos, do damage, inflict casualties and tie up the enemy's reserves.

Taking our situation into hand, our task didn't see too bad. We were cocky and arrogant and felt that we could pull off this job and do it in a typical Ranger manner. Our egotism and faith in ourselves never faltered. We just knew we could swing the deal.

Now that the enemy and our own situation was known, all we needed was a plan to carry out our mission. So the Battalion drew up the blueprints and each company followed suit, using this masterplan for a pattern.

The Battalion blueprint for this operation ran along these lines. The actual assault of the Pointe was to be made by D-E-F Co.'s. They were to come in from the seaward side, overcome the cliff obstacle and continue to take the Pointe. They were to have the use of two amphibious ladder-carrying ducks to abet them in scaling the cliffs. Ropes and rope ladders were also to be carried, in case the vehicles couldn't make a desired landing. They were to touchdown on shore, h-hour minus thirty minutes. This was to give them thirty minutes in which to accomplish their mission. This was so, because the other three companies were to be awaiting the outcome of these companies. If the attackers on the Pointe were to be successful in their assault, in the allotted time, then A-B-C Co.'s were to follow in the footsteps of D-E-F Co.'s, push thru them and continue the line of advance till the town of Grandcamp-les-Bains was taken. If the men on the Pointe didn't radio in or signal the mission completed in their given time, then A-B-C Co.'s were to take it for granted that D-E-F Co.'s had been unsuccessful. A-B-C Co.'s were then to hit the beach ("O maha-dog-green") which was about four miles due south of the Pointe, push up the coastal road and attack the Pointe frontally and try to contact their brother companies who were to be in that vicinity.



Besides the battle plan which was drawn up for us, there had to be certain administrative arrangements to be taken care of. Communications and signal systems had to be arranged, not only between the attacking forces, but also between us and the Navy. Aid stations and supply bases had to be found and made accessible to us. C.P.'s and O.P.'s had to be picked out and a million and one other minor and important details had to be planned out, so that each man would know exactly the minutest of details and know precisely how every thing fitted together in this giant jig-saw puzzle.

We were endlessly briefed and oriented on our roles in this coming drama. We intensely scrutinized maps and remembered all the day terrain features, which were to be in our zone of action. Special aerial photos were handed us to study, and a rubber m model map was specially constructed so that each and every terrain feature was sharply imbued in our minds.

We got so that every man could have maneuvered over this land blindfolded although we never had seen that piece of ground in our lives before. Each man got to know, not only his own part, but that of his buddies, so that in case of casualties, one man if necessity required, would have carried out two men's work, if not he would know which link of the chain was missing and know how to cope with the situation then.

Not only did we know our own individual jobs and knew our companies and Battalion's mission, but we also learned the jobs of units which we were to be operating alongside with. We got so that we knew every angle of the big picture and there wasn't a thing in the entire Army's plan of battle that we weren't familiar with.

Came the day of June 1 and we found ourselves aboard the same Belgium ship which had carried us thru on our previous maneuvers. It was like old home week. We made ourselves as comfortable as was possible and settled down to enjoy our coming trip across the channel.

We had left the marshalling area fully prepared for the invasion. We were loaded down with our equipment and basic loads. We had come down to our jumping off place, (port of Weymouth) in enclosed trucks. Our morale and spirits had never been better. We sang all the way down. One would never realize that we Characters were embarking on

an assault that was to bring us so much loss, while gaining for us the esteem of the entire world.

We detrucked at a point outside the pier. We then entered the pier and proceeded to march along till we reached the Re Cross coffee and donut stands which were doing business here, gratis, of course. We partook in our last coffee and donuts on the shores of England with hearty gusto and great gulps. Our stomachs were well appeased by the java and sinkers. We continued our march, burdened down by our heavy loads until we reached the docks where our L.C.A.'s awaited to take us to our mother ship.

Cameras and photographers were having a field day. Moving pictures machines were busily engaged at preserving our features for posterity. Inquiring reporters were shooting questions and interviewing us, as we moved along. Wise cracks and humorous jokes were flung about as though we hadn't a worry in the world. Gaiety was quite in evidence as the boys broke out in vocal refrains, such songs as, "Roll Me Over" "I've Been Working on the Railroad" "Tennessee is a Hell of a Place to be In" and others filled the air. A good time and a good showing was had by all. More spirit was displayed here than in a haunted house.

We said our last farewells to some Navy personnel and to the reporters who were allowed on the dock. We then boarded our cramped L.C.A.'s and prepared to ride out to our awaiting mother boat. We were sixty-four men and three officers, plus the added headquarters personnel of two first aid men and one "300" radio operator.

Our ship lay anchored off the coastline in the bay of Weymouth. All about us and as far as the eye could see were other vessels of all shapes and sizes. Some bore the proud, majestic insignias of the Royal Navy, while others had the painting and bore the gallant flag of our own Navy. It was an inspiring sight to view this immense flotilla.

Out on the far horizon was the line of the ever watchful and ever alerted battle ships of our combined Navies. Enemy E boats alerts had been received and these cruisers and destroyers were making sure that no harm came to our small, vulnerable crafts. The huge friendly looking anti-aircraft balloons that protected the city of Weymouth pre-

sented a pretty picture as they lazily floated about the upper stratosphere. The friendly aircraft that continually roved overhead gave us the assured feeling that we were well being taken care of, such as a mother bird protecting her little ones. There were so many ships all around us that I couldn't help but think what a splendid opportunity this would be for an enemy air raid, but I suppose the Fuftwaffe didn't think that way, or have the gumption or the planes to stage a raid. Whatever the reason was, they didn't attack.

## INVASION BOAT

### Chapter X

Once more we were to find ourselves aboard the same mother ship which had been our homes in our previous maneuvers. We were so familiar with this craft that it felt like old home week. We already had our private nooks and crannies selected so that no time was lost, or confusion resulted, when we unpacked and settled down.

For five days our boat lay anchored off the coast of Weymouth. It was during these days that we got the splendid opportunities to go on deck, inhale the exhilarating sea air, and imbibe freely the salty sea water.

It was great sport to encircle the deck and to view the coastline with its sheer cliffs and level beaches; to see the city of Weymouth with its modern buildings; to note the ever present barrage balloons so playfully being tossed about by the winds; and to watch the various amphibious birds that were continually flying about and ever so often diving in graceful swoops to catch fish in the sea.

The weather the first couple of days we were at sea was cool and moderate. At times heavy rain clouds would come out and darken the skies, but rain never fell. The channel water was rough. We could feel our ship rocking each time the waves rushed against our ship. We knew then that the channel would be a strong barrier we would have to overcome before we could successfully launch our success.

There was nothing unusual or extraordinary about our activities while on ship. We went about our duties in a same routine manner as though we were still dry running. No signs of nervousness or undue fidgeting could be observed as we went about our businesses. We all knew what was expected of us and we didn't want to disappoint anyone. Although we were playing a game against death and destruction, we had a strong faith that the final score would end in our favor.

, Our quarters were fairly crowded, as we were crammed into the first towhold below deck. Our sleeping arrangements consisted of hammocks that were hung from the ceiling and held in place by large hooks, that were screwed into the posts that ran from the floor to the ceiling. This was a new way and an experience of doing bunk fatigue.

I'll never forget my first attempt to enter one of these contraptions and tried

to get some shuteye. Since these hammocks were close to five feet off the deck floor it entailed a certain amount of athletic agility to enter one of these things. If you were too active, you'd find yourself out of these hammocks, but on the other side, if you weren't much of an athlete like myself, you'd find yourself with one leg in and one leg out, swinging to and fro, like some comedian doing acrobatics. At first I thought I'd never make it, but with a tenacity born from a desperation to get some sleep, I finally made it. Now that I had gotten in, all I had to do was curl my body into a question mark and try to get some forty winks. Well to make a long story short, I conquered this fangled Navy booby trap and went off to dreamland on the double time.

So far, we hadn't the slightest idea of when the actual day of invasion would be. We all had our surmises, but nothing official. We continued to rehearse our battle plans, discussing and debating all the possibilities that might arise in such a great undertaking. The minutest of details were taken into consideration and alternate plans made for every contingency. Everything concerning our doings and activities were learned by heart, every spot of land was imprinted in our minds and even today we can easily recall the familiar names of Pointe Du Hoc, Grand Camp-le-Bains, Verpill-sur-mer, Omaha dog green beach, etc. Everything which was humanly possible to insure the success of the huge mission was undertaken; nothing, not even the most incredible incident was left to chance. The big brass and big dealers had spent many hours arranging and planning. They had outdone themselves in their preparations. Our fates laid in their hands, now, and in those of our Maker above us.

Our ammunition, weapons and equipment were continually being checked to make certain that they were in the best of working order. Our life belts were tested to make sure that they wouldn't fail us if the emergency arose to use them. Administrative and other details were looked into so that nothing escaped our vigilance. We had a job to do and we did want to show the world the way a Ranger would do his task. And we did!

While on board ship, we had one change made in our company. This change was decided on for the better as our company Lt., Lt. Rafferty got himself promoted to capt

tain. He had finally made his rating, which he had so righteously worked for and earned for himself. Congratulations were extended and hands were shaken.

There were other promotions made by other officers in the Battalion, so that to celebrate this occasion a party was thrown for them. There were lots of drinks present. It was only natural that some of this liquor be handed down to the enlisted men so that he too could share in the merriment. That evening everyone went to bed happy with all worries drowned and forgotten.

We finally received the word the 0700 a.m., Monday, June 5, would be H-hour, so on the evening prior it found us in full and completed preparedness. The weather was cool and cloudy while the channel water was rough and turbulent. A last minute's cancellation gave us a new lease on life for twenty-four hours longer, not that we wanted or needed it. In fact, this was a bad break as we felt like condemned men, who had received a reprieve for a day. We had been anxious to get it over with and now we were to be delayed. Oh well, maybe it was all for the better, as after all even though we knew we could beat the Heines, the channel was too much even for us Rangers to buck. So we went back to our hammocks and got ourselves that extra-day's rest.

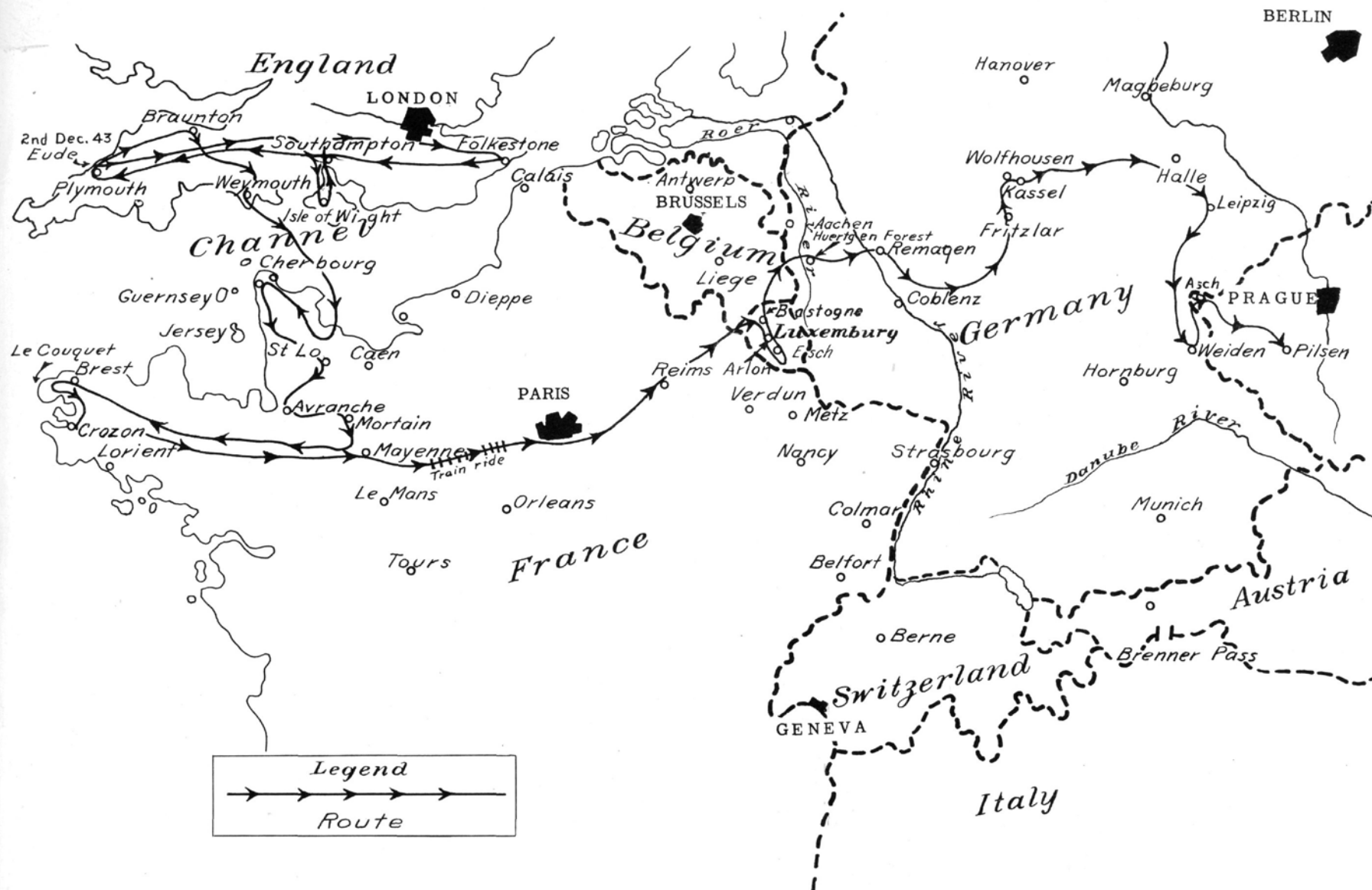
The day of June 5 found no difference in the atmosphere in the boat. It was spent in the same uneventful manner as any other day previously spent aboard. The same men who generally did the debating and arguing on the merits and demerits of our ain parts of the invasion were heatedly going strong in their discussions, while the men who always were lazy, lounged and slept in their ratholes (as we nicknamed our hammocks). Then the same bunch of card players were having their usual games and from the interested and concentrated looks upon their features, one would never know that these men, too, were to take part in the coming assault of tomorrow. Invasion or no invasion, that card game had to go on. What a group of men, everyone as unperturbed by the coming historical event as a thick skinned rhinoceros with a fly on its back.

Then there was a section of men who were more conscious of the facilitation of carrying and hauling of equipment during the attack. Original and novel methods were demonstrated such as extra pockets sewed on the pants leg, which made a good carry-

ing place for grenades. Another was the taking off of the meat can carrier and placing it behind the cartridge belt for a similar purpose. Other minor details were brought to our attention which would make the individual soldier's burden much lighter and much easier to carry and handle. Nothing great or inventive, but surprisingly helpful to the G.I. in the coming assault.

That evening our ship hauled anchor and sailed out, keeping its rightful place in the vast fleet. Our new D-day was to be June 6 while 0700 was set as H-hour. The waters that separated us from the enemy was finally being gapped. In our minds we reviewed our parts and that of our mission, which would it be?--Would it be to follow D-E-F Co.'s up the cliff or land at Omaha dog green. Whatever it would be, history was now in the offing.

# THE EUROPEAN TRAVELS OF THE 2nd RANGER Bn.







BOOK TWO

NORMANDY CAMPAIGN

BREST CAMPAIGN

BELGIUM--LUXEMBOURG

## CHAPTERS

### I. NORMANDY CAMPAIGN

1. D-Day
2. D/1 to D/3
3. Columbieres
4. Prisoner of War Enclosure (Valognes)
5. Beaumont-hague
6. Prisoner of War Enclosure (St. Jean De Daye)
7. Beaumont Hague Again; Mortain and Mayenne

### II. BREST CAMPAIGN

1. Le Folgoet
2. Conquet Peninsula (Lechrist Battery)
3. Crezen Peninsula (Le Fret)
4. Landernau
5. Trainride

### III. ARLON-- BELGIUM

### IV. ESCH--LUXEMBOURG

### V. RAEREN--BELGIUM

## D-Day

### Chapter I

The evening of June 5 found now changes in the morale or spirit of us Rangers. Appetites hadn't lost one iota of their fullness. There was the same quibbling and quarreling over the chow as there always had been. We Rangers were just as hungry on this evening as on any other evening. Sometimes I wonder if these brave men fully recognized and realized the dangers in the parts and roles they were to be playing. I honestly and truthfully believe they knew, but were too manly to let it get the better of them and to show it. I also believe that in every task they had previously handled, they had made such a good showing of the job, that they had acquired a confidence in themselves and in each other, so as not to let a thing like the invasion get them downhearted. It is small wonder that a Ranger will cockily walk along the streets of life with two Ranger patches boldly emblazoned, one on each shoulder and in fancy embroidery and challenge any one or all that dares cross his path.

Our ship was making slow progress as it steadily cleaved its way thru the choppy waters of the channel. The ship was lurching vehemently as the rough waves swooshed against it. We held our course though and kept our place in the armada.

We had retired early that nite as we were to load into our L.C.A.'s at 3 a.m. This was because they wanted us off our mother ship as she presented too large and compact a target to the enemy. Whereas in our small L.C.A.'s we were a more smaller target and better deployed.

I suppose all our thoughts that night were of the invasion. We couldn't hold off any pretenses to ourselves any longer. So far our only hint of such an operation had been our realistic, but simulated exercises off the English coast. Naturally, these problems were hard physically, but we had no casualties and were always able to keep together and retain our control. What would happen if casualties would arise and control became lax? This and a million other problems haunted our dreams that last night aboard ship.

It was pitch dark when the time came for us to load into L.C.A.'s. Our mother ship was now anchored about thirteen miles off the French coast. The water was beating

furiously against our boat. We had to come out into this inky void from our lightened quarters below. We were momentarily blinded. With all our crowding and milling about, we loaded onto our L.C.A.'s with the slightest of confusion, thanks to our previous dry run practices. We were literally jammed into our assault boats, a section at a time. Generally these crafts were supposed to hold thirty to thirty-five men, but we were close to forty men and fully loaded down with heavy packs and equipment. We were packed together as tightly as the proverbial sardines in the can.

Our two boats (one assault boat for each platoon, plus the extra headquarters company personnel assigned to the company) were gently lowered to the waters below. Our boats bobbed about like a tiny cork caught in a rip tide. The channel on this side was much rougher and choprier than on the English side. The incoming spray dampened and soaked us through and through. The night was terribly cold and the water colder so that besides being uncomfortable, we were miserable to boot.

Dawn was beginning to break. We were as yet drifting about. So far we hadn't been fired on by the enemy and neither had our naval guns opened up. I was sadly mistaken in the concept that I was a good sailor, as the effects of the up and down, to and fro motion of our frail craft made me and a good many other boys horribly sick. Puke bags which had been issued to us prior to our embarking the L.C.A.'s came into play. A few boys were leaning over the rails trying to revive themselves by having the onrushing waters wet their faces.

Expert handling was needed to keep our L.C.A.'s on their courses. It was most fortunate that we received this skillful manipulation. Zero hour for the other companies to land on the Pointe was now approaching. A rending and thunderous ovation of shells whizzing overhead signalled the beginning and the breaking loose of all hell. Our supporting Navy was starting its softening up process of the enemy's beach defenses. As yet, we were still out of accurate fire range of the enemy guns, although some return shells did land to our rear. The distant and distinct hum of friendly aircraft became audible and soon the planes and bombers became visible. I personally couldn't appreciate or take notice of the greatness of our attack, as my face at this time was

deeply buried in the puke bag. Our lieutenant who was watching the proceedings gave us a fairly descriptive resume, anyway, as much as his advantageous position allowed him of the raging battle.

By this time, we could picture our brother companies scaling the cliffs and assaulting the Pointe. We could actually see the returning bombers as they flew back to their bases. They had completed their part in the neutralization of the Pointe.

More enemy shells began to land in our vicinity. Our own Navy guns were still firing sway. The great belches of flame that shot forward after each round left the giant muzzles gave promise that the enemy was "hurting."

We were anxiously awaiting word from our companies on the Pointe. Our features were tense and alert; everyone was straining forward as if trying to snap an imaginary leash that held him back. Our CO. who was in our boat nervously scanned his time-piece. No word from the companies on the Pointe as yet and the deadline fastly approaching. Other L.C.A.'s were beginning to make the run to shore. Some of these boats were equipped with rocket firing equipment and they were using them. No one was standing up in our boat now except the coxwain and the gunner. Things were beginning to get hot. The enemy was bringing up his larger artillery pieces. Artillery shells were landing nearby and even machine gun and small arms fire were hitting the water about us, but on the whole this shelling and firing was inaccurate.

Time was running out for the companies on the Pointe. Our CO. signalled that we'd make the run to the beach. (We couldn't wait any longer.) Excitement was mounting, enemy shelling increased; the water was terribly rough and choppy and many a wave engulfed our craft and threatened to overturn it. The artful handling of the vessel by the veteran English sailor saved the day. He cleaved, and dodged his way forward. We were coming in fast as so were many other similar crafts. Enemy accuracy increased, small arms and machine gun bullets began to bounce off our bullet-proofed sides.

The shore began to take on new and larger aspects. We could clearly view the beach and surrounding terrain. The bursting of shells upon the shore wasn't exactly tonic for our morale. We seemed to be on top of the beach, when a scraping and sear-

ing sound rended thru the air. Our crafts came to an abrupt stop that marked the finis to our ride. Ramps were quickly lowered. Men hastily jumped and dived into the icy, waist-deep water. We were about seventy-five yards from the shore. Bullets were really flying about now. Cleverly concealed and smartly defended enemy positions gave the Jerry a decided advantage over us. Casualties were being received by us. Men were being hit while in the water. It was a struggle to maintain balance in the surf and to dodge the withering hail of enemy fire. We were helpless, like ducks in a shooting gallery. Our Navy and planes hadn't completely neutralized these positions at all and now our landings were masking the fire of our Navy. It was up to us, the footslogger alone now.

The cold water, the excitement and confusion gave me and the others who were sick a quick cure. I looked back and saw what had caused our craft to stop. It wasn't a sandbar as I had originally surmised, but underwater obstacles that had been placed by the enemy. Thank God they weren't mined. On the left, a breached L.C.I. stood amouldering and burning. On all sides of us dead bodies of Americans. G.I.'s were floating around. We had no feeling for them, but now we had a score to settle with those dirty Nazi bastards.

Our men began to spread out, to deploy and to reorganize into their squads and sections, upon reaching the shoreline. Our return covering fire was inadequate and inaccurate. Our only hope and allvage lie in reaching cover on land and storming the enemy in a frontal attack.

Our fighter planes, meanwhile, were dealing out death and destruction to German artillery positions in the rear, but enemy mortar and small arms fire were causing us many deaths and other casualties. We gained shore and feund momentary respite on a pile of rocks that ran parallel to the waters edge, about one hundred yards across the beach. But before we had reached this cover, we had to go through a curtain of lead and chance a continual artillery barrage which covered this entire section of open beach.

Men were stripping themselves of their packs and excess ammunition. They had become too waterlogged and were too much of a hindrance to carry. Lifebelts were also

shed as we dashed to the precarious safety afforded us by the rockpile. All those that reached this cover did so, by sheer luck, rather than skill. Murderous enemy close range automatic fire was sweeping everything in sight and mowing down soldier after soldier.

We were exhausted and tired on reaching the rockpile. There seems to be no end to the enemy resistance. Another hasty reorganization of the squads present was made. We were fighting mad. We dashed into the fray in headlong flight, shooting up everything that looked like the enemy.

Other soldiers plus Rangers were now running and dashing about with us Rangers out in front. We were getting closer to the enemy and already some of our boys were assaulting their positions. The popping of hand grenades and the flashing of bayonets put an end to many a Henie's activity. Tanks which had floated in on the beach began to give us covering fire and neutralized a strongly encased enemy machine gun position that was covering the beach.

You couldn't help but admire the cleverness and the stratagem of the Jerry defenses. They had built their lines well, taking advantage of the commanding terrain, and using a skillful system of camouflage to conceal their defenses. We had been under their observation at all times, while we had difficulties in locating from where they were shooting at us.

Rangers were beginning to assault the hilly defenses of the enemy using automatic weapons, rifles, hand grenades and other arms that they had been equipped with. There was no stopping us though enemy fire was taking its toll. Teamwork plus individual Ranger initiative was driving the enemy from his covered position. Prisoners were being taken, but not for long. We didn't have the time and men for them. Anyway, we couldn't bother with them.

Once we gained a foothold on the hill, we were in a position to flank the enemies strongpoints. Another hasty reorganization was effected. We relentlessly drove and forged ahead. One emplacement after another was wiped out. Enemy artillery wasn't as heavy on the hill as it was being poured down on the beaches, so that we were not har-



assed too much by shelling. Sniper small arms were about all the enemy resistance being put up now. A few of our combat patrols quickly took care of that.

We were in a "giving" position now. Our true and accurate firing was putting the final touches to the lives of the fanatical Germans. We had seen our buddies fall. Now, we were avenging them with a fury that knew no bounds. We were unmerciful and cruel, but he who lives by the sword, must die by the sword. That morning brought many a Jerry face to face with his Maker.

Individual heroism was being displayed on all parts of the battlefield. Medics were doing yeomans service, wounded men were dragging wounded men to safety, brave men went gallantly to their graves storming impregnable positions, every one was doing his share and more. I could easily write a volume on individual accounts of bravery. I'm only sorry that I haven't the time and space to do that here. I would like, though, to recount one story of heroism which should set an example, not that more was done, but it is much a story of human sacrifice that I would like to relate it. Its about our CO., Captain Rafferty, who was killed in action, in the line of duty.

Our CO. was the first man off the assault boat. He had just waded through the water and had reached the beach, when a spray of machine gun fire had wounded him in the leg. It hadn't taken him long to size up the fighting situation. He realized to stay on the open sandy beach was suicide. He repeatedly shouted, hollered, cajoled, and urged his men to keep on going ahead, refusing to budge from his own uncovered place, so that we could be in a better position to control his men. He was masterful and inspiring as he yelled and directed his men forward. When the last man passed him, he made a v in attempt to seek personal safety, but a direct hit of an enemy 88 put a climax to his career as an officer, and Ranger. A quick ending to a most courageous leader.

We were now in full control of the hill. The enemy had been subdued. Soldiers from other units were now following our lead. These men who had been stunned by the unexpectedness of the enemy counter-attacks were now being brought out of their lethargy. We had shown them what could be done and how it could be done. Our undaunted and fight-

ing spirit had manifested itself. These troops took on new life and new courage from us, and valiantly aided us in our drive.

We had now established a small beachhead. Assault crafts from other units were continuously landing. They were still being subjected to artillery fire but they had no small arms fire to contend with. We had taken care of that part. Our fighter planes were still hammering away at rear enemy installations and giving us the protective cover we had been promised. Engineers were clearing mine fields and blowing obstacles on the beach. Tanks were landing and going forth to battle. Everyone was taking his place in this global drama. But, yet, it was us Rangers, who were out in front, leading and showing the way.

Information began to pour in from individuals who still remained in our company about the other members who were absent. The combined stories presented a tale of woe. Our Co. had been killed, as was previously narrated, both of our platoon leaders had been wounded, and were put out of action, the First Sgt. was reported as missing, and probable dead (later on his dog tags were found hanging on a cross, in the Army cemetery at Vervielle-sur-mer) and the names of the men killed and wounded sounded like someone calling off the company roster. We had landed on the shores of Normandy with sixty-seven enlisted men and three officers. When we counted noses on top of the hill that morning, we had no officers, and only twenty-two dead men. There wasn't a throat that didn't have a lump in it and there wasn't an eye that tears didn't stream from. I know, I was there. These fearless men were human, they had lost their buddies and comrades, who only last night joked and played. Now they were gone. They had given their all for their country.

We were without leaders, fatigued from our arduous and gruelling fighting, disheartened by the sad news of our fallen comrades, but yet we never stopped in our pushing forward. We had paid a heavy price for our gains, but we had taken a good toll in return. How many krauts we left dead that morning I'll never know, but I'm sure for every man we lost, we got four or five in his place. We had established a decent size beachhead where every moment saw new troops and new supplies arriving and disembarking.

We had captured and destroyed innumerable Heiny weapons and equipment and we had lifted the morale of other fighting men who had seen us in action and had come forward to aid us. We conclusively disproved the myth of the German super race that day. We had shown the world what could be done if the right action was taken at the right time. We proved that the Heinies could be beaten if a little teamwork and brainwork were coordinated with the guts and stamina needed. We displayed the might and tenacity that makes the democratic way of life stronger than the Nazi way, and actually showed it.

## D-Day til D+2

Although we had done our share of the fighting, we had as yet to complete our mission. We still had to take the Pointe and contact our Brother companies there. A complete reorganization of A.B.C. companies was effected on top of the hill that overlooked the beach at Vierville-sur-mer, so as to remedy that situation. Captain Arnold (then Co of Baker Co.) was put in command of our task force. Our three companies combined hardly made one full Ranger company. We had sustained heavy casualties, which had depleted our ranks.

We formed on the coastal road, which led to the Pointe. We took up the approach march formation and continued our line of advance. Our plan for taking the Pointe was a simple one. We were to follow up this coastal road until the road junction which led to the Pointe was reached. Here we were to do a flanking movement and assault the enemy in a frontal attack. Our order of march was: Able Co. to lead off as point, with Baker and Charley companies in support, while elements of the 116th regiment was to compose the main body. To this we had the direct support of four tanks, which were to be directly under our control.

It was now getting on in the afternoon. The weather was moderate and rather cool for this time of the year. I hate to think how much more miserable we would have been had that day been one of those hot June days. What with all our running and fighting, we had done, we would have all been worn out to a frazzle and we would never have been able to keep up our attack.

We started out cautiously, feeling our way forward. Enemy artillery was now falling intermittently into our positions, causing casualties here and there. Our company escaped unscathed. We ran into sniper small arms fire as we approached the coastal town of Vierville-sur-mer. Our point and combat patrols took that situation into hand. A house to house search of the town was inaugurated by these fighting teams, which cleared out all enemy elements and cleared the town of snipers.

Our procedure was steady but tedious, so that darkness was beginning to envelope us before we could advance further outside the town. A halt was declared, while a conference by our leaders was held. Combat patrols were sent back to contact friendly units

to our rear and flanks. It was decided that we set up bivouac for the night at a road junction down the road a couple of hundred yards away. We holed up there for the night and took up defensive positions. We were all tired and fatigued. We hadn't rested once during the day. We had been up since 3 a.m., continuously fighting and forging ahead.

We dug in for the night and set up a hasty perimeter, or all-around defense of our area, which consisted of strong points and outposts. Our patrols, meanwhile, had returned with negative information, concerning the enemy. G-2 reports that were handed down to us weren't exactly what the doctor ordered. We were told to hold ourselves ready for an enemy counter-attack of tanks and foot troops, which was imminent to come that night.

There we were, just a handful of men plus a few tanks which had established a bivouac in a field across the road from us. Now, tired and weary as we were, we couldn't get to sleep as that night a million and one things plagued our minds. Chiefly, what happened to our companies at the Pointe? How were we going to repel the enemy when he counter-attacked? What about the enemy shelling, etc.? These and other questions ran thru our minds that first night on French soil.

We had been most fortunate in that all day not one enemy airplane had been sighted. We did have one alert, but I never saw the Jerry planes and didn't see any counter actions taken. But now, under the cover of night, the Luftwaffe began to sally forth to administer death, destruction and damage. Their target being the dormant Navy, that still lay vengeful and protecting off the French coast. Also they were out to destroy all our gains and installations on the beach itself.

From our vantage point we could clearly view the scene as our beach and naval defenses, put up a brilliant barrage that turned the night into day. We could ascertain distinctly the bursting of flak, and we could follow the flight of the parabolic machine gun tracers as they made their way skyward. The huge searchlights' beams as they crisscrossed in search of the enemy menace formed weird designs in the skies. Bombs were being dropped upon our vessels at sea. We could clearly view the great splashes formed each time the bombs struck the water. Thanks to the strength and effectiveness of our

anti-aircraft defenses, the enemy lacked the correct precision to score a direct hit. I didn't see a bomb come close.

The raid ended as quickly as it had started. All then became quiet and dark. Ghostly silence hung over the land with eerie unnaturalness. We were now alone on guard by ourselves at our small outposts waiting and expecting. We strained our eyes to the utmost, to pierce the inky veil of night. The slightest noise or movement was a certainty to bring us to stark attention and alertness. Our nerves were on edge, we were entertaining the report of an enemy attack and we were making sure that we wouldn't be caught off guard and off balance.

Dawn came and still no attack. We were beginning to feel the relief that only light can bring after spending miserable moments in the gloom. I don't know why it is, but the fact is ever present, that the soldier doesn't mind dying in the daytime, but comes the night with its mist and darkness, there comes along with it man's natural fear and dread of this unknown dimness and causes him uneasiness and terror.

Artillery shelling had been fairly negligible that nite, so that no casualties were sustained by us. That morning when we formed to move out our fighting strength was unchanged. We advanced forward using the same approach march formation as of yesterday. We advanced cautiously, making use of all the natural cover that the terrain afforded us. We encountered some sniper fire, but once more our combat patrols took care of that danger. Every house which was in our zone of action was thoroughly searched and made certain that no enemy lie hidden therein. Information was gathered by the friendly French civilians, but most of the information gained thru this source was of small use to us, as it was too unreliable.

During our march, we received the opportunity to study and to reconnoiter the terrain we were fighting over. Although we had some knowledge forehand from our aerial and ground map studies, what the ground would look like, this gave us a chance to ascertain for ourselves what it really was. We could notice the level fields, which were all hemmed in by the hedgerows of Normandy fame. The many apple orchards and grassy fields where cows were grazing on. Nothing escaped our vigilance, especially those areas where "achtung minen" signs stood posted and were surrounded by barbed wire.

We were barely crawling along, moving at a snails pace; patrols were out seeking snipers and other members were left to search out buildings and areas. We were very cautious as many signs pointed that the enemy had been very recently in this vicinity. We wanted to make sure that we didn't fall into any of his traps. Intermittent artillery fire also limited our speed. We had to seek cover several times. We never held up in any place for any length of time. We knew speed was essential if we were to aid our brother Rangers on the Pointe. We tried our best to expedite matters and to speed things along.

It was quite paradoxical, as we went along the road, tactically, snooping and pooping. We saw the French civilians boldly walking along the center of the road, going about their chores and business as nothing new or different were going on. Most of them hadn't realized what had actually happened and were astonished and surprised to learn that we were real Americans. Once they learned and gained our identities, there wasn't anything they wouldn't do for us. Milk and cider bottles were brought forth and flowers were thrown at us. That was one day we didn't go thirsty or hungry.

We had finally managed to push forward to about a place three hundred yards from the road junction that led to the Pointe, when all hell broke loose in full fury. Our forward elements who had advanced farther than the supporting group had made contact with an organized defense line, which was protecting this vital junction, covering this approach to the Pointe.

So far, in our progress during the day, we had come under some small arms fire and some shelling, but here we were being subjected to both frontal and flanking automatic fire plus artillery. Our point was fighting heroically and had knocked out one enemy machine gun plus the crew and some riflemen, but they had in return sustained a couple of casualties, themselves.

We called up our tanks which had been halted by a huge bomb crater in the road to come to aid us. Thanks to the skillful maneuvering on the tankers' part, they were able to bring up their armor to the very front. Up front it was just a fire fight with only small arms being used, as enemy artillery wasn't landing there. We got the tanks to open

up on a fortified house that stood at the road junction. Excellent results were obtained as a direct hit blew the house to smithereens. All we had to contend with now was machine gun fire from our right flank. We tried to get the armor-protected tanks to do this job for us, but could not get any communications through to them, as they were completely buttoned up. I distinctly remember Captain Arnold, who had been up with the front vanguard hammering away at the turret of the tank with his faithful and trusted carbine trying to get them to open up so he could speak to them. He finally made himself heard and got the tankers to unbutton for a short while. He gave them the situation and what he wanted them to do. Bullets were whistling all about. Twigs were being snapped off from bushes behind us and lead was plowing into the tanks themselves. How Captain Arnold remained unharmed is beyond me. He did get a souvenir hole in the end of his carbine, to carry about, though.

The tanks finally took up the desired position and emptied several boxes of fifty calibre machine gun slugs into the enemy defenses. Our own automatic weapons plus our expert rifle shooting were adding to the enemy toll. Another boy from our company was wounded in the exchanges of lead and had to go to the rear. The Heinies were now beaten, when out of the clear skies, we were subjected to the most intensive and concentrated barrages from an 88 battery we've ever undergone. A direct hit killed one of our men and miraculously missed two others who were in the same place practically as the one who was killed. There was only one choice for us then and that was to get out of that spot quickly. We took off down the road, but had to hole up in the ditches alongside the road as small arms fire from enemy positions further down caused us to halt our movement. We sweated out this terrific bombardment in these natural slit trenches.  $\frac{1}{2}$  Another one of our boys was killed when a direct hit struck the ditch he was lying in.

We were out in the middle of no man's land, all by our lonesome. The troops of the main body had stopped when we had started the fight at the road junction and our tanks had been forced to retreat to the rear due to the seriousness of the situation. There we were out in the middle of nowhere, sweating it out with shell after shell landing nearby. I don't know how many shells were thrown at us in the short period we were in



those ditches, but I do know that when the barrage lifted, I couldn't recognize the immediate countryside as it was so cratered and beaten up.

When the barrage ended, we retreated back to our main body for reorganization. Once more, darkness began to steal over us so that we had to hold up at a position about 800 yards from the Pointe. We dug in here and prepared to bivouac there for the night.

Once again we had to lick our wounds; we were getting weaker and weaker, but still we were pushing, driving, and battling the enemy, causing him to go backwards inch by inch. As yet we hadn't accomplished our mission. We were afraid to even think of the fate that befell our heroic brother Ranger companies on the Pointe. All we could do was hope and pray for the best, for their sake.

We set up our usual perimeter defensive position, setting up a series of out posts and strong points. Combat and visiting patrols were sent out to contact both the enemy and friendly troops. We were all weary and fagged out. Another tough day of combat had worn us out physically. We had come through this day's action and although we hadn't done what we had set out to do, we did accomplish the clearing of a town and of the main coastal road. We had closed with the enemy and had forced him to retreat. As yet, we were still out in front, leading and showing the way, forward.

Information which reached us about our rapidly expanding beachhead and of the continual disembarking of troops, supplies, and vehicles buoyed up our spirits. We knew we weren't fighting by ourselves now, and that we were being backed by the greatest fighting machine this world has ever seen.

That night we ate our "K" rations, dug our slit trenches deeper and prepared to pull our guard. We tried to get a little rest while on post. We were set for another imminent enemy counter-attack. Our minds again were filled with any unanswerable questions. I couldn't help but go over the cruelties and beastialities I had seen and others had suffered. I thought why couldn't people in other parts of the world live in peace with themselves, as the folks back in America do. There was no need or necessity for this outrageous and hideous war, this unnecessary shedding of tears and blood.

D/2 til D/9

The second nite spent on French soil was passed in pain and misery. We were all under great strains. Our arduous fighting of the past couple days were beginning to tell on our tired and worn features. We were anticipating an enemy attack and we thought surely one was in the coming. None did come though.

It was cold that nite, colder than we had expected it to be. We weren't equipped against this frost, so besides having to sweat out the Jerries, we had to endure a nite of coldness.

Once more under the cover of darkness the Luftwaffe came forth to bomb our beach and Naval installations. Once more we had a front row seat to scan the spectacle of this battle, to watch as anti-aircraft defence put up a brilliant display of fireworks. No bombs landed in our immediate area. We hoped that once more our boys had warded off this danger without too great a harm done to them.

No artillery or small arms fire bothered us that nite, so when morning came, we again took up the approach march formation to contact our Ranger Companies and take the Pointe. This time our advance wasn't to be halted. We overran the enemy's defense line and broke into the positions on the Pointe.

We finally contacted our Brother Ranger Companies, who it seemed were in full possession of this stronghold. There weren't many of them about, as they had had their share of casualties. It was a happy reunion. Personally, I had doubted if I would ever see any of them again.

It seems from the stories we gathered from them, that they had accomplished their mission, but only after they had had some hectic battles. They had lost all communications contact with us, so that they couldn't let us know of their victory. They had held the Pointe for three days, fighting off one counter attack after another. Although they had lost heavily in men and equipment they had still retained possession of the Pointe, repelling the enemy time after time, again, and again.

(Note-I'm only sorry that I can't allot myself the time and space here to tell of the true heroics of these companies, to relate of their share and glory in their attack. How they overcame insurmountable obstacles to achieve the success they had obtained. How

They had scaled the cliffs under fire. How they had assaulted the fortifications on the Pointe, and how they had bravely and tenaciously hung onto what they had fought and won. I offer this piece as a salute and as a tribute to these brave Ranger Companies for their gallant role in this invasion.)

This time our Battalion underwent a complete reorganization. There had been men who had been listed as missing in action, but some how or other these men turned up. Our company regained five such men. These Rangers had got themselves separated from us, but had attached themselves to other units in our zone of action and had fought side by side with the soldiers from these other outfits. Now they were back, back to the organization they were an integral part of. It was good seeing them, as up till now, all men that were listed as missing in action were presumed to be lost to us forever.

Our company finally got itself an officer. Up till now our spirit first platoon Sgt. (Tech. Sgt. White) had been in command of the company. He had done an excellent job. The way he handled his assignment bore credit to him. We got Lt. Solomon (now Captain) from Charley Co., a fine officer and a good leader.

Our reorganization being completed, we had the task of taking the fortified sea-coast town of Grandcamps-les-Bains, which lay a couple of miles from the Pointe. Due to our strenuous fighting and heavy losses, a last minute's change decided to put us into a reserve position and to let our bretheren Ranger Bn., the 5th, do this job for us. And do it they did, in a grand Ranger fashion, overcoming and routing the Heinies in a decisive victory. The Fifth had sustained a few casualties but they made up for it in ground gained, Krauts killed and wounded, plus innumerable stores of weapons, equipment and prisoners taken.

We, meanwhile, took up reserve positions in a field half way between the Pointe and Grandcamps, off the main road. It wasn't much of an area, as it was swampy and damp, but after what we had gone through, it was like Paradise to us. We were now in the rear. That meant we could relax our vigilance and take things easy. We sat down, lit up cigarettes and contentedly whiled away the moments.

Our supply trucks, which had already landed, caught up to us here. We retrieved our

earthly army possessions which were in our duffle bags. We immediately went into a change of clothes as the ones we were wearing showed the signs and symptoms of being in battle. We got out our wash kits and went to work on our features and bodies. No one used a razor, anyway most of us didn't, as we were going to make our appearance equal the toughness of our esteemed name.

Instead of our usual "K" rations, we were issued 10-1 rations. That day we were able to partake in our first decent and balanced meal since we had disembarked from our boat. It was appetizing to eat a hot meal, and the hot coffee we drank put new life into us. We almost felt human again, instead of the savage animals we had turned into during our battling.

That nite, we slept peacefully. There had been the usual air raid upon our beach and naval installations, but our position had been untouched. We felt like new men the next morning; that nite's beauty rest had erased the lines of worry from our features.

The next morning, or D/3, saw us shuttling by foot and by trucks to a new bivouac area just outside the small town of Osmansville ( which lies south of Isigny.) Our move had been administrative. We weren't bothered by enemy activity. We patrolled our area extensively, but no Germans were found. One uneventful day and night was spent there.

D/4 found us on the move again. From Osmansville, via the hard fought and hard won submarine base town of Isigny, we traveled until we reached our new destination which was the wooded area called "Bois Du Melay." We established our camp here.

Our usual patrols were sent out. They returned with a few Heinie stragglers they had picked up, plus several well-groomed and well-cared for horses. The Jerries were sent to the proper authorities to the rear, while the horses were kept for our own amusement and pleasure. From here on the Rangers took on the aspects of becoming a cavalry outfit, with every able-bodied man taking his turn riding these animals. Our colonel had other thoughts, however, he had like the way we had functioned as infantry soldiers, so that we had to rid ourselves of the horses. We gave them to the civilians in the vicinity, but only after a barter had been made. We got meat, eggs, butter, cider, etc. in exchange. A very fair exchange I reasoned, as I personally don't like horse meat.

We remained in this reserve area for five days. The only cause we had for sweating was the nightly visit from the Luftwaffe. Luckily for us, our area remained untouched by that danger, but our nerves were frazzled every time the drone of the enemy engines were heard overhead. Bursting flak that continually fell in our vicinity caused all to seek cover. Nobody slept without his helmet on. I tried one time to sleep with my helmet off one night, but I felt as naked as a new born baby, so I hastily replaced the faithful headpiece on my noggin and took off for dreamland, tout de suite.

Our entire army was now driving ahead. We could ascertain this progress by our own continual moves. The enemy was falling back under our powerful and consistent blows. We were taking full advantage of the enemies' plight and of his state of disorder. Men, supplies, equipment, vehicles, etc., in an ever ending stream continued to pour in to defeat the Jerries from the now-cleared beaches. Everything that was humanly possible was being undertaken by our giant military forces and they were doing an excellent job of it.

On June 15 our battalion was on the march again. This time we headed for a real rest area. Our destination was the outskirts of Columbières, vicinity of Isigny. It was to be here that we were to shed our old war togs and pick up new ones.

## Columbieres

For the first time since our assault landing on the beaches of Normandy, we were to have an administrative mission. We were now in a rear area. Our camp site was a well kept field just outside the town limits of Columbieres. Our area was surrounded by hedge-rows. So that we built our new homes under the concealment of this natural camouflage, so as to hide us from enemy aerial reconnaissance and bombings.

Cows used to graze right in the midst of our area, so we had no shortages of milk. The apple orchard that lie across the road from us saw that we had something extra to eat besides our rations. All in all, we were well supplied as far as hunger and thirst were concerned.

Our company's strength on arrival was pathetically weak. We had one officer and twenty-seven enlisted men, plus three extra characters from headquarters. Hardly enough men to form a good-sized platoon. This accounted for the reason we were here, as our Battalion was to be injected with new life and new personnel.

We received our first batch of recruits the third day we were there. They were a fine group of energetic looking specimens. These men were all volunteers and knew what they had let themselves in for. They had been carefully selected and chosen by our staff officers, who had given each a thorough interview. They had been physically tested and found to be in the best of condition. Their service records were unblemished. They had answered all the Ranger requirements. Each of them had the makings of a true Ranger, so we began to make them feel at home.

Our company received twenty-one men and two officers to boost our strength to nearly double its size. It was like getting a booster shot in the arm. It was good to look around and see their fresh eager faces. To feel the new vitality they had brought with them and which they injected into the company. We also had a change in leadership. Our CO. Lt. Solomon was shifted to "B" Co. while we received Lt. McCullers from Headquarters Co. Our new CO was an original member of the Rangers and he had seen action with D, E, and F companies on the Pointe, so that as far as we knew, it was an even-steven trade.

Another addition to our company came when two boys who were wounded on D-day came limping and hobbling back to us. They had both suffered bullet wounds in the legs, and

although they only were on the road to recuperation, they had gone A.W.O.L. from their hospital, just waiting until their wounds healed, so they had taken the first opportunity that came along to rejoin us. They said it had been too worrisome thinking about us and not being with us, that made them go awol.

One of these boys carried about for a souvenir two bullet holes in his helmet, which gave the proof of his narrow escape from the clutches of death. If it weren't for the toughness and firmness of our Army's steel or if it weren't for the angle of penetration of the bullets themselves, I'm afraid that we'd have been short one more Ranger.

This soldier isn't the only member in our battalion that carries such a souvenir. There are other Rangers that were just as fortunate as he, thank the Lord.

Now that we had a decent sized company, we as yet didn't have the fighting organization, which is so imperative in combat. These men needed to be trained and learned in the ways of us Rangers. They had to be broken in, to find their places in the squad.

This wasn't difficult for them to do as they were most willing and able. They did their bidings cheerfully and did them well. They absorbed all we could teach them and they never complained or bitched about their extra details. They had the correct spirit. We were glad to have them with us. It didn't take those men long to find their places in the squads, and it didn't take them long to become Rangers.

Being we were now in a rear area, we found time to go out and look about, to acquaint ourselves with this new country and also of its people. We'd go out on what we called scavaging parties with the main object of our hunt being either to get food or drink. We were quite successful in obtaining both.

Each time we would partake in this game, we would carry with us our French-English handbook which was a necessity in those days. In fact, no G.I. was in complete uniform unless he had this book with him. The book was most handy in overcoming the linguistic handicap which stood between the French people and us.

On these forages, we became friendly with the civilians. We began to learn their customs and we picked up many French phrases. We acquainted ourselves with their foods, and learned the taste of their drinks. It was on one of these jaunts that I got my first

taste of that liquid refreshment called "Calvados." That was one experience I'll never forget. It seems as though a couple of buddies and myself were making the rounds of the local farmhouses to see what we could pick up. In our travels, we came across a small farm house where we were warmly welcomed by a most polite and a bit on the ancient side lady. We made our usual requests thru the usage of our handbook and by an intricate system of arm and hand signals, we had worked out. Well, the old lady hadn't understood us too thoroughly, but she did get the idea that we were in need of something to drink. She asked us to wait a minute as she went into another room to bring us something to satisfy our thirst. She didn't take long. She reentered the room where we had waited carrying a quart bottle which was full of white stuff, very similar to alcohol in appearance. Not knowing better and not being of a suspicious nature, I thought I would sample the stuff. Well, I took a slug. One shot and that was all. The helmet which I wore and hadn't removed shot up into the air, I stood gasping for breath, I thought that surely my guts were burned out. That was all, brother, to say that stuff was potent would be putting it mildly. That stuff made our wood alcohol and canned heat taste weak in comparison. Even to this day I have nightmares everytime I dream of "Calvados."

It was here in the Columbiere area, in a field across the road from us, that our work from D-day till D+2 was recognized and acclaimed by Gen. Huebner (then CG of the 1st Div.) It was here we won and gained ourselves the honor and distinction of being awarded the famed "Presidential Unit Citation" which every Ranger so proudly wears on his right breast. It was here that the General personally pinned certain high decorations and medals on individuals in our company and in the Battalion who had so justly earned them. These Rangers whose feats were so outstanding and whose merit was so warranted that all the red tape procedures in obtaining medals had been out, so that these men could wear these honors they had bravely fought for before their heroism could be forgotten or overshadowed by future happenings.

Our only direct contact with actual combat was through the nightly visit of the Jerry aircorps. Once in a while a brave and daring Heiny plane would venture out in broad daylight on a reconnaissance mission, but our P-38's and P-51's made sure he didn't hang a-



round long, or do any damage. At night, though, we'd have our usual alerts. The Luftwaffe would come out of its hiding and caused us many sleepless hours. We weren't afraid or worried about the enemy planes strafing or bombing, but the danger of falling shrapnel or duds from our bursting ack-ack was a constant menace to us. It also didn't do our nerves any good when during an air raid a large dud from our 40 mm. or 90 mm. would come hurtling and whistling earthward. It sounded exactly like a bomb and if you were like me you'd have said all your know prayers and have made up a few more, sweating out that never to come explosion of the harmless missiles.

Our Armies were now engaging the enemy in the north and in the south. Furious struggles were being fought for the key cities of Cherbourg and St. Lo. Our giant strength was exerting itself as the enemy was gradually being driven backwards, yard by yard. It was under these conditions that we received our next mission, which was to be prisoner of war escort in the Cherbourg peninsula. So, on June 25 or 26 we found ourselves bivouaced in our new base, which was situated about a mile out of the city of Valognes, on the main road that led to Cherbourg. We were to take up new roles in the guise as escorts to Heiny prisoners.

## Prisoner of War Enclosure-Valognes

### Chapter IV

During the few days we had been in actual contact with the Germans, we had taken many prisoners. These captured enemy were handled by us in our own inimitable manner. Now we were to go out and play host and nursemaid to them.

I never had dreamed that I would see so many prisoners at one place and at one time as I did when we were doing prisoner chaser duty around Cherbourg. It was these fallen Heinies that gave me the true scope of the immensity of the battlefield and of the successes of our armies.

Our labors here consisted of guarding and transporting of prisoners. It was our job to bring back the enemy personnel which had been captured by our troops, and to bring them to our prisoner of war enclosure, which was situated a couple of miles outside of Valognes in a large open field right off the main road which connected Cherbourg to Valognes.

Besides this transporting, we were also responsible to see that the prisoners were searched and processed before they left our enclosure. Once inside the barbed wire pen, they were out of our hands as then the job of guarding these birds fell in the hands of the M.P.'s. All we had to do was make sure that these prisoners got there and to gain all the available information from them, as was possible from our interrogation.

Our prison pen was a plain affair. All it was, was a large open field enclosed by barbed wire fences. At every corner we had a platform where a light machine gun stood mounted and a guard stood prepared to use this weapon if necessary. There also was a lighting system that made our area look like Broadway and Times Square when night fell. This was to mark the place for what it was and to give warning to the Luftwaffe not to bomb their own men.

The enemy was taken an awful shellacking in this area as our phones continuously buzzed and rang giving us the notice to take the excess prisoners off the outfits hands which were on the line. God only knows how many trips we had to make and how often. Transportation by truck was being overdone, so some of these journeys had to be made by foot. We were on the go steady from dawn till dark and in our nine-day stay, our Battalion of

500 was credited for handling over 25,000 Heinies.

While on this task, we did a lot of traveling. We visited all the various parts of the battlefronts to obtain our prisoners and also we had to transport the excess Heinies from our o ges to the rear enclosures. Therefore we got the opportunity to see and to note the destruction and damage which this modern warfare had wrought. The cities of Valognes and Cherbourg were totally obliterated and smaller towns and villages that had lain in the path of our advancing and crushing juggernaut had suffered a similar fate. The staggering cost of this conflict was quite apparent, not only had human lives been expended and lost, but huge centers of habitation had been completely erased. It made my blood boil every time I viewed these scenes of disaster. I'm glad that this cruel savagery is over, and that the ones who were responsible for the crimes are paying for it or have already paid.

Being we did all of the interviewing and interrogating, we got to learn something of the Heinies of his thoughts and of his reasoning. We discovered certain bits of information about them and discovered the "why" of their idolization of the Nazi way of life. On the average, these supermen were far from being anything like that wonderful physical homo. In fact, most of the prisoners looked worn out and beat up. Their ages ranged anywhere from fifteen to fifty. We had batches of young men and the old granddads we picked up made us wonder how the hell Hitler expected to win the war.

In general, these Heiny "sad sacks" didn't like the war or their big generals running the show. They had the greatest of respect and admiration for their Fuehrer, though, and believed him to be the greatest man on earth. They hated the Russians with passion, and feared them likewise. They were deathly afraid that we were going to hand them over to the Russians. Most of them thought that Germany couldn't win the war as they claimed the Reich was depleted from its previous fights, but the younger and indoctrinated Nazi never doubted that their "Vaterland" would emerge victorious. All the Krauts were impressed by our powerful motorized and armored forces and were in full praise for our Luftwaffe. They couldn't understand how we had allied ourselves with our fighting comrades, the Russians, and they repeatedly tried to warn us that we'd be fighting them before this

present conflict was over. They spoke very little or nothing of their own ally, Japan. They seemed to be totally ignorant or very poorly informed on that subject. We learned many other details which gave us a new slant on these creatures we were battling. They weren't dumb though, as every one interviewed asked if it couldn't be arranged to be sent to a prisoner of war cage in America.

While we were here, the weather took an extreme change for the worse. Constant rain kept us wet and miserable all the time. Our bivouac area, which was just behind the barbed wire enclosure, in an open field, was turned into a slimy mudhole. Many was the nite we had to sleep in puddles of water due to the fact that the rain water seeped thru our pup tents and filled our slit trenches.

Our first movie we had the pleasure to behold on the European Continent was held in this area. It seems as though one of our boys knew some fellows from a special service unit. He had gotten in touch with them and persuaded them to have a picture showing for us. They agreed to come over one night and present us with a show. We fixed up a large barn that lay in the area and made all the necessary preparations. Well, they kept their word and came around; the projector was set up and we prepared ourselves to spend a pleasant evening. All went well for the first half of the first reel, then suddenly the sound track went snafu on us. A hasty check was made to ascertain the cause of the trouble. When the cause was found, it was learned that there was no remedy, since something had blown out and would have to be replaced. Since there was no replacement handy, it was decided to either call off the show or run it off in silence. As we had nothing better to do, and as the weather was bad, we chose to remain and watch the picture run off in silence. It was great fun as we made up our own dialogue as the show proceeded. I'll never forget that first picture showing in France, as a good time was had by all. The dialogue we created that nite would have put the best of Hollywood's scenario writers to shame.

Our armies had now cleared the entire northern part of the Cherbourg peninsula. We had gotten all their gains in Wehrmacht personnel, so on July 3, we struck tents and prepared to move out and go to a new base of operations, to undertake an administrative and patrol job in the northwestern part of the peninsula.

## Beaumont-Hague

The next step on the Ranger's travels, thru France was to be the town of Beaumont, which is situated on the northwestern tip of the Cherbourg peninsula. It is the part of the peninsula that juts out into the English channel like a crooked finger and faces the channel islands of Jersey and Guernsey.

Our new campsite was set up in a group of Jerry barracks which had formally housed the German soldiers in this sector. These barracks were dirty and filthy affairs. It took a lot of cleaning plus some repair work to make these buildings habitable. We built up a recreation and movie hall, fixed up a shower room and set up other buildings which were of use to us. While for ourselves, we transfixed our quarters into a comfortable place where we could take things easy. This indoor mode of living marked for the first time since our assault landing on June 6 that we were to be inside, instead of outside.

While here, our battalion received the mission of reporting in all the enemy positions, which lie in the area between the city of Cherbourg and Auderville. Our battalion also had the job of patrolling the nearby beaches, so as to be prepared to beat off any enemy raids or counter attacks which the enemy might have attempted from his Channel Island bases.

Our company received the task of the searching and seeking. That meant, we had to comb out all the enemy installations and ammunition dumps, which he had left behind in his defeat. We had to report in their location and the amount of equipment therein.

To accomplish our mission, our company was broken down into sections and platoons so as to be more thorough in our searching. The only aid we had for this task were the maps which we had of the area. We'd begin our jobs by riding out to an initial starting point, then we'd work our way up, generally in a northern direction until we reached our final assembly area, after having scouted out all the enemy's installations which we'd mark on our maps.

In our wanderings, we came across many formidable and impregnable fortress positions. We searched out the immense pillboxes, walked thru the elaborate system of trenches and tried cautiously to avoid the well laid mine fields which protected these positions. We

uncovered huge store rooms, where the enemy had stocked up quantities of ammunition, weapons and equipment for usage against us. We took account of all these things and made out our reports.

Our company was fortunate as we never incurred any casualties from either the handling of the German equipment or from the booby traps and minefields which were so plentiful in this area, as there had been some men wounded in other companies while on this job.

After we had searched out our assigned areas our Battalion underwent a new reorganization. New men were added to our companies and there were changes made in officer personnel. Our company received a batch of these men to bring it up to nearly full strength. Then also, we received our Lt. Porubsky in this deal, who then was only a 2nd Looey, while we had to give up Lt. Hamilton to Headquarters Co.

Then also, a few of the boys who had been wounded on D-day returned to us at this area. It was swell to greet and welcome them back and to have them resume their normal duties like in the good old days. It was very heartening to hear their tales of other comrades and it was a nice feeling to learn of the splendid and merciful work of our medics and doctors and of the fine care and treatment these boys had had while recuperating.

A slight training schedule was drawn up so that the new men could find their places in the company and to give them a chance to coordinate their abilities with ours. No difficulties were encountered in our training as these soldiers were more than obliging to do their share, so that they could become members in our famous family. It didn't take long before these men held their own, and fitted into the squads as true Rangers.

It wasn't exactly all work and no play at this base, as we did have the opportunity to go out and raise a little Cain. The town of Beaumont was an excellent source of obtaining the juice of life, commonly referred to as Cognac and Calvados. Being the people there were most friendly, a barter system between us got us very pleasant results. Some of the more romantically inclined boys were able to take off for the city of Cherbourg, where besides drinking material, mademoiselles could be found, who were willing to entertain for a nominal fee.

New ratings were made here. Fellows who had come in D-day as privates and corporals found themselves wearing three or four strips and taking over squads and sections. Congratulations were extended, while backs and shoulders were pounded. There was no enmity displayed as these men had won their glory through their qualities as fighting men, rather than through being stooges for the company commander. It has always been stated by our Bn. CO., Col. Rudder, that a Ranger should be able to take over and handle any weapon or job, should the occasion arise. This statement was more than justified on D-day when we were without officers and lead non-coms, but had gone forward on our own initiative with men taking over key positions which had been made open and had continued the drive full steam ahead.

It was on July 24 that our company received the orders to part, so that day found us entrucked and prepared to roll. We were ready and set for combat, but the big operators in higher headquarters had other ideas, so we got the job of prisoner-chaser instead, this time around the vicinity of St. Lo.

## Prisoner of War Enclosure

### St. Jean De Daye

Our armies were engaged in a desperate struggle for the great cities of Coutances and Avranches in the southwestern part of the Cherbourg peninsula, and for the important city of St. Lo. In the heart of Normandy, when we took up our duties as prisoner of war escorts, at St. Jean De Daye. We had only two Ranger companies to handle this assignment, but then again, we had the assistance of the M.P.'s to help us in this operation.

Our new base, or prisoner cage, was situated just outside of St. Jean De Daye, in an open field right off the main supply route which linked both insigny and Carenten to St. Lo. Our own billets was a house which stood on the grounds that were part of a huge estate in this area. While the officers set up their headquarters in the Chateau which controlled this estate.

On this estate there was a special store room where huge vats and barrels of cider were stored. These containers were just filled with this sweet tasting beverage. Being there were no civilians around, we took it upon ourselves to drain these vats by mouth. Many was the hilarious evenings we indulged in cider drinking parties until finally we did deplete the cider in these vats.

Our job here was an exact duplicate of what we had done previously, even our cage was a reasonable facsimile. About the only difference was the fact that instead of us being bivouaced on a field, we were billeted in a house that had been selected for us by an advance detail.

During our stay the first few days we were here, we didn't handle many prisoners. Neither did we have to go any distance to get them. But then as our armies began to push forward and to break thru the enemies defenses in those areas, mentioned above, we began to get very busy and we began to do some long range traveling.

A good example of this will be in this illustration. At first, we would go about four or five miles down the road, pick up a couple truck loads of Heinies come back and call it a day. Later, we had to send out large convoys to go forty or fifty miles in every direction and at all times to keep pace and to keep track of all the German pri-



soners our armies were capturing. We really had to work then. These trips over the dusty and bombed roads during the hot, dry month of July were no picnics, especially when you had to sit on the front fenders due to the fact th t the trucks were so jammed with enemy personel that there was no room for us in the trucks. We'd go out clean and white, and we'd come back sandy, grizzled, and ruffled.

We had a great deal of trouble from the Jerry Luftwaffe in this area as not only was our camp situated right off the main supply route that led from both Carentan and Insigny to St. Lo, but our grounds were covered by huge field and anti-aircraft pieces that were part of our defenses and offenses in this area. So that every nite we were here, we were subjected to a visit by the Luftwaffe. Although our enclosure itself was never strafed or bombed, the neighboring ground was. Our sleep would be constantly disturbed by the planes as they zoomed overhead, and by the confounded racked caused by the firing of our anti-aircraft defense. Once aroused, we would make speedy headway to take cover in the trenches we had dug in the inearby field.

Another reason which caused us great worries in this area was when we were transporting prisoners at nite. Many was the t me we had to do this nite work and many was the time we were attacked by enemy planes. Being we had no way of identifying our cargo of prisoners to the Luftwaffe, they naturally thought that we were just another convoy, so they used to open up on us. We were very lucky that we didn't sustain any casualties from these raids.

I'll never forget one bright day, when we had the mission of picking up some German prisoners around Avranches. This took place about the time our armies were making their vital breakthru in this area. We had set out in a large motorized convoy toget the prisoners. The roads we were using were jammed with mechanize vehicles that stretched in never ending columns. A most impressive sight af military might. We were just at the outskirts of Avranches when out of the wild blue yonder, the drone of fighter planes were heard. They were heading our w y, coming in fast. Everything happened and at one time. The planes started to strafe the roads, while our ground defenses put up a terrific barrage in return. Our trucks halted and we all dove for cover. Shrapnel and bullets were

whizzing all about, everything was confusion; everyone was shooting and running about. The raid didn't last longer than ten minutes, when the Jerries turned tail and took off for parts unknown. No one from our group was hurt, although we were a bit shaken from the experience. We resumed our trip, picked up our prisoners and returned to our base as though nothing had happened. That had been some air raid, while it had lasted.

we had one unfortunate happening occur during one of these prisoner chasing details. One of our boys who was armed with an '03 rifle accidentally set it off. The discharged bullet ripped thru his lower jaw and imbedded itself into his brain. He died instantaneously. It was one of those quirks of fate which happen and for which nothing can be done.

Outside of this incident, we were fortunate in that no harm or wounds were incurred by us during our work at the enclosure in this area. Neither did we have any troubles from the prisoners themselves. I never have heard of or seen any attempts of the captured Germans to ever make a break for freedom. It seems once they fell into our hands, they meant to remain there. I don't blame them either as for them the war was ended.

Our morale and spirit during our stay at St. Jean De Daye was of the highest quality. Prisoner of war escort duty had many good features to it, that atoned for the perils of the mission. All our details and dirty work were done for us by the prisoners. They dug all our sump holes and trenches, did our K.P. and kept our billets clean.

Because we did all the searching of these characters, we were able to pick up many souvenirs and insignia from them. We confiscated and kept for ourselves the gadgets which weren't allowed the prisoners and which weren't of military value.

Another morale booster came when Lt. Edlin rejoined the outfit. The Lt. Had recuperated from his wounds incurred during the D-day landing and now he was back. It was good seeing his homely face again.

Besides this, it was always heartening to know of the rapid progress our armies were making in their struggle against the Wehrmacht. We could tell this by the amount of prisoners that kept rolling in and by the amount of territory that fell into our possession. It felt good to know that our armies were meeting the Germans on their own battlegrounds

and were literally knocking the daylights out of him.

On August 4 we received word to pull stakes as our job here was now finished. That day found our derrieres parked as comfortably as was able on trucks assigned to us. We were now ready to journey to our old home grounds at Beaumont, where we once more could undergo a Battalion reunion and reorganization. That day seventy men and four officers rode their vehicles, while they gabbed and joked about past experiences and discussed plans for the future.

## Beaumont Hague Again

### Mortain and Mayenne

For the first time since we had crossed the channel, our company was over-strength in personnel, so that when the Battalion reorganized back at Beaumont, our company didn't have to undergo any changes.

Our second stay in this camp was to be no longer than three days as events were happening too fast, while we were too far in the rear to retain the required pace with the actions this war of movement. We didn't do much the three days we were here, as there wasn't much to do. We were awaiting orders which were seen to come down to us.

Our Armies at this time were engaged in two gigantic offensives, and were operating successfully in both. One was the giant pincer encirclement drive around the Mortain and Mayenne sector, while the other was the superb cutting off movement of the entire Brest peninsula from the rest of the French mainland. Our new mission was to bring us to the Mayenne battle area. So on August 7, we were seated in our respective vehicles, ready to go forth to engage the enemy in combat in that vicinity.

Our truck convoy moved due south using the main roads as much as was possible. We passed through many a shell torn town and the amount of Jerry equipment and vehicles we saw lying in the ditches along side the roads gave proof to the violence of the campaign and gave us the warning symptoms of our nearing the battle front.

The finish of the first day's ride found us bivouaced in the vicinity of Canisy. Our campsite was laid in an open field enclosed by hedgerows just outside the town. A defensive set-up was rigged up, and preparations were made to spend the night there.

An uneventful night was passed. Outside of the usual Luftwaffe raid, all was quiet and silent, no enemy action was noted or reported. A couple of bombs did drop in a nearby field, but no harm or injury was sustained by us. Perhaps our nerves didn't fair too well and maybe a few gray hairs were sprouting on some of our heads from this bombing, but that was part of the day's work.

Two more full days were spent in this area. Nothing new occurred and outside of the enemy's nightly air action, no enemy activity was seen or heard.

Our next move brought us to the town of Buais, which lies just south of Mortain. It

was an important communications town due to its situation on a large stream which possessed a vital railroad crossing and a vehicular bridge. Our entry into this town was greeted by an enemy barrage of both artillery and mortar fire. I suppose faulty or poor enemy observation saved our hides as we suffered no casualties. That night, the Luftwaffe had us really going for cover. Bombs fell pretty close and the shrapnel of the ack-ack on their earthward journey had us all diving for our holes. No artillery fell in our position that night.

The following morning or on August 12 found our battalion relieving a battalion of the 116th Infantry with the task of defending a vital bridge and also protecting a river crossing northeast of Mayenne. We had, also, to be on the lookout and on the alert for Heiny stragglers and small enemy units which had been by-passed by our forward elements; and it was also our job to see that they didn't infiltrate our front lines and rejoin other enemy units and to make sure that no sabotage or rear echelon destruction was done by these Krauts.

We took up a defensive position on a piece of high ground that faced towards Mayenne. We were right off the main road that led from Buis to Mayenne. Combat patrols were sent out continually to secure and clear the grounds about us. For all of our hunting, snooping and pooping, all we got for our labors were three Heiny prisoners who were ready to call it quits anyway.

For five days we stayed here. We thoroughly searched and combed the area for the enemy, but neither hide nor hair could be found of him. The enemy had left this part of the country and had left a bit more hurriedly than we could pursue him. Although our own company may have been outrun, I'm afraid the enemy didn't outspeed our motorized forces as destruction rained heavily on the enemy during his retreat from this battlefield.

Our short stay in this area was far from being a hardship on us and as a matter of fact, it was more of a pleasure. Right next to our position were many well-supplied and well-furnished farm houses. Chickens were endlessly roaming about just asking for the consequences they were about to suffer. Drink and other eating material were, also, in great abundance here, so we took advantage of this to keep us in the best of spirits and

health. Once more the barter system with the French civilians brought about a better understanding between our great nations, as we got for ourselves the things our hearts and stomachs desired.

After our five days of life on the farm as that was all our set up here turned out to be, we prepared to board our two and a half ton trucks and set out to make a journey that was to take us to the Brest Peninsula. Our tails were getting that flat shape that one can only get from too much familiarization with this mode of travel, but we didn't mind that as we were off for new places and new adventures. There isn't anything that tickles a Ranger's fighting palate more than to go forward and find new friends to make and new worlds to conquer.

## The Brest Campaign

### Le Folgoet

#### Chapter II

Our lengthy journey from Mayenne to our new base of operations at Le Folgoet was one of triumph. Although we had to undergo the discomforts that a trip of such distance entails, we were atoned for it by the hearty welcomes and greetings the people threw at us. At each town and village the civilians would line up along the streets and cheer our progress through their communities. They were heart-rending affairs and did us all good to behold these spectacles. All ages and both sexes enthusiastically waved their hands and jubilantly shouted words of thanks and encouragement to us. Flowers and fruits bedecked our vehicles and everytime we halted the good old cider or wine jug would come into play. In return, we would throw out to the people, especially the younger kids, certain articles of our "K" rations and watch humorously the fighting and scraping that would ensue among the people for the possession of these articles.

Sight-seeing was another one of our favorite ways to break the monotony of this dull journey. We could view the scenery and note the similarities and contrasts between Brest and Normandy. About the biggest difference appeared in the towns and houses. Whereas in Normandy everything was scarred and shell-marked, in Brest all stood in their picturesque finery seemingly untouched by the ravishes of war.

After some twenty hours of continual riding with only time out to stop for regassing, we reached our destination at Le Folgoet. We were all tired and fatigued from our journey, but our spirits were never better. This liberation business was a pretty good business. It made us happy in thought that all our strife and fighting were being appreciated, that these people were conscious of the fine meaning of freedom, liberty and democracy and were showing us their approval for our aid in bringing to them these principles and ideals that they had lost four long years ago.

Our new bivouac area was to be a large open field just outside the town. It was a pleasant and ideal spot to pitch our tents. The levelness and clearness of the pasture gave promise for athletic fields, while the nearby town of Le Folgoet gave added promise that wine and women might be found. Both promises were fulfilled.

While the front line units of the 8th Corps were battling for the commanding terrain approaches that held the key to the city of Brest, we became the reserve troops of Corps and took up our duties as such. A light training schedule was drawn up for us with stress put on map and compass work and section problems. We kept ourselves physically fit by doing physical training. The road marches we took made sure we stayed in the pink. We played lots of sports, with soft ball being the dominant game played.

Evenings were spent in the usual manner--card games for the men who could afford to gamble, while bull sessions and letter writing kept the others busy. A few of the braver men sneaked into town and found amusement in the wine they drank and the women they danced with. On the whole, life functioned and went on here in a general and monotonous Army manner.

On August 21 our company received a combat mission. It wasn't supposed to be more than a motorized patrol, so it was decided that the 1st platoon would be able to handle the assignment by itself. Their task was to contact units of the 8th Inf. Division, which was on line in an area east of St. Renan and to scout out a distance to their front.

Early that morning the platoon started out taking with it one two and a half ton truck. They encountered no trouble and made contact with the friendly units on line. Arrangements were made so that the platoon would scout out the front. Information which was received by them informed them that a well concealed Heiny automatics position was operating somewhere in the sector that they were to patrol, and that it was causing a lot of casualties in that area.

The platoon dismounted and broke into several foot patrols with each having a definite area to cover. They cautiously inaugurated their search to hunt out the enemy. They did a thorough job of it, but no trace could be found of the hidden Germans. Suddenly, out of the clear blue skies, a barrage of 88's began to rain down on them. To add to this, the enemy opened up with his automatic weapons upon the patrol led by Lt. Meltzer. The initial burst literally cut the Lt. down, killing him on the spot, while seriously wounding three other men. Meanwhile the rest of the groups had been forced to retreat and to find cover. The first aid man with the platoon (P.F.C. Roberts) made a valiant



but futile attempt to give medical treatment to the wounded man, but no sooner did he leave his cover, when he too was shot down.

The platoon reorganized and sweated out the enemies' barrage. When it lifted, they made an unsuccessful attempt to recover the men, but once more another concentration of artillery impeded their efforts. They were forced to retreat back to our own lines. They called for mortar support, but being the enemies' position still remained unknown, the ammunition was only wasted.

Enemy artillery hindered all further tries at rescue. The platoon had to give up the idea and returned to camp, but not before arrangements were made with the troops on line to retrieve the wounded at night. That had been a harrowing experience for the members of that platoon.

(Note- The men who were shot were all retrieved, but it was too late as they had all been killed except for the medic who was found to be alive and who after a recuperation in England is now with the Battalion performing his medicinal duties with "C" Company. The following are the names of the brave Rangers who lost their lives that August 21 in the vicinity of St. Renar, France: Cpl. Goldman, P.F.C. Bolema, P.F.C. Anagnos, and Lt. Meltzer--Requiem in Peace!).

The next day a reshuffling in officer personnel saw our CO., then Lt. McCullers get the well known brush off and found 1st Lt. Arman take over his position as "oldman" of Able Co. Lt. McCullers was reassigned to Headquarters Company. Our new company commander was formerly from "F" Company. He had seen action on the Pointe during those hectic days of D-day and D+. He had proven his skill and courage and as a reward for his merits had been awarded the Silver Star. Today, Lt. Arman is a Captain and still is our "oldman" and a good one at that. (P.S. It's too late to brown nose as all ratings have been frozen, so I'm innocent on that count.)

On August 24 our Battalion received a combat mission, the first since D-day. We were to be the right flank force of the 175th Infantry Regiment, operating under the code name of Task Force Sugar. That day saw D, E and F companies depart to take up positions on the offensive.

For three days we sweated out word to go join our brother companies on the line. It finally came, and we prepared to move out to our new Battalion CP, which was located at Ploumouger, on the Le Conquet Peninsula. It was to be from this point that our battalion was to operate its rear echelon functions. And it was from here that we went forth to face our mortal enemies, the German soldiers, for the first time since D-day.

We were eager to join the fray as we had a score to settle with those dirty sons of bitches. Our dead comrades were yet lied unavenged. We had a duty to fulfill. We knew we couldn't have peace with ourselves and with our consciences until we did get our range revenge.

## Le Conquet-The Lochrist Battery

(Note-The names of the towns and places about to be mentioned in this campaign will only be found on a large scale map of the LeConquet Peninsula, which is just west of the city of Brest and which forms a vital defense of that city as can be seen by a study of such a map.)

we had just dug ourselves in, as our position at Ploumouger was in range of the giant enemy coastal guns that guarded the land and sea approaches to the city of Brest, when word came to us of a patrolling job that needed our attention. We donned our equipment, checked our weapons and entrucked to move forward into battle.

Our job was to attack an enemy strong point on the other side of the town of Ploumouger. The German defense at this place supposedly consisted of one strongly fortified pillbox, which was covered by open emplacements. There was also known to be several machine guns and some anti-aircraft pieces which could be lowered and fired at ground targets. The entire position was surrounded by minefields so that all approaches were well taken care of. Enemy personnel and number were unknown, but estimated to be anywhere from fifty to one hundred men.

We were supposed to pull this job, finish it and return to our base at Ploumouger, but future doings surely proved the gross untruth of that statement, for once we left our headquarters, we didn't return till fifteen days later when we had cleaned out the entire Le Conquet peninsula and had silenced the gigantic batteries of Conchirst, which then left the city of Brest undefended from all western approaches and left it very much susceptible to attack from that flank.

In our mission we were to be abetted and aided by Charley Co. who took up positions on our right flank by the supporting half-tracks of our headquarters company and then we had a group of the FFI (French Forces of the Interior) whose main labors consisted of establishing road blocks and protecting our rear during our advance.

We detrucked at a point several hundred yards away from the enemy's strong point. We then advanced forward on foot until we reached our line of departure. Our company strength at this time was sixty-six fighting men and three officers.

A heavy concentration of fire from the 75 mm. S.P.'s of our headquarters half tracks,

and of Charley company's mortar, initiated our jumping off. We crossed our line of departure under this protective firing. Enemy artillery was negligible, while small arms fire were absent. We advanced in section column with the squads within the section leapfrogging forward. Enemy resistance was light as we began our attack. We made slow progress as we took advantage of every bit of cover and concealment Mother nature had afforded us in this sector. Our mortars and self-propelled 75's kept up their firing. The enemy returned with only small arms and some depressed anti-aircraft fire. No casualties were sustained. We were now advanced to the edge of the minefield. Our forward scouts were trying to probe their way through to make a path for us, when the Jerries were seen waving a white flag. A truce immediately followed and the enemy surrendered to us, unconditionally.

We picked up a total of 70 odd prisoners, which we shared with Charley Company. Innumerable rifles and other weapons were also picked up and all the artillery pieces destroyed. The Heines were then sent to the rear. We took up a defensive position in this vicinity. Patrols were sent out to gain information and to contact the enemy, but no positive information was obtained. We set up here for the time being and prepared to spend the night. We had done a good day's work and now we were readying ourselves for tomorrow's labors.

The following day found us on the go again. This time, we had another enemy strong point to attack, but in the vicinity of Treziers. It seems as though the enemy defenses in the area consisted of strong points and outposts which were the first line of defense of the Graf Spee batteries at Conchris. They were strategically situated so that each position covered one another and that each had communications with the other. They were fairly widely scattered, therefore making our task of picking off these outposts or strongposts one by one, simple.

Our tactics and approach to the second Heiny position was very similar to the methods used the day before. We advanced under our covering fire of our mortars and self-propelled. Our own automatic weapons gave us the final protection we needed. We advanced cautiously, taking the utmost advantage afforded us by the hedgerows for cover and

concealment. Again we had worked forward to an assaulting position when a white flag was seen flying from the enemy pillbox. Another unconditional surrender added ninety-four prisoners to our bag, while nine Jerries were left behind mortally wounded from the short battle which had ensued. We sent the prisoners to the rear, checked the booty and destroyed all the equipment we had no need for. Once more we could pat ourselves on the back for another good day's hunting, and we could thank the Good Lord that once more we had suffered no casualties.

We set up our usual defenses and prepared to spend the night here. Patrols were sent out on reconnaissance, but little information filtered back to us that was of any value. Rations and water were brought up to us, so we readied ourselves for the next day's task.

The next morning saw us board trucks to strike at an enemy position in the vicinity of Kerrichan. We detrucked at a point outside of the town and advanced in a south-westerly direction. We took up our positions at a forward assembly area, several hundred yards away from the Heiny strong point. Some artillery was thrown at us, but our answering mortars and self-propelled guns silenced and neutralized the enemy batteries. No casualties were suffered by us. We went into our assaulting formations and advanced forward under the cover of our protective fires. Once more the Germans decided to call it quits as we had gotten too close for their comfort. The surrender added seventy-two more Heinies to our prisoner of war toll, while six more Jerries were sent to meet their Maker. Another day's labor ended and in a very satisfactory manner. We were really rolling and functioning as a combat team. Our daring exploitation of the enemies' strong points was bringing us good results; we were gaining confidence as we continued subduing the enemy. We were making it rough for the Jerries.

Again we prepared to spend the night in this general area. We had taken care of the enemy personnel and we had taken care of his supplies and equipment. Our patrols were active in securing our position and were also busy trying to obtain further information of the enemy. Ammunition and rations details were brought to us, so we equipped ourselves for the following day's mission.

Our next battle and it was a battle, took place the very next day. We had a heavily defended enemy position in the vicinity of Kerlogue to take. This position was on a commanding piece of terrain and covered the sea entrances to its rear and dominated all land approaches to its front and flanks.

We arrived at our forward assembly area, which was a fair distance away from the Heinies, and dug in. Artillery began to fall about us. Our own mortars and self-propelled guns began to open up, but to no avail as this strong point was of a determined nature. We received the word to attack, so we took up our assault formations. Enemy artillery and long range machine gun fire had us well dispersed and hugging the earth pretty closely. We continued our advance, miraculously avoiding casualties, until we reached a covered position about four hundred yards from the strong point. We had to hold up here as the terrain to our front was absolutely devoid of natural concealment, and it would have been suicidal to make an attack under the conditions that confronted us.

A tremendous and accurate enemy artillery barrage caused us to withdraw to rear positions. The enemy observation was excellent and they had all the advantages that a well-defended position entails. We began to jockey backwards and forwards trying to get into closer range, but the heavy concentrations of both artillery and automatic fire caused us to keep low most of the time. We sustained casualties when a mortar shell wounded two of our boys. They were treated on the spot by our first aid man and later evacuated to the rear for hospitalization.

When night fell, we were no better off than when we first started out. We were entrenched in positions which ran along a dirt road running parallel to the Heinies. We were about five hundred yards away from the strong point.

A miserable night was spent here, rations and water detail was a dangerous mission in itself. Air bursts and machine gun fire had us all sweating and praying. We were really getting a taste of combat, and we were beginning to feel the ugliness and dread of mortal conflict. We picked up two enemy stragglers that night. They had casually strolled down the road, hands above their heads, and had given themselves up.

The following morning saw us in the same position, only this time we were on the de-

fensive. We had called for our heavier artillery in the rear to give us supporting fire, and we got the help of our fighter planes to neutralize the position for us. Grand performances were turned in by both branches of service, but the enemy refused to quit or give up. It was up to us, the ground troops, to route him out of his pillboxes and elaborately dug in positions, and we tried our darndest to do just that.

Again, we resumed our assaulting positions, but once more accurate and heavy shelling caused us to proceed with caution and to hold up. The enemy possessed the key terrain features in this area, and he was making the best of use of it. He also had the material and personnel with which to hold onto his advantage.

The enemy continued to hold us off at arm's length, all that day. We couldn't jockey into a position to close with him. So when evening fell, it was decided to hole up in our original positions and to spend the night there. Combat patrols were sent out and contact with the enemy was made. Heavy return fire from machine guns and mortars drove our patrols back and caused them to withdraw.

Another night was spent in anguish as we sweated out probable enemy patrols and counter-attacks. Combat fatigue and general weariness was beginning to tell on us. A lack of a decent diet was also leaving its marks. The cold summer nights didn't add to our comforts or boost our morale, and continual shelling by the enemy wasn't exactly the most pleasing thing in the world for us.

The next morning or on September 2 we left Kerloge. We had decided to give this job up as a bad one for the while. We had other positions to take care of. A hasty decision was formed to destroy the other German installations on the peninsula and return to this position after it had been completely isolated so that we could attack from another direction and flank, instead of frontally as we had been doing. This grand strategy turned out to be the best piece of brainwork turned out by our staff in this campaign.

Our next sector of battle was to be in the vicinity of Trebebu. We had left one section of the company to contain the enemy strong point at Karlogue and to divert his attention from the real attack our company was planning to make in this other area. We affected this by pulling out under cover of our artillery and entrucked our vehicles from

a rear position. We rode to a point outside the town limits of Trebebu. Here we detrucked and went into an approach march column. Our entry into the town was heralded by sniper fire, but our advance guard took speedy and prompt action against them and in the ensuing fight, killed two Heinies. We continued our line of advance until we ran into an enemy patrol. We escaped unscathed, but killed five Jerries and captured two, for our troubles. We then halted and took up a defensive position in this general vicinity. We dug our holes in an enclosed field just south of Trebebu. Combat patrols went out and contact was made with the enemy. Again our men had to withdraw as the Jerries were well entrenched and had too much fire power for them. We were constantly on the alert as reports had reached us about an imminent counter attack. The enemy threw artillery at us intermittently. Air bursts from depressed anti-aircraft guns caused many a sweating Ranger to give out with a prayer. Whoever said there were no atheists in a fox-hole was 100 per cent right. We were most fortunate that no casualties were received by us that caused evacuation. We did have some casualties, but they were minor cuts and scratches from shrapnel, but not serious enough to cause hospitalization.

Another miserable night was spent in these holes. Rain fell and brought with it all the discomforts that could befall a soldier in combat. We ate our "K" rations in uncanny silence. The section that had been left behind at Kerlogue caught up with us here; they had accomplished their diversidary mission quite successfully, so they atoned by the near misses they had receive from the enemy shelling and small arms fire.

The next morning found us on the move again. We were minus one section from the second platoon as this group of men became attached to a tank destroyer force that was going to support "C" company in their attack that morning. Our company was advancing in a general southwesterly direction so as to keep up a skirmish line with Charley company. Our march was interrupted by intermittent resistance from enemy patrols. These skirmishes generally ended the same way. After a short but sharp conflict we'd overcome these nuisances and continue on our way. Eleven Heinies were left lying dead behind our advance.

We took up a defensive position somewhere southwest of Trebebu. We sent out a contact patrol to visit our brother Ranger company. Then, we formed a consolidated line



with him. Combat patrols were sent out, but no contact was made with the enemy. Two expert O3 riflemen were sent out on a job. They were equipped with telescopic sights to snipe out a high German officer, who had been spotted by our men at one of the enemy strong points. They took up a position in a tree that gave them clear observation of the enemy. It wasn't until the next day though that they got the opportunity to get their man and get him they did. As soon as the officer came into sight, both men opened up on him at precisely the exact moment and pumped two clips of hot lead into this Nazi officer. They could clearly ascertain their results and were able to report in mission completed. We, meanwhile, were holding our positions southwest of Trebebu all that day and night as the rest of the Battalion was coming up on line with us. We had to wait for them so that a complete and consolidated Battalion front could be formed.

Enemy artillery and the firing of the huge coastal guns from the Lochrist batteries caused us loss of sleep that night. Everytime those giant 280 mm. opened up, the muzzle blast would actually lift us out of our holes although we were several hundred yards away from these giant pieces.

The shells that sped out of the muzzle of those 280 mm. would come thundering over our heads, sounding like a freight train on the move. I'm very happy that none of these shells landed in our company's area, although the section which was with "E" company had the unpleasant experience of feeling these shells as they landed nearby.

That night, the Jerries counter-attacked on our left flank. Charley Co. bore the brunt of this enemy assault and repelled it. They had gotten a good support from our artillery as white phosphorous and 105's caused the enemy to disperse and to become confused. The Nazi were stopped dead. ( And that could be taken in two ways.) Our company had remained untroubled by enemy activity .

The following day found us in these same positions, holding our own. Combat patrols were constantly going out to clean out and secure our front and to draw the enemy into the open. Our battalion was now presenting a solid front. We had eliminated most of the enemy strong-points and outposts and now we were making the final preparations for the attack against the strongly defended enemy stronghold at Lochrist. All that day we

sweated out intermittent artillery and anti-aircraft shells that burst like huge fire-crackers over our heads and which threw shrapnel all over.

Our own artillery was giving us excellent support. They threw round after round of white phosphorous into the known enemy positions. It did our hearts good to know that the enemy was hurting more than we. Our fighter bombers were also doing their share in the neutralization of the enemy strong-points. Day in and day out, weather permitting, we could see them strafing and bombing the enemy pillboxes and destroying his communications systems. It was a thrilling spectacle to watch these courageous pilots as they handled their planes; to see them go into their dives; to machine gun everything in sight; come out of their dive; twist and twirl so as to avoid the bursts of ack-ack that was certain to follow on their tail.

That night saw us in these same positions. Our Battalion was now awaiting the bringing-up of other friendly units on line with us. We had advanced a bit ahead of schedule so that now we had to hold up so that these friendly troops would come up and secure our flanks. So that we could make a coordinated and timed attack in conjunction with these other units.

September 5 marked no new changes in our positions. The section that had been with "C" company rejoined our company. Patrols continually roamed and searched out our front. Enemy shelling fell intermittently. Just a routine day of combat. Where one minute all is quiet and the next finds a shell whistling overhead; where very little is actually known of the situation; where you just sit in your fox hole and gaze at your buddy; where you smoke your cigarettes in chain fashion as you have nothing better to do; where no one says anything and you just stare at your buddy; where you sit weary and fatigued munching away at your "K" rations; where you try to sleep and when you have just dozed off a shell lands nearby and awakens and alerts you more than ever before; where you'd give anything and everything to be out of there; where you wonder and think what you're doing here and why; and where your hopes and prayers are that the next shell or bullet hasn't your name on it.

September 6 found us on the run again. This time we had the task to divert the

enemy's attention in the general vicinity south of our positions as our brother companies D.E. and F. were to make the main attack in their sector of action. We advanced forward 1000 yards overcoming some enemy resistance. We wounded twenty of them and added twenty more to our prisoner of war bag. In our drive we crossed the main highway that linked the peninsula with the city of Brest. There for, we cut the main enemy supply and communications lines. Charley company who was advancing in a similar direction as we, had likewise success. We then coordinated our gains and consolidated our positions.

We holed up here for the night and set up our usual defensive positions. Patrols went out to secure our front and visiting patrols were sent out to contact our friendly units on our flanks. Enemy shelling was negligible in our area. We were now too close to him for his effective use of his larger pieced guns. Luckily for us, that those giant 280 mm. guns couldn't be depressed low enough to cover our area. A sleepless night though was spent here, as the shells from those large pieced traveled overhead constantly, sounding like a thousand wild horses stampeding.

The following day saw our company on the approach march. This time our zone of action was to be in the vicinity of Kerizou. We entered the town and found it clear of enemy personel. No physical contact was made with the Jerry. We holed up here as other units on our flanks were having more trouble than we, and they had been forced to proceed more slowly and with more caution than we had had to.

Again, a consolidation and coordination of our position with friendly units were affected. We were now in the final stages of the actual assault upon the Graf Spee batteries at Lochrist. Final preparations were being undertaken. Artillery and air fighter support were softening and neutralizing the enemy stronghold for us. Our own advances had cleared most of the Jerry outposts which had formed an integral part of the defenses of the Lochrist position.

The next day saw us in the vicinity of Liettes. We were in the approach march and moving in a southerly direction. We advanced along the main highway that led from Brest to Lochrist. Enemy action was fairly heavy; active enemy patrolling had us fighting for every inch of ground we gained. Sharp clashes were quite frequent. We got fifty-four

prisoners for our efforts. Six more Heinies were left behind deader than the proverbial mackerel. We were fortunate in these skirmishes as no casualties were suffered by our side.

That night saw us in an enclosed field, practically under the very noses of the Jerry. Enemy air bursts constantly cracked and burst overhead and machine gun fire from pillboxes had us all digging deep. We were at the climax of the game. All night we sweated out these enemy barrages. Once more lady luck and the Gracious Lord above saw us through.

September 9 marked the finish to our labors and mission in this general area. A combat patrol composed of the entire first platoon and which was led by the platoon leader Lt. Edlin broke into the intricate enemy defenses and effected a complete capitulation of the entire battery at Lochrist. A total of 814 prisoners were surrendered to us and all the coastal guns, artillery, weapons, ammunitions, and supplies fell into our hands.

The patrol had originally started out as a full platoon, but then it had broken down into several sections. With one section remaining in a rear covered position to give supporting fire if need for such ever arose. The four-man group which was being led by the platoon leader pushed forward speedily. They bypassed a known enemy guard post and stole their way thru a minefield. They then came upon and surprised two men in a machine gun position, which they captured without a struggle. While two men were left to guard these Heinies, the Lt. and the other man, a Sgt., continued on their way. They gained entrance to an underground hospital and surprised a high medical officer there. On the demands of the Lt. arrangements were made for this Nazi officer to call up the commanding Colonel of the Lochrist battery to come over and talk over surrender terms of the entire position. The Colonel realizing the seriousness of his predicament and knowing his position to be completely surrounded by our forces obliged by coming over. Some arguing ensued between the Colonel and the Lt. about the surrender terms, but our Lt. finally convinced the Colonel with the expedient of a hand grenade pressed tightly against the Colonel's stomach of the folly of not a total unconditional surrender. P.S. He got it.

Meanwhile the rest of the company had entered the enemy stronghold through another opening and had had everything under control. Our own Col. arrived on the spot and an official ultimatum was given to the Nazis. That afternoon at 1330 our Colonel had the desired official document of the Nazi's Col. This brought to an end the battle of the Graf Spee batteries at Lochrist. The signing and the officiating of the surrender took place in the little town of St. Mathieu, which is just outside the Heiny strong point at Lochrist.

The prisoners were rounded up carefully searched and sent to the rear. Innumerable and invaluable stocks of enemy weapons and supplies were found and given over to the proper authorities. We got the opportunity to inspect the position and we got the chance to note the effects and damages wrought by our supporting branches of service, the artillery and the air corps.

Those big 280 mm. guns which had caused us those endless and worrisome nights, were found to be of immense stature. Their gigantic structure and encased concrete homes had made these giants immune to our shelling and bombing. Their large muzzles easily contained our helmets in their openings and the size of the shell was equivalent to a good-sized bomb. These huge masses of steel even dwarfed and made look puny the 155 mm. guns at Pointe du Hoc in comparison.

Our company received the mission that night to guard these positions. It was the first time in two weeks we could relax our vigilance and take things a bit easy. The tenseness and strain were erased from our faces and once more we became the joyous and carefree Rangers, we were, and always will be.

Beaucoup of wine and liquor had been found in the vast storerooms in these Nazi positions. So we indulged in this treat and became a bit inebriated with our success. That night, we slept in peaceful bliss with slight interruptions from the heavy snoring of those who had partaken too freely with those liquid stimulants.

Although we had taken care of the main Nazi defenses on the Conquet peninsula, we still had one more job to do. That was the taking of the position at Kerlogue, which had stymied us the first time we had attempted to take it. Now we were in a position to

attack from any direction or flank we desired. For now we had completely isolated this strong point by our decisive victory at Lochrist.

The next morning, September 10, we boarded vehicles and rode to the town of Kervauern. There we detrucked and went by foot to a forward assembly area not more than four hundred yards from the enemy position. A heavy artillery shelling, mortar barrage plus the firing of S.P.'s from T.D.'s preceded our jumping off.

We were now on a flanking side of the enemy. All that stood between us was a deep valley of 100 yards width. The enemy's position was on a higher piece of terrain than ours, so that he had the advantage and benefit of clearer observation. He was well entrenched and the impregnable pillboxes he defended were great handicaps to overcome. Even direct hits from our self-propelled and heavy artillery shells were glancing off these huge fortresses without so much as causing the slightest of dent or damage.

We prepared to leave our line of departure which was on the top of the hill. We were awaiting the order from our Lieutenant. He gave the signal and away we went over the top. (Both literally and figuratively) We ran down the side of our hill which was totally bare of cover. We felt as naked as a new-born babe. Our supporting artillery and mortars were giving us good protective fire. The German resistance was light. There was some small arms fire from enemy outposts and a little mortar shelling which fell to the rear of us. We reached the bottom of the hill and proceeded on our way through a mine field. We had a bit of defilade from the enemy here but we were still vulnerable to his mortar fire and grenades. We skirted the edge of another minefield and followed along a stream that ran parallel to the Heiny position. We were in waist deep water when the enemy opened up with another mortar barrage which again fell to our rear. We came into a position where we could climb the enemy-held hill under cover and concealment, so we proceeded to ascend. We joined up with Charley Co. here (they were also attacking this position but from another flank) We coordinated our efforts and after a heavy concentration of our artillery had fallen on the enemy, we prepared for the final attack.

The assault was made, but we didn't have to fire a shot as the Jerries had decided to call it quits. They had raised the flag of truce, which we could see floating from the

top of a pillbox.

The enemy surrendered to us unconditionally. We got a total of seventy-five prisoners which we shared with "C" company. We sent them to the rear to the proper authorities while we proceeded to handle all the German supplies, equipment and all the booty and souvenirs we could get our hands on. All kinds of pistols, flags, medals and other valueless articles fell into our personal possession. It was a field day for the loot-hungry and souvenir-crazy-Rangers. This was a sort of a token payment for the fine work we had done we reasoned. I'm sure that the Heinies didn't care or have the need of the stuff we took from them, where they were going.

This concluded the final chapter to the story of the Conquest Peninsula episode. We had completely taken and wiped out the last pocket of resistance in this area. Our mission was now reported in as accomplished.

That night we were back at battalion rear, which still remained at Plumouger. We set up an administrative bivouac and as we no longer had a combat mission, we were relieved from the 29th Inf. and reverted to the 8th Corps Reserve.

We could look back that evening and glance over the results of our campaign. Our companies battle score read something like this: credited for approximately 600 prisoners, besides the wounded, and accounted for 51 Jerries killed. (This score is a poor one, as it is only tabulated on the known number of Heinies we killed. How many were not included and not ascertained is not known to us, but I'm sure a more correct figure would be three times the total we were accredited with.) While on our side of the ledger, we had sustained two serious casualties plus a few minor wounds.

Then there was the gallant role we had played in the taking of the Graf Spee batteries with its four huge 280 mm. pieces. We had captured innumerable supplies and equipment, artillery and anti-aircraft weapons. The giant bunkers and pillboxes that fell into our hands more than proved the skill of us Rangers in combat.

This mission had been a typical one for us Rangers and had been conducted and concluding as such. We had locked horns with the enemy and we had vanquished him. The penalty we had extracted from him sort of avenged our fallen comrades and had made up for

all of our trying times during the campaign.

There had been many cases of individual valor and heroism. The trials and tribulations we had to endure before we could emerge victorious were many. And the skillful strategem as worked out by our staff had been excellent. This had all added up to the downfall of the enemy on the Le Conquet Peninsula.

I would like to take this time to pay my thanks and honest tribute to the other branches of service and to the brave men of the FFI who so ably aided and abetted us in our campaign. Without artillery, air cover and tank destroyer support, I doubt very much if we could have done the job. It was they that staggered and softened the enemy, so that we could come in and administer the knockout blow to them. We appreciated their labors and we admired their fine cooperation. We were fortunate to have had them with us.



## The Crozon Peninsula (Le Fret)

Our company had come through the campaign of the Conquet peninsula with flying colors. Our battle strength had not been seriously affected by this battle and our morale and spirits were as high as ever. We were a bit fatigued by our ordeal in the conflict, but otherwise we were the same carefree and cocky Rangers.

We were now Corps reserve. We took this splendid opportunity to relax and recuperate. We had a nice bivouac area just outside the town of Kervavoun, which was on the other side of Ploumouger, our original base of action.

We took life easy and caught up on a million and one things that we had left untended to by our entrance into battle. Pens and pencils came into play and letters were dispatched to our loved ones. Our booty was carefully wrapped and packed so that today, souvenirs of the Brest campaign are proudly displayed in many a Ranger's home in America. Soap and water, razors and brushes were employed to cleanse ourselves thoroughly, removing all the filth that we had accumulated in our two week battle.

For three days we jelled about, doing the least of manual labors. We had a few dare devils in our company who had gotten hold of some Jerry motor cycles. These characters would drive these decrepit pieces all about our area. These vehicles had more knock to them than a fuller brush man. Good, peaceful slumber was interrupted many a time by the chug-chug-chug and brrr-brrrr of these cycles, as they made their rounds about the camp. These drivers had more spirit than a barrellfull of monkeys and got cursed more than a new recruit by a veteran top kick.

On September 14 we threw all our earthly army belongings onto waiting vehicles and prepared to move out to a new camp. We were sixty-three enlisted men and three officers strong and in the best of physical and mental condition.

Our new bivouac area was to be an open field which lay off the main highway that linked Landerneau with the city of Lesneven. We had a nice arrangement here as not only were our tents pitched on beautiful grounds, but the access we had to these two large towns was very much to our likings.

During our short stay, we got the chance to visit both these towns. Both places were centers of amusements. They had cafes where thirst was a thing unheard of. Many a

carefree hour was squandered in these large towns as we drank and made feminine acquaintances freely. The people were most gracious and friendly and acted as perfect hosts. As we were welcomed and greeted in a manner for liberators and conquerors. It did our hearts good to associate with these civilians.

On September 17 we again received a combat mission. The city of Brest was now undergoing the final stages of its siege. Our armies were in control of the city proper, but the dockyards and submarine bases were still holding out. The enemy had still possession of fortifications on the Crozon peninsula which like its brother peninsula, Le Conquet, was an integral part of the city's defenses from where the enemy was receiving strong and excellent artillery, mortar, and anti-aircraft support for the defense of that city.

It was under these conditions that we rode forth to our next base of operations, which was to be a rear assembly area situated outside the town limits of Ergol. Our Battalion became attached to the 8th Inf. Div. and received the job of relieving task force "A" on the Crozon Peninsula, with the mission of taking the German-held town of Le Fret.

After a short briefing and orientation on the general situation, we took up the formation of the approach march and set out once more to enter the fray. We relieved the friendly troops we were supposed to and continued our advance forward.

There was no enemy resistance, as fighting on the whole was very much limited. The enemy was folding up on this area and our troops were picking up and taking hundreds of prisoners. We got seventy-eight such Heinies ourselves, who surrendered to us without putting up any struggle or defense. They were sent to the rear while we resumed our forward advance.

That evening after a full day's march, we entered the hospitable town of Le Fret where we picked up 1,600 Jerries of whom 1,000 were bedridden. That day also saw the capitulation and the total surrendering of the city of Brest to our forces.

The Heinies hadn't offered us any resistance, as we took over the town. It seems like the enemy didn't have any defenses here, as Le Fret had been declared an open town and had only been used by the enemy as a hospital base. All the wounded from the city of

of Brest had been evacuated to here from across the bay that separated Le Fret from Brest.

We've always considered this campaign as the greatest farce of our career. Imagine the rough and tough Rangers taking over a hospital town where all the defendants were bedridden or crippled and the personnel entirely non-combatant.

Besides the capturing of this town, we also effected the release of four hundred American prisoners of war, plus other Allied prisoners who had been captured by the Germans in the Brest and Normandy campaigns. These men were turned over to the proper authorities and were assured the best of care.

That night we established bivouac in a field right in the middle of town. We set up control points and checking posts. It was a queer scene as under the rules of warfare as handed down from the Geneva Convention, these Heinies were free to walk around and roam about the town as this was an open town. And also due to medical reasons, these men were actually able to go and do whatever they pleased as long as they remained within certain bounds and limits. It was also strange to us for while we the conquerors slept outdoors on the ground, these prisoners had their homes and hospitals to use as sleeping quarters. Quelle a Guerre!

Our feelings were a bit appeased though by the liquid loot we had captured. So we drowned our sorrows in alcoholic refreshment and went to bed happy in thought that things could have been worse.

The next day, we were relieved by a battalion from the 28th Division. We entrucked and rode to a new assembly area. We found ourselves relieved from the 8th Div. and once more we reverted to Corps reserve. The entire Crozon peninsula had now fallen into our hands and the commanding enemy General of the entire Brest peninsula (Gen. Remoke) became another member of our prisoner of war enclosure. Our new campsite for that day and night was to be a field outside the town of Pr t Meur. No new occurrences or happenings took place, so we took things easy and readied ourselves for future battles.

## Landerneau and Lesneven

The following morning saw us on the road again. This time our new area was to be an open field outside the town of Kirbilben, which was situated off the main road that led from Lesneven to Landerneau. The entire Brest peninsula was now completely cleared of enemy except for the strongly fortified positions of St. Nazaire and Lorient. Our mission in our Corps zone of action had been completed and fulfilled, so that we went into an administrative bivouac.

Seven days of pleasantness and enjoyment was spent here as we renewed and remade acquaintances in Lesneven and Landerneau. Our second platoon leader, Lt. Porubsky was made 1st Lt. and a little party was held in his honor. Beaucoup toasts were drunk and congratulations were extended.

By now, our armies were running rampant over the French soil. The liberation of Paris had been heralded and our armies were racing through the nations of Belgium and Luxembourg. The war news was of the most optimistic and encouraging nature. We were all hoping that this disintegration and this annihilation of the German forces in these countries would bring about the desired unconditional surrender we were so gallantly striving for, but I'm afraid our prayers remained unanswered though as future happenings and battles were to bring out.

On September 28 our battalion boarded a train which awaited us at the station at Landerneau. We were off for a new destination, a new nation and a new battlefield. So that day sixty-three enlisted men and three officers loaded onto these antique boxcars known as 40 and 8's and departed for newlands and new adventures.

### Trainride (France to Belgium)

If ever we had cause to curse the mode of conveyance of the two and a half ton truck, we had now reason to curse more vehemently this new and first train ride we were to undergo. If man could ever devise a more hideous and cruel method of torture than this, I had as yet to have seen it or hear of it. To say our journey was tedious, monotonous, and unbearably uncomfortable, I would not be exaggerating in the least bit. We were tightly crammed and packed into these old and decrepit French boxcars, commonly referred to as 40 hommes et 8 chevaux (40 men and 8 horses) which had seen better days in World War I. These crude affairs, I doubt seriously if they could have held half the number of us comfortable, yet there we were thirty-five men plus all our equipment, rations, and weapons, which took up more space than we, the soldiers.

The cars were filthy and dirty before we entered them and by the time we ended our travels a pig sty would have appeared to have been a place of sanitation in comparison. The only compensation we got from this trip was the excellent opportunity to view firsthand the landscape that is beautiful France and to derive the experience that only such a journey could entail.

Our morale and spirit, paradoxically enough, were never better. The more crowded we became the more we joked, the dirtier we got, the more we laughed and the more we traveled, the better we like it.

Our sleeping quarters and positions we assumed when night fell looked like something out of a Rube Goldberg cartoon. Heads, limbs, and bodies were sprawled all about and no one person was ever found that could claim his own physical belongings. There wasn't an inch on the floor that wasn't covered by someone or a part of someone's anatomy. A mortar base plate was turned into a pillow and a "K" ration box, miraculously enough, became a bed. When dawn would break and time for arising would come up, a general scramble would ensue to make sure that the right person would come up with the right limbs. Inventory was taken daily to make sure that all bodies and limbs were present. What a life and what an ordeal, yet an experience we wouldn't want to have missed for a million dollars.

For 750 weary miles we endured our pains and miseries, drinking in the scenery. The picturesque villages and the larger towns were always refreshing and welcoming sights to

behold. At each stop the people would crowd and mill about our train to greet and cheer us and to exchange their food and vegetables for our items in our "K" rations.

A critical shortage in cigarettes didn't aid to our hurt feelings during the journey. Roll your own's with Jerry tobacco became a popular smoke on the train. The odor and stink that could only come from Heiny tobacco didn't neutralize the already present stench from body odor and from the accumulated dirt and filth. But we didn't mind, we got used to these nuisances and didn't let it bother us. We knew that things were rough in the E.T.O.

After five days and nights of continual traveling, we reached our point of disembarkation which was the city of Longuyon, France. From there we loaded onto awaiting vehicles and departed for our new base of operations which was to be a wooded area, approximately five kilometres from the cathedral city of Arlon, Belgium. We crossed the border that separated France and Belgium and found ourselves on new terrain, in a new nation.

Even then we could look back and scan over our progress. From our small beachhead on the Normandy coast, our Armies had expanded and exploited our gains, fighting all the way, so that now they were actually battling on the so-called Holy soil of the Third Reich, itself. What sacrifices, hardships, and tribulations we've had to overcome. What problems of logistic and supplies we had to solve, and what personal inflicted agonies and miseries we've had to defeat, so that we could so relentlessly drive onward, no one will ever know or no one will ever be able to write about.

It's with small wonder and lots of pride that I'm proud that I'm a soldier in the United States Army and it's with more egotism and conceit that I'm proud to be a member of the battalion which bears the gallant fighting name of "RANGER."

On October 3 the Ranger Battalion found itself bivouaced in the forests outside the city of Arlon, Belgium. We had been relieved from 8th Corps and we were now attached to the Ninth Army as reserve troops. We were ready and prepared to embark into another phase of combat, in a new nation of Europe, or anywhere, for that matter, our country deemed it necessary for us to fight.

## Arlon, Belgium

### Chapter III

Our new habitat in the forests outside the city of Arlon wasn't exactly the mecca spot of the universe. Continual rain and dampness made our area resemble a sump-hole, and the cold winds that raged against our pup-tents had us all shivering and shaking. If it weren't for the proximity of our camp to the entertaining city of Arlon, I'd hate to think of the consequences we would have had to suffer.

Our battalion received a rear echelon mission. We became the guardians and protectors of Ninth Army headquarters, so that while we were here our functions were of an administrative nature.

We had a complete and final reorganization of the battalion here. Other companies who had been less fortunate in the Brest campaign, as far as casualties were concerned, than ourselves, received new men and officers. Supplies and ordnance equipment were re-issued and other routine and necessary duties were attended to. Our company didn't receive any new men, but we did regain a few old men who had been wounded on D-day and who finally had caught up with the unit at this place.

A light training schedule was drawn up for us. It wasn't too strenuous, but it kept up in trim, both physically and mentally. We took small hikes, ran section problems, and brushed up on our marksmanship. We also received a good deal of briefings, stressing the defenses and structure of the Siegfried Line.

For recreational facilities we received passes to visit the fair city of Arlon. This was a pleasure and privilege, since Arlon, being a large, modern city, was quite a center of amusement and entertainment. Cognac and beer could be had for a price and women were attentive and friendly to our passes.

There were many food stores there, where purchases could be made of certain edible articles. Certain fruits and vegetables were plentiful, so that we were able to supplement our army rations. Bake shops and ice-cream parlors gave us the first opportunity since our landing on the continent to indulge in that luxury of eating cake and ice cream. A treat that was highly treasured and prized and one that found many of us going back for seconds and thirds.

Movie houses and photo places did extremely well as far as our patronage was concerned, and the department stores and the shops where little knick knacks and souvenirs could be bought did a flourishing business. When we went to town, we did it both literally and figuratively.

We did have one setback, though, in our visits to this city. It seems as though there were a lot of brass and B.T.O.'s (big time operators) who roamed the streets alerted to see that the troops didn't forget their military discipline. Well, it seems that we had a few boys who were a bit lax and negligent on that score, so that some reports filtered back to our company commander via the Battalion commander concerning this behavior. A restriction was imposed on us and the ones guilty were relieved and deprived of their rank. Our restriction didn't last long and we were again free to roam the streets of Arlon. Perhaps, we were a bit more conscious of military courtesey and discipline, but we never lost our cockiness that marks the Ranger from the ordinary G.I.

A precedent that was to be established in this area was that the first Ranger dance we were to have on the European continent, was held here. We had gotten hold of a special service unit to furnish us with a band. We had made arrangements in town for a hall to house the affair, and our kitchen had prepared cake and refreshments for the occasion. We were all set. All that was needed now to make the affair a success were the women.

The night of the dance arrived, the band arrived, the Rangers arrived, the refreshments arrived, but alas and alack, where in the heck were the women. What an embarrassing situation. Ten soldiers for every girl present. What few damsels that did come couldn't dance to American music. What a night, most of the fellows decided to take off on their own to find a partner to bring to the dance. I guess some of these men must have found the woman they were searching for, yet somehow or other they never did come back. Others who were making a tour of the bars and cafes in search of feminine companions got themselves into a condition where they couldn't come back. By the time it rolled around to say adieu, there was hardly a soul in the dance hall. What an affair,



but I doubt if there was a one that didn't have a good time that night, one way or another.

It was also in this area that we got the honor of having Lt. Gen. Simpson (CG of the Ninth Army) to review and address us. It was a feather in the cap for us Rangers to receive this privilege, as it isn't every day one can get one of these big boys away from his duties to pay his respects and tributes to your outfit. He heaped his praise on us Rangers for our fine work and efforts. He personally pinned several medals and decorations on the breasts of certain individuals who had earned them either on D-day or in the Brest campaign. Cameramen and news photographers, who were present, made this a complete field day. All in all this gave us good reason for the celebration that followed that evening.

During our mission of guarding the Ninth army headquarters, we received an enemy paratroop alert that found us all prepared and ready to go into action against these enemies.

I can't recall the exact day it happened, but it came about in the hours of early morn. We were sound asleep, dreaming blissfully of better days to come, when out of the dark night the guards started to waken us. We were informed of the situation, which happened to be enemy paratroopers dropping in our near vicinity and threatening army headquarters. We hastily dressed, grabbed our weapons and donned our equipment. A slight downfall of rain had turned our area into a mud hole and had turned the night into pitch blackness. We boarded our vehicles, which had been standing by, and set out to contact the enemy. It was cold, miserable rainy night. We arrived at our assembly area in town to gain further information of the situation. We learned that we were too late as the enemy had already been taken care of by other friendly units into whose area the troopers had landed. Being there was no need for us, there was just one thing we could do, and that was to go back to our holes and try to make up for all our lost slumbers. We again boarded our vehicles, cursed all the fates, and all those responsible for this deal and went back to our camp. We got back drenched to the skin, more asleep than awake. We hit our tents, took up our prone horizontal positions, and resumed our acquaintances with

dreamland.

On October 21, or after an approximate stay of three weeks in this area, we received the order to strike tents. We packed our equipment, rolled our rolls, and once more set ourselves to make a new journey to new lands. We entrucked and prepared to hit the road. We were seventy enlisted men and three officers. Our spirits were excellent and morale never better. Once more we were to cross a national border. This time we were to cross the Belgium line and to enter the garden nation of Luxembourg, to continue in our duties as guardians and protectors, only this time we were with the First Army of the 12th Army Op., and attached to our old friends of the Brest Campaign, the 8th Corps.

## Esch, Luxembourg

### Chapter IV

Of all the places and towns we've had the pleasure of stopping at, in our travels over the continent, about the most pleasant and most enjoyable stop we made was the time we visited at Esch, Luxembourg. Even today, when the reverent name of Esch is mentioned a faraway and dreamy look appears in the eyes of those fortunate ones who had the privilege of being there and a hush descends upon the assembly as memories of happy, by-gone days are revived and relived.

For the first time since our stay at St. Jean De Daye, France, we were to be billeted indoors, in nice, clean barracks which had formerly housed the members of the Hitler Jugend Movement in this area. We had a splendid set up and had the use of all facilities that such a camp would naturally possess.

Not only were we freed from leading an outdoor life, which at this time of the year was highly undesirable, but we had the comforts of a warm barracks, a day and recreation room, shower room, and latrine facilities. This is the kind of home a soldier dreams of when he is in a foxhole.

Moreover, we were in approximate distance to the charming city of Esch, where many a gay and happy moment was frivolously squandered, where the wine and whiskey flowed freely and where the girls were more than friendly to our advances.

Our duties here were of rear echelon functions, so that we were able to take advantage of our administrative duties by going to town nightly or as often as we were permitted. Outside of a light training schedule that occupied our daylight hours, we were free to enjoy our evenings in any way or manner we saw fit.

We never had to bother about laundry or having our OD's neat and pressed, since for a few cigarettes or a D" bar we could get all these things done, as well as any repairs or sewing for which we had need of.

Since Esch was very much the equivalent of Arlon as a center of attraction, it had the similar movie houses, cafes, bake shops, stores, photo shops, etc. that one found in Arlon. There were the same ice cream parlors about so that there could be seen in these parlors the same group of Rangers who indulged in this favorite American pasttime of eat-

ing ice cream and cake. I believe that the city of Esch is about the closest thing that I've seen, that could compare with our smaller sized cities back in the States.

We were about the only American troops in the area, so that we had full run of the town. I don't think there was one of us that lacked companionship as the women situation here was excellent, not to mention plentiful.

The people were most friendly and courteous. In our short stay here, strong chains of friendship were made. Many of the residents were well-learned and could speak English well, so that the lingual handicaps no longer barred us from their intimacy.

Our company, meanwhile, had one addition made to its officer personnel. We received Lt. Wilson from our own headquarters company to give us overstrength in this department for the first time since Brest. We made a good gain when Lt. Wilson joined our company as his merits and skill under future combat conditions proved him to be the fine Ranger officer that he is.

Our morale and spirits were never better, and it's no wonder as we have never had it better than when we were here. So, when our day of departure rolled about, we packed our belongings in dismal silence and prepared to load onto our vehicles.

That day, November 3, saw us saying our farewells to the people from our initial starting point in the town. With sad adieus and fond au revoirs, we rode off into the distant horizon to a new base of operations somewhere in Belgium.

## Raeran, Belgium

### Chapter V

The pains and miseries of a cold November day was very much present on our journey that brought us through the north of Luxembourg into Belgium that morning. For seven cruel hours we endured this frost while we huddled closer to one another for mutual protection against this wintry onslaught.

Our new campsite was to be in an orchard off a secondary road that led to the main highway which linked the city of Raeran to Eupen. We were just inside the German border and for some of us, it gave us our first chance to cross this line and to enter the Third Reich.

The weather had taken a distinct turn for the worse. Rain, snow, and mud plagued our bivouac area the entire duration of our stay. It wasn't long before our field was turned into a mud hole and swamp. Deep ruts which were left by our vehicles and also by the vehicles and tanks of neighboring units didn't help this situation any. Three times daily we had to traverse this swamp to reach our open-aided kitchen. Although our kitchen was no more than fifty or seventy-five yards away, we always worked up somewhat of an appetite just in getting over there across this knee-deep sump-hole.

The road outside was no better off. The rain and snow plus the absence of laborers had turned these lanes of communications into slimy, slippery and muddy avenues of transportation. Our Armies engineers fought and worked gallantly to keep these supply routes open and did a valiant job of it, but still many a vehicle would fall into a mud bank and be held there until a release could be effected with the aid of either another vehicle or a bulldozer.

While we were here, we got ourselves married. (Army speaking) We became engaged and hitched to "Combat Command" which was composed of units of the 5th Armored Division, plus a reconnaissance outfit and a platoon of TD's. From then on we were to have been mechanized and part of an armored task force.

A combat mission was handed down to our company while we were here. We were supposed to have tested our new partnership, but due to certain circumstances, this job was never carried out. Our mission was to have been to take couple of Siegfried line towns

and then to push onward to a final objective. But, it appears we couldn't cross our line of departure until units of the 28th Division had taken the heavily defended town of Schmidt, so that they could protect our flanks and act as a hinge for us to pivot on, in our attack. Well, the doughboys of the infantry unit accomplished their mission, but sustained terrific casualties in doing so. When the enemy launched a strong counter-attack, those brave soldiers couldn't hold on to the ground they had so courageously won and they had to relinquish that key town. For two days we waited fully equipped to go forth as soon as the 28th Division regained the town, but continual enemy reinforcements in men, artillery and other materials from their reserve positions in the Cologne area held them off, so that our mission was cancelled before we even had a chance to start out. All we could do then was to shrug our shoulders, unpack and prepare to settle down as best as was able in this mired area.

We made a recreation room of a basement in the house that bordered our field. It was a fairly roomy place and the owner was a friendly civilian who didn't mind our using this part of his house. There were some chairs, stools, and a couple of tables so we turned this into our gambling and writing den. At night, we would find refuge and a better place to sleep in, in the barns that surrounded our area. This was much better than sleeping in our open pup tents and on the camp ground.

A surprise inspection tour by our Supreme Commander, Gen. Eisenhower with Gen. Omar Bradley, plus their entourage, gave many of us our first opportunity to see these high officers at close quarters. It was a nice feeling to think that these B.T.O.'s had taken precious time from their never-ending labors to come down and see how the lowly fighting men exist. A couple of our men got the chance to speak to these great men and even today, they recall the exact words of those short, but never-to-be-forgotten conversations.

Since our campsite was situated in a locality that was enclosed and enveloped by key military cities, such as Veriers, Liege, Eupen, Malmedy, we were constantly subjected to the threat of that new secret weapon of the Nazi superminds, the buzz bomb, or rocket. These missiles of death would fly over our area several times during the day and quite frequently during the night. Although they flew overhead, none ever landed in our immediate vicinity. A few did drop near enough to cause the earth under us to quake and

shiver as a hula-hula dancer's sarong in a storm.

On November 14 our battalion received a combat mission, so on that morning we struck tents, threw all our belongings into our dufflebags, rolled our rolls, and prepared to move out. That afternoon found us detrucking at our forward assembly area in the Hurtgen Forest. Snow had begun to fall while the frost and cold was making life very miserable for us. Our company strength was seventy-one enlisted men and four officers. Discomforts caused by the weather had us all bitching and cursing. We were mad, we wanted to get at the enemy who was causing us all these agonies. We were sore enough to tackle him bare-fisted. I'm happy to state, though, that we didn't as God only knows it was a tough enough job to man handle the enemy with all the steel and metal that was at our command.





BOOK III

GERMANY

- I. The Seigfried Line
  1. Germeter (Hell's Corner--Hurtgen Forest)
  2. Hurtgen Forest (Rear Assembly Area)
  3. Bergstein (Hill 400)
  4. Hurtgen Forest Again
- II. Battle of the Bulge
  1. Simmerath
  2. Roetgen
  3. Schmidthof
- III. Crossing of the Roer
  1. Wollseifen
  2. Kalterherberg
  3. Dedenborn
- IV. From the Roer to the Rhine
  1. March 2 till March 5
  2. March 5 till Maychoss
  3. Maychoss
- V. Rhine till V-E Day
  1. March 26 till May 8

## THE BATTLE OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE

Although some of us had crossed the German border previously, this was to be our company's first crossing as a whole with a set purpose and mission in mind. We were to pit ourselves against the enemy's vaunted Siegfried Line defenses. So that afternoon, after we'd been alightly briefed and oriented on a fluid situation, we formed in an approach march column and proceeded to our zone of action, via the Hurtgen Forest.

The weather continued to be bad with a wet snow dogging our every footstep. We were loaded down with our full packs which contained the precious fuels of combat, plus our rations. Under our arms, or strapped over our packs, we carried our sleeping material, which weighed us down like a ton of bricks. Since the temperature had dropped down to about freezing, we had our overcoats on. All in all we were well laden down before our journey ever started.

The muddy and sloppy roads made each step of our's one of torture. Slime and filth bedecked our shoes and mud splotches blended into the wetness of our outer garments. The hilly roads that twisted and spiralled through the forest was a handicap that the stoutest of Rangers could hardly overcome. Men dropped out for short breathers, while others lagged in the rear. This march was far more gruelling and more fatiguing than the severest speed march we'd ever taken.

At a point about one half mile from the town guides came forward to lead us to our positions. We had to go cross-country, since enemy artillery had the road net in this area under fire. Over fallen limbs, through felled tree branches, across slushy paths, we traveled. No one uttered a sound. We entered the town (Germeter) where we held up for a short while as a conference by the B.T.O.'s was being held to make formal arrangements with friendly units therein.

We were now attached to the 28th Infantry of V Corps. Our mission was to relieve the 2nd Battalion of the 112th Infantry Reg't. Our task was purely a defensive one as our mission was to hold our army's line, protect the flanks of two infantry units working in this sector, and to repel all counter-attacks. We had to be especially alert for infiltrating enemy patrols, as these groups were gaining lots of information and causing disturbances in rear headquarters.

We took up our positions in the town, occupying four houses. We were most fortunate that observation had been extremely poor due to the weather conditions and that no enemy artillery came whopping down on us. It had taken us some time to affect the relief of the friendly troops and we had been out in the open a good while, very much vulnerable to a shelling.

I will never forget that first night for two reasons. One, it seems as though the house our group was to occupy had a large object at the side of the entrance, so while we were waiting for the house to be cleared of troops, a few of us sat down on this immobile object. It wasn't til morning that we found out that our seat of last night was nothing else than a big, fat, bloated cow, which had been struck down by shrapnel. Then also, that night we pulled guard by a wood pile at a corner of the house. When daylight came, we found a better position to set up our outpost. So, the next night we set up in a haystack just outside the back of the house. It was a most fortunate change as during the second night, a large shell landed right in the exact spot we had pulled duty the first night. I'm sure there would have been two members of Able company very much absent had we not changed places.

We spent our first night in Germeter in comparative tranquility. Some shells landed nearby, and every so often the enemy drew up a self-propelled tossend direct fire into the town. On the whole, though, the enemy activity was light.

Our first morning, as was to be expected, was spent in acquainting ourselves with the immediate surroundings. We could look about the town from our inside positions and note the turmoiled conditions of the neighboring terrain. The road to our front was just a series of shell holes and the nearby fields were one hole after another. What little trees there were, were uprooted or shell-scarred. The houses, themselves, were in fairly good condition, but there wasn't one that wasn't airconditioned, or holy from direct hits or from shrapnel. Farther down the road by a junction, the houses were completely razed, and the woods to our left front bore very good proof that they had been thru combat.

Our own houses were in fairly good condition, although they were well-marked and scarred by the ravishes of war. They stood as yet defiant and habitable. To our front

stood the high ground that gave us the proof of the considerable advantage which the enemy had in observation plus giving us the advance notice of toughness of the battles to come.

That morning, it was a bit cloudy and observation was shrouded, but when the afternoon came and the skies cleared up, the artillery came hurtling down on us. So far, the shelling had been negligible, but that afternoon we received a thorough concentration. Luckily our houses bore the brunt of the barrage and withstood the savageness of the attack. No casualties were sustained, but our morale wasn't raised any higher.

Artillery fell intermittently that day, so that we did have some cause for sweating. We pulled our guard duty, ever on the alert, always on the watch, but no signs were seen or heard of the enemy.

The following day we received orders to dig slit trenches in our back yards so that in case of enemy counter-attacks we'd have a compact and continuous skirmish line to fight from. We ventured outdoors under the cover of early morning cloudiness and dug our trenches. We returned to our houses on completion of our holes. Enemy shelling had interrupted our diggings a couple of times, but no one got hurt.

That afternoon, when the sun came out and the clouds disbursed, a terrific enemy bombardment made our fox-holes deeper and wider and had us all in the basement repenting our evil ways of life via our prayers. We surmised that the enemy on seeing our new positions gathered that new troops were in the area and that this was his way of welcoming us.

For one week we stayed at these same positions, sweating out enemy barrages and seeking cover every time he opened up with his self-propelled. We sustained a few casualties that caused evacuation, as well as some who were hit but remained on active duty. Our movement was highly restricted as enemy observation put all the roads under constant surveillance. No one left the houses except for missions. We set up visiting patrols to give us contact with the neighboring units and we repelled a couple of enemy patrols trying to infiltrate our positions. We got a couple of enemy soldiers for our efforts.

We took advantage of the fact that we were living indoors in that we had certain facilities to make our habitat more comfortable. We had stoves, so that at all times hot

water boiled for our coffee. Of course, our heating system wasn't as elaborate as back home, since we could only burn one cake of coal at a time in order that no sparks or smoke would be emitted from the chimneys. We didn't mind this, as after all, this was much better than being in an outdoor foxhole. We had a concrete basement, so, whenever time for sleeping rolled around, we could go down and doze away our off hours in comparative safety. Of course, these damp, dark, dirty cellars weren't the healthiest place in the world to sleep in, but they did afford a good measure of precaution. Our latrine was the barns that adjoined our houses. They weren't much, yet it was a nice feeling to know that while we excreted, we couldn't be embarrassed by having to withdraw under certain distressing conditions during an enemy shelling. Of course, the odor and stench of the place after a few days of living here wasn't the sweetest smell we've ever sniffed, but after a time we grew used to these nuisances.

Each day enemy action caused our nerves to become more frayed and spirits to become lower. A constant diet of "K" rations left us physically exhausted and the never-ending dread of a direct hit upon our houses always gave us reason for concern. There's now worse feeling than to be in a position in combat where you can't help yourself. All we could do was to stay in our houses and sweat out artillery barrages and self-propelled fire. We couldn't move about because at any sign of life or movement, enemy action was sure to be taken. We had no enemy targets to return fire upon, so that we were never able to rid ourselves of the pent-up emotions that we had for the dirty bastards.

But if we thought things were rough here, we were badly mistaken in that concept. Baker company who had taken up a defensive position a few days after its arrival in a corner of the forest to our left front had sustained terrific casualties and had suffered the tortures that only the hells of war and winter can impose upon human beings. They were so depleted and exhausted that a relief was necessitated. It fell upon Able company to effect this relief.

On November 20 Lt. Edlin took a visiting patrol to the Baker company area and made a reconnaissance. He also completed arrangements for their relief. A slight misfortune arose when during an evacuation of a wounded man, a mine was set off and the Lt. received

some shrapnel in his hand. Refusing to be hospitalized, the Lt. returned to the company and on the next night led us to our new positions.

It was late in the evening of November 21 when we moved out. The night was pitch black; the cold winds which blew caused chills to run up and down our spines. The countryside provided an eerie and supernatural sight with its tangled maze of fallen trees, foliage and razed houses. We entered the mess of brushwood and branches which gave egress to our positions. The footpath which led to our new positions was an obstacle course in itself. One of our BAR men tripped over a fallen log and broke his ankle and had to be evacuated. We affected the relief of B Co. and took up our positions in the damp, cold holes which they had dug. Water had filled these holes so that it felt as though we were entering an icy path. All we had to sop up this lake with was one shelterhalf and one blanket.

Enemy shelling was negligible that night, so that we were able to accomplish our mission without further injuries or casualties. We set up a defensive position within our holes, having one man out of the two-man holes pull guard, while the other slept. That night was one of misery, coldness and dampness.

Morning arrived and brought with it one of the most tremendous barrages of mortar fire we've ever encountered in combat. Two separate direct hits on our entrenchments killed one of our men (Tex Remmers) outright and inflicted mortal wounds on another (Anderson). There were other casualties which called for evacuation. A cave-in of one of the slit trenches buried a couple of others who were dug out in time but who had to be evacuated for concussion.

Evacuation was a complete mission in itself. The only connection we had with the outside was the small path that brought us to this position. It was so obliterated and so strewn with trees, limbs, and branches that every step necessitated a leap or jump. To add to this obstacle, so reflexly concealed mines and boob-traps confined our movements to within the bounds of the path. It was a fatiguing journey to carry a man on the stretcher over this route. It was most tiresome and the ever-lurking menace of an enemy concentration of artillery, mortar and self-propelled at any moment made these journeys dar-

ing escapades. Great tribute must be paid to the men who carried the emblem of the Red Cross on their arms, who so bravely and so repeatedly risked their lives to bring the wounded to a place where medical and surgical treatment could be given. Today, many of our friends are alive due to these men's valor and courage.

Our first view of our surroundings gave us the knowledge that these woods had suffered the horrible consequences of battle. Not a tree stood unmarked. There was enough trees down so that the Germans will have no need to cut another one down for a long time. What must have been a beautiful forest was now a mess of uprooted and overturned trees. Ugly cuts and rips showed exactly where the limbs and branches were sheared off and crater holes literally dotted the area.

All that morning the shells came whizzing in all sizes and millimeter. These woods were an important key to the entire Siegfried Line defenses and the enemy was trying to retain possession of the forest. It was a miracle that we weren't all killed or wounded during these shellings. We had so many narrow calls that it became routine features of our lives. Our blankets and equipment which lay on the outside of our holes or in the inside were peppered with small pieces of shrapnel. How our bodies missed all these tiny missiles of death, I'll never know. All we could do during the barrages was to sweat and pray and between shellings, dig deeper.

All that day and night we suffered in these holes. Enemy patrols which were combing the area lurked nearby. We held our fire for fear of giving our position away too soon without finding out the enemy's real strength. Some small arms were fired in our general direction so as to draw us into a firefight, but since our mission was purely defensive we didn't return the fire. Enemy artillery fell intermittently. Our own counter-batteries were giving us close support. We could clearly ascertain our AP's (white phosphorous) dropping within 200 yards of our holes. The sprays of hot, molten lead that spread out into fantastic designs when these shells landed covered the woods with white smoke and put an acrid odor into the air.

The following day, which was Thanksgiving, found us in these same dreary trenches. Frost and dampness were making our lives unbearable. Some men were suffering from frost-



bite and had to have medical attention in the rear. Shelling was as heavy as ever and three more of our boys had to be evacuated. Our company was thinning down like a prisoner at Buchenwald. Our only chance to combat the frost was some fox-hole exercises, and the only way we could combat the physical foe was to bar his attempts to break through our lines.

That day we sent out patrols to search the area to our front. They were to be especially watchful for minefields as other units were to be advancing over this terrain. Other patrols, meanwhile, were sent to contact friendly units on our flanks. Ration and water details were sent to the rear.

For our Thanksgiving dinner we supplemented our "K" rations with "D" bar which we ate for dessert. I'm afraid there weren't many of us who had reason to be thankful that day.

Enemy barrages were heavy all that day and a couple of boys who were suffering from concussion had to go to the rear. Our morale might have been low, but our fighting spirit was as good as ever although we had nothing material to fight.

Another miserable night was spent in these icy-watersoaked holes. A slight drizzle that fell didn't do our waning morale any good. Enemy artillery was negligible, but we were subjected to some small-arms and sniper's fire. Morning came and more shelling came. This time it wasn't so heavy. We believed that our counter-batteries were beginning to take their toll of the enemy and that they were losing a great deal of their fire power. Also, friendly units who were on our flanks began to advance forward and the enemy was placing more fire on them.

We sent out patrols that day to clear out our front of the enemy. We also sent out our usual visiting patrol to contact friendly units on the flanks. We were fortunate that day, as no casualties were suffered from enemy action, though a few of the men had to go to the rear for treatment of trenchfoot.

That afternoon found us in the rear as friendly units bypassed our positions. The enemy had long been cleared out of these positions but terrific shelling and pounding had denied us this ground. Enemy artillery still fell in our positions and it was con-

sidered very foolish to leave our hole at any time under any circumstances. A couple of more cases of frostbite, and our company took on the appearance of an understrength platoon.

Our last night in these holes were spent in comparative quiet and comfort. Details, which were sent to the rear to bring up additional sleeping material, brought back the much needed equipment. Extra socks were also furnished, so for the first time in three solid days we had the opportunity to have a dry pair of socks on our feet. Enemy activity was negligible. Some artillery and mortars landed in our vicinity. No foot patrols or small arms fire were encountered. Even the weather took a turn for the better, as the bright moon lighted up the sky. It looked as though Miss Good Fortune was smiling on us at last.

The next morning found us in another barrage in which one casualty was sustained. Outside of that, enemy shelling was fair. That afternoon, we were finally relieved and we returned to our defensive positions in town. After four nights and three and a half days we were at last free of these holes of death and misery. What untold sufferings we had endured will never be known. It's small wonder when we recall this part of the Hurtgen Forest, we refer to it as Hell's Corner and Purple Heart Forest.

We took up our old mode of living in the houses in Germeter. Some of the boys who had left the holes for medical reasons were on hand to welcome us back. They had just taken treatments and had taken up a position in town to act as counter-attacking reserve.

A quick count of men present gave the score of fifty-seven enlisted men and three officers. I couldn't guarantee the combat efficiency of half the men present as I'm sure that if these men had not been Rangers they would have been in hospitals relaxing and recuperating, instead of hanging around, ready to take part in active battle if ever the emergency arose.

For two days our company remained in town. Enemy artillery and self-propelled continued to fall intermittently, but no casualties were sustained. After living in these exposed slit trenches, this indoor life was a haven of Paradise. Our one coal fire was a source of warmth and pleasure. Hot coffee was constantly being brewed. Our cold toot-

sies were thawed out. We caught up with lost sleep and we felt a certain safety in being in these enclosed and well-constructed houses.

On November 29 we were completely relieved. We reverted to reserve troops of Corps and took up a rear position in the Hurtgen Forest. There we underwent certain rear ex-helon functions.

We had accomplished our first mission on German soil and although we had no physical gains to show for our valiant efforts, the facts were still very much in evidence. We had been thrown into a sector which was the key position of the entire Siegfried Line. Repeated and constant shelling of all kinds of enemy pieces had not budged us from our positions. We had defended and secured the flanks of the 8th Inf. Div. and 5th Arm. Inf. and had linked these units into one continuous fighting chain. We had repelled every and each attempt of the enemy to counter-attack or infiltrate in our sector and we had actively cleared out and secured the area to our front.

We had endured all the torments of combat. We had withstood the wintry onslaught of frost and rain and we knew the sufferings of our wounded comrades. We had sweated out everything and anything that was humanly possible for the enemy to fire at us. Artillery, mortar, small arms and self-propelled. These were all in a Ranger's day's work.

Our morale might have slipped a little as the shells whined overhead and our feet might have smarted under the touch of the cold and dampness, but our fighting spirit never wavered or courage ever diminished. Although we had undergone all the cruelties that only our advanced civilization could have produced, there wasn't one of us that had any doubt as to what the outcome of the struggle would be. Our advancing armies who had used us as a pivot point in their attacks had gained the ground for which they had fought. This atoned for all our labors and agonies and appeased our tortured minds and bodies.

## HURTGEN FOREST (REAR ASSEMBLY AREA)

We were tired and battle weary Rangers that day. We had to travel back over the same route that had brought us to Germeter. Our arrival at our rear assembly area saw a group of worn-out and fatigued bodies sprawled about the area waiting to find a place to call home.

The two weeks we had spent under these arduous conditions had put a heavy mental strain on us, so now it was a delicious feeling of relief to know that we were some distance in the rear with friendly troops separating us from the enemy.

Our new homes were log cabins which were constructed by our brother companies who had pulled back to this area a couple days previously. They were crude pieces of construction that consisted of logs piled up on one another to form an open box. They were wide enough to house four or five men fairly comfortably and they stood about three feet off the ground. They afforded excellent protection against shrapnel and small arms fire.

For reasons of waterproofing and blackout, we draped pine boughs all over these logs and threw shelter halves and blankets on top of that. This afforded some protection against the snow and rain and also gave us a good wind breaker effect against the cold, wintry days and nights.

The forest at this time of year was slushy and swampy. Bare and open spots gave the evidence to the fact that we had put the trees in these spots to good use. Many trees bore the same markings and scars as others encountered in our battles. What little footpaths there were, were of little value, due to the swampiness of the place. We never did like this area as the surroundings gave one the impression of being hemmed in. It was dreary and desolate and very depressing.

Our battalion underwent a new reorganization and unification. The half-track platoon of headquarters were disbanded and the men from that section found their way to other line companies. We received six of these men. These men were veteran Rangers and had all come in on their vehicles on D-day. We also received one man from "C" company, so that our company took on the aspect of a good-sized outfit.

Our boys were relaxing and taking things easy and trying to forget their trying times at Germeter and Hell's Corner. Fires blazed all day in front of our little cabins.

The friendly flames warmed our bodies. We whiled away all our leisure moments around these fires. Gossiping and shooting the bull were our favorite pastime in amusing ourselves. Letter-writing and book-reading were about the only extracurricular activities we indulged in. We went about our functions in a routine and half-hearted manner. Life seemed to be absent. The only spirit and joie de vive could be found only around chow time, as then we took on a new and effervescent spryness.

Although our area was a good distance to the rear from the actual front lines, we were still in range of the enemy's artillery. Every once in a while mostly during the evening and night we'd be subjected to some shelling. This fire was inaccurate and we were fortunate in that our company didn't sustain any wounded. One unhappy incident befell "C" company when a shell struck a tree and caused an air burst in their area. They were just having a briefing and orientation and were grouped together when the shell burst. Two men were killed and several others seriously wounded.

We were loafing the days away in a carefree and contented manner, when someone at headquarters got the bright idea that we were getting sluggish and fat due to our laxness in physical training. So on December 3 the battalion was ordered to go on a tactical march for an hour.

The day was fair and the skies clear. The road was a bit muddy, but walkable. We had about completed our march when out of the clear blue skies came the drone of enemy aircraft. They were coming in perpendicularly to the road and were flying really hell-bent for election. Our ground defenses put up a deafening barrage and completely filled the skies with puffs of smoke, flak, and machine-gun tracers. We dispersed quicker than one can bat an eye and found refuge at random. Enemy machine guns clattered and sprayed the road we had just so horrendously left. Bullets were whistling about and falling flak had us all perspiring. When the sound of friendly planes were heard, we all sighed with relief as already the Heiny bastards were taking off for parts unknown. We reorganized and reformed in the road and continued our march as though nothing had occurred.

All the while we were in the forest, we had hopes of being relieved and sent to a rest camp as this area wasn't exactly an ideal spot for relaxation and for forgetting

things pertaining to the war.

On December 6 we got word to move, but not in the wanted direction we had longed for. So we rolled our rolls and stacked our dufflebags which we had left behind and prepared once more to face the enemy. We were fifty-four enlisted men and four officers. We erased the disappointment that was written all over our faces, boarded our vehicles, and rode into the fray with our curses and battle cry on our lips.

## BERGSTEIN (HILL 400)

It had been fairly late in the evening when we moved out. It must have been about 10 p.m. as I distinctly recall we had sat about our cabins, waiting for the company commanders to finish their orientations and briefings. Information was very meagre and what little we could ascertain was of very little value to us soldiers.

We did learn that we were to be on the offensive this time. Our mission was to take Hill 400, which lay about one half mile east of Bergstein, which was then our Army's farthest penetration into the East.

We rode our vehicles in complete silence and darkness. We were huddled together like little lambs at the slaughter house. A cold wind plus a slight drizzle were dampening our spirits and soaking us thoroughly, making our very existence miserable. We detrucked at a turn-about, which was a good four miles from the actual front. The reason was that any further progress of the vehicles would come under enemy shelling range and give our entry away. We wanted our entrance to be of a secret nature, so as to effect a surprise attack.

We proceeded to go the rest of the way on foot. On our route, we passed the many tanks and vehicles which had given their all. This mute testament to the heavy battle which our gallant soldiers have fought was sufficient proof of the rough going that lay ahead. Battered and discarded hulls of giant tanks littered the nearby fields and sides of the road. Vehicles of all descriptions and of both nations were plentiful and pathetic to behold as they lay in their positions of death.

We were laden down with supplies and equipment and the tedious trip was beginning to make itself felt on our physical being. Artillery pieces from both sides were opening up and we found ourselves in the midst of a duel. We continued our march until we reached the outskirts of the town. A halt was declared, as artillery was making shambles of the town. We took some cover beside the half-tracks and tanks which had been knocked out and had been left standing as roadblocks in the middle of the road. Our colonel, who had made a hasty reconnaissance of the area, had selected his C.P. and had further briefed the C.O.'s.

Enemy shells were landing close and we were lucky not to have received any casual-

ties. Men were lying under the half-tracks and in the ditches on the side of the road. Control was lax, but never lost. Our company received the mission of taking up a defensive position on the eastern outskirts of town and to contain all the enemy to our front. The actual assault of the objective (Hill 400) fell to D, E, & F. companies. We were to act as flank protection and as a counter-attacking force.

Guides were supposed to have led us to our defensive position, but somehow or other they never did show up. So our own officers took on the responsibility of leading us on their own initiative plus map reconnaissance.

We advanced slowly through the town, which was still receiving intermittent fire. We were well deployed, but held our formations. We proceeded with the utmost precaution, stopping only when a shell whizzed by, hitting the ditches at each explosion. The town was no more than a razed and skeleton form of a village. Several fires still burned at spots which were once houses and the streets were littered with fallen debris.

It was a little after 3 a.m. when we reached our sector or action. We were most fortunate that the Heinies had so obligingly left a series of trenches in his wake, so that we had a swell arrangement. This was a sweet answer to a tired and weary Ranger's prayer. We were all played out and it was with great relief that we welcomed these entrenchments.

Enemy shelling plus a cold drizzle were adding to our hardships. We remained all night here, enduring these torments. We prayed for success for our brother companies D, E, & F., who were scheduled to make their assault early in the morning.

When dawn broke, we spotted enemy activity and vehicular motion to our front at a distance of 500 to 600 yards. We held our fire and called for artillery to fire a missile for us. The results were excellent as we observed and zeroed in the shells. An enemy counter-barrage wounded two of our men and they were sent to the rear.

D, E, & F companies, meanwhile, radioed in mission completed, but were under going a terrific bombardment of enemy shells of all sizes and descriptions. They sustained heavy casualties but retained possession of their objective. All that morning these stout handful of Rangers were being counter-attacked. The enemy was throwing everything he had



and if a kitchen sink had fallen in their sector, these men on the hill wouldn't have been surprised in the least. These artillery concentrations were generally followed by a wave of enemy foot-troops, but these gallant Rangers beat them off. Every attempt of the Kraut to regain a foothold of the ground they had lost, was stymied. Our own artillery was giving them excellent supporting fire and had tremendously aided in keeping the enemy disbursed and confused. The Heiny dead were piling up in stacks all about the hill, but still they came on for more. The Rangers obliged them by giving them all they wanted.

As for our company, we were undergoing all kinds of shelling. Enemy tanks, which were dug in to the northeast of us (Schmidt area) were constantly booming. Every so often, the Heinies would pull up a self-propelled and open fire on us. Then they would withdraw to a concealed and prepared position before we could spot it and call forth our artillery. Some small arms and sniper fire harassed us, but didn't cause too much concern.

All afternoon, we sweated out one barrage after another. Again we were like ducks in a shooting gallery, letting other people use us as targets while we lay on our stomachs not able to do a thing but pray and sweat.

Men were trying to catch up on some sleep since weariness was beginning to become apparent. We munched our "K" rations and everyone had a glassy and half-dazed stare in his eyes. I honestly believe that if our previous training had not been of super quality there would have been a lot of us today in sanitariums playing Napoleon or Queen of the May or whatever they play in the booby-hatches.

That night, we moved into positions in the town, itself, to take up a reserve counter-attack force for the men on the hill. Furthermore, we were alerted to be especially watchful for infiltration which was trying to cut off our men on the hill from their bases of supply and communication in town. Also, some snipers had reentered the town and their burp-guns had caused some confusion and casualties to some friendly troops.

Enemy artillery and S.P. fire continued the reduction of the town to shambles. We suffered casualties when shrapnel found a target in the bodies of two of our men as we

entered the town. We set up in a couple of beat-up, but habitable houses off the road that led from battalion headquarters to the hill at the outskirts of the town.

Consistent enemy shelling which came in non-ending barrages had us all worried. We were extremely fortunate that the Jerries had built their houses strong. I'm afraid if it weren't for the reinforced concrete basements in these houses, this author may not have been able to write this story.

The closest call we had came when an enemy shell crashed thru the outer wall of the building the 1st platoon were housed in, penetrated into the hallway where the guard stood posted and landed as a dud on top of the basement the platoon was gathered in. Everytime anyone wanted to quit the cellar and go outside, he had to make a round circle as to avoid making contact with the dud. The 1st platoon boys weren't too happy about the fact either that another close hit may have set this shell off. Thank God, it never was exploded.

We had held ourselves in immediate preparedness to rush to the aid of the companies on the hill as reports came in to the effect that they were being counter-attacked. We donned our equipment and were all set to move to the rescue. But the gallant Rangers on the hill didn't need our help as they continued to mow the enemy down and manhandle the Kraut every time he was foolish enough to storm the hill.

We spent the night in these same positions, fully on the alert to move out if needed. We never were needed. Enemy artillery continued to fall and self-propelled opened up every so often. That morning, we underwent one to the most horrendous enemy barrages and concentrations we have had the displeasure to be subjected to. For forty-five minutes, without the slightest interruption, the shells rained down all about us. Several direct hits were scored on our structures, but outside of concussion and fright, we escaped unscathed. Incredibly, not one casualty was sustained.

That afternoon misfortune struck at Battalion Headquarters. A direct hit landed in the command post and killed our beloved surgeon instantaneously. It was a great blow as "Doc" Block was about the most like officer in the battalion. He had come in at the Pointe, D-day. His heroism and bravery had won for him our honest respects and got him

a D.S.C. for his brave and valiant efforts. "Requiem in Pace," "Doc" we surely miss you. Also, an untimely request from higher headquarters deprived us of the services of our Battalion C.O. Lt. Col. Rudder. It appears as though a regiment needed our C.O.'s services more than did our battalion, so we lost our faithful leader to the desired of the big dealers, and we gained Major Williams as our new Battalion C.O. (He was formerly executive officer.)

One nice thing did happen to our outfit though while we were here. The Army's new rotation system finally caught up to our unit and our company was most fortunate in placing five men to go home on furlough. Each man had the necessary requirements which was two medals plus six months combat or hospital period. Paradoxically enough, these men hated to leave us in this period of stress, but yet they couldn't afford to pass up a chance to visit their loved ones.

That evening a relief was effected for the battalion. Artillery was still raining down on us and we suffered one casualty, who had to be evacuated. Our companies on the hill were first to be relieved and then we followed; bringing up the rear was the enemy's artillery. Although we hadn't slept for two days and two nights, the boys found new-born energy, pep and vigor as they hustled out of town as fast as their legs could carry them. We fairly flew the distance between the awaiting trucks and the town. Shells were landing nearby and gave us added inspiration for our headlong but controlled flight. When we reached our vehicles, we were all perspired and thirsty. Water had not been available, so the men scooped up gobs of snow which had lain on the side of the road and used that to quench their thirst. That night, December 9, found us back in our old "Doghouse area," so nicknamed in the Hurtgen Forest.

Once more we could review our actions in combat with satisfaction. We could again pat ourselves on the back. We had gone out and had gained the most vital piece of terrain in the entire Schmidt area for our corps; we had made the farthest penetration to the east of all our armies at that time; we had undergone the most severest of shelling and direct fire that the enemy had ever concentrated in one area; we had repelled one counter-attack after another; and we had sustained heavy casualties, but had held out with undy-

ing stubbornness and unyielding tenacity. The many enemy dead who lay or were piled in heaps about the battlefield gave mute testimony to the fact that a Ranger would never surrender without a fight what he had won in mortal combat. That night when the depleted and worn-out Rangers left this zone of action, it had taken an entire infantry regiment to effect the relief.

## HURTGEN FOREST AGAIN

Again we faced this self-styled mode of living, adopted over a week ago. Although we had no love for it, there was nothing else we could do about it, so fifty-five men and three officers (Lt. Edlin had gone home on rotation) resigned themselves to the fate on hand and settled down to renew acquaintanceship with our log cabins or "doghouses."

Once more our body-warming fires blazed cheerfully in front of our cabins, but somehow or other the conversations and bull sessions were dull and uninteresting. Bergstein had taken a lot of our spirits and we had honestly believed that we deserved a better reward than these doghouses in this depressing area.

We led, dull, routine lives in this area, just existing for show call. We got a break when the battalion initiated a pass system. Each company was allowed a certain quota of men to visit Eupen, Belgium (1st armies rest center) for forty-eight hours and certain more fortunate persons were allowed seventy-two hours plus traveling time to Paris. The lucky men that got to go to Paris really had a time and I never heard any complaints about the rest center at Eupen, either, since the frivolous city of Verviers was within easy traveling distance.

Since we were in a rear, some of the boys who had contracted frost-bite and trench-foot in their stay in Hurtgen and Bergstein, now were sent to hospitals for treatment. Some of these cases were severe and we lost several men that way.

These brave men had suffered and endured all the pains and miseries of this illness and could easily have had themselves evacuated to a rear area during their stay on the front lines. But they never had complained or mentioned their pains to anyone and had fought alongside us, carrying their own tortured emotions in silence. It is this kind of individual heroism and guts that makes a soldier into a Ranger. He doesn't win a medal for his sacrifices, but he gains his own self-respect and the admiration of his fighting buddies.

Many is the time I've seen a buddy of mine maimed or wounded trying to refuse medical attention for fear that they would have to go to a rear hospital and leave their comrades open a position on the line. I'll never forget the day in the Hurtgen Forest (Hell's Corner) when a mortar shell wounded my section leader. He refused the attention of our

first aid man as it was too dangerous for our medic to expose himself to come over from the CP to attend him. So, he hobbled out to the CP without a word and then made the trek to the rear alone on a broken ankle. Normally, it would have taken four stretcher bearers to carry him through this maze of tangled branches and limbs and through the constant danger of incoming artillery. Today the sergeant is in a hospital in the States, because of wounds he sustained in the forest.

For five days we led the life of a woodsman. Cutting and chopping down trees and convertine them into firewood. We made our homes more comfortable while we passed away the time in a manner that required the least of manual labors.

On December 16 we got the very unexpected order to move forward again. We had some men out on passes and some that were undergoing treatment for trenchfoot. We were very much unprepared for any missions, yet the order had come down and had to be carried out. We threw all our belongings in our duffle b gs, rolled our rolls and prepared for action.

It was late in the afternoon when we boarded the trucks. We hadn't been oriented and even our officers were in ignorance of the situation. We road the vehicles to Roetgen which was Corps headquarters. We halted there as our officers were to be briefed and oriented here. We were now destined to enter a new phase against the Nazi superrace. This time we were to be on the defense.

## BATTLE OF THE BULGE

### Chapter II

#### SIMMERATH

For the third time within a month's period, we were to be thrown into a position where to our front lay hostile and unfriendly territory; where the slightest error or mistake in the fundamental principles of warfare would result in the loss of life; where movement and silence were restricted to the utmost and where suffering and torments were forever present.

Roetgen at this time presented a scene of chaos. Enemy paratroopers alerts had all our rear echelon troops staunchly alerted and patrols continually roamed the streets searching for infiltrating Germans. Spies were being rounded up dressed in G.I. garb and were being detained for questioning. Enemy long range artillery was dropping in the vicinity and buzz bombs were flying overhead at a rate previously unheard of. These signs and symptoms gave the warning signal that the great German counter-offensive was now in its initial stages. The battle of the Bulge was being born.

Our officers returned from their conference. We got our first briefing on the situation. Little was known of the enemy's moves and of his strength. All we knew was that he was on the offensive and that he had made some penetrations into our lines. We were now attached to the 78th Division of V corps. We were to take up a defensive position just north of the enemy's breakthrough (Simmerath) and we were to contain him in that sector. We had to be extremely careful for infiltrating patrols and spies who were causing disturbances in our rear headquarters and were harassing our front-line troops.

It was fairly late when we moved from Roetgen to Lammersdorf. There we exchanged our trucks for light tanks and completed our journey to Simmerath. Enemy shelling was light. That was a good break, as this tank-riding business was no good. We were too big a target and too exposed. Also, these tanks made enough racket to give away our approach positions for miles away.

We took up positions about 200 yards outside of town, facing the enemy from the north-east. We were set up in a dirt road that was lined on both sides with trees. This afforded us some natural shelter. It was now about 1 a.m. Shelling was negligible since

the enemy hadn't spotted our movements as yet. We dug in as best we could, but the firmness and solidity of mother earth in this vicinity parried our every effort. For security reasons we didn't try to blow ourselves holes through the employment of hand grenades and dynamite. In the first platoon's area, water was struck after a depth of no more than two feet; so that our only protection against the enemy were shallow slit trenches which we were able to dig out.

Our company was pathetically small. Our two platoons combined would barely have equaled one of our regular platoons. Our sector of action covered a large front so that we were well distributed. Instead of having a desired skirmish line with oral or hand to hand signals for contact, we were set up as a series of outposts with messengers and walkie-talkies as our only means of communication.

We were well exhausted and fatigued when we had finished our diggings. We had set up as well as was possible under our distressing circumstances, when the enemy began to pour smoke shells in and began throwing air bursts at us. It was the most ticklish situation we had ever run into. Smoke shells screened our front and prevented clear observation. The shells caused gray hairs to appear on our heads. The small number of men we had facing the enemy didn't aid the wrinkles and lines that appeared on our faces. We thought certainly an enemy counter-attack was imminent.

Buzz bunnies were being constantly sent off by the Kraut. We could ascertain their initial send off as we could see from where they were being fired. It was an interesting sight to watch as these huge rockets sped upward and then over our positions; watch as they flew thru the curtain of lead our air defenses put up and gaze with horror at the huge explosions which followed these missiles of death when reaching its destination.

Enemy aircraft was extremely active that night. Huge transports flew over our position at treetop level. We felt as though all we had to do was stick our hands up and we'd have been able to pull these planes down. I had never seen so many enemy planes in the sky at one time as I saw then.

To our rear our ground defenses were seeking out these Heiny crafts. Their giant spotlights and beams criss-crossed the skies to form patterns of X's. Ack-ack and ma-



chine gun fire lit the skies as enemy aircraft and rockets zoomed overhead. We could view the enemy unloading paratroopers. We watched as our forces sent out barrage after barrage of hot lead into these Germans, and we could feel that these Heinies were "hurting."

No one slept that night as the scene was a bedlam of confusion. Smoke and artillery had us all sweating and enemy air activity didn't do our nerves any good. No enemy foot troops or patrols were seen in our sector, so we held our fire, waited and watched.

Our own artillery was giving us excellent support. Round after round of white phosphorous landed to our immediate front. A couple of short rounds though had us wondering on whose side these artillery gunners were. We were fortunate that no casualties were sustained.

To top all this off, the enemy opened up with his nebelwarfer (rocket-thrower.) We couldn't realize for a while what had happened. So many confusing and harassing sounds were heard at one time that it momentarily stunned us. Some say it sounded like several planes strafing simultaneously, while others say it was more of a rubbing and grating sound which sent hot and cold shivers dancing up and down one's spine. The six shells that whined overhead made the sound of someone plucking telephone wires and the explosions sounded like a tornado on the rampage.

No enemy counter-attack was made that night and no casualties were sustained. The next morning found us trying to improve our positions, and trying to gain some sleep and rest. Enemy artillery was light to fair. At times, the activity would be restricted, but every so often the enemy made himself felt by sending a few rounds over.

That night engineers brought us wire so that we could better our positions. We did a fairly good job of constructing a concertina wire fence. Enemy artillery harassed our efforts, but it never more than momentarily halted our labors. We suffered one casualty when shrapnel struck one of our men. Misfortune also occurred when another shell killed one of the engineers who had been aiding us.

These nights of winter were frosty and cold so we devised a rotation plan whereas every hour a couple of men could go to our company CP (which was a house in town about

200 yards to our rear) and get himself thawed out and to perhaps brew himself a cup of coffee or heat up his "K" rations. It was a great relief to leave the dreary and monotonous holes to warm out our frozen bodies and warm up our innards with something hot.

The following day saw us in these same dugouts. We wasted the daylight hours by sweating out enemy artillery and the constant threat of an enemy counter-attack. We were lucky that no attack was pulled off and that no casualties were sustained. That evening E company of our battalion relieved us. We took up a mobile reserve position in town.

Just like Bergstein or Germeter, the town was well punished by the ravages of war; but there were several houses that stood in good condition. We obtained two of them and took up our new positions. We made ourselves at home in the basements of these houses. We prepared to get a little rest for our weary bodies.

For the first time in three days we had the opportunity to wash and shave. Since there were some beds in these underground shelters, we had the added comforts of sleeping as civilized human beings. Enemy artillery was fair to moderate in the town. One of our buildings sustained a direct hit but outside of superstructural damage, no harm was done to the personnel within.

We received seven new men while we were here, who had been recruited to appease our previous losses in combat. These soldiers who under normal circumstances would have undergone certain training and treatment to break them in for their jobs, but now due to the seriousness of the situation((the Battle of the Bulge was in its deciding stage) the youngsters were being thrown into the heat of combat without the chance to become acclimated by degrees. Having the right spirit and gumption, these men fitted into their respective places and took up their positions in the squad. They fulfilled their tasks in a manner that spoke well for the officers who were responsible for their being there, and gave credit to the men for their willingness and obedience in carrying out their assigned missions.

For two days and two nights we were in reserve. Then we moved out to relieve Baker Company, who were on line. Their positions were the ones that bordered the right flank of our original sector of action. They were well set up in Jerry communications trenches

so that we got a good deal in this exchange. Enemy shelling was intermittent. The enemy would pull off his old trick of bringing up his S.P. guns and let loose on us every so often. Then withdraw to a concealed position in the rear before we could spot it and bring our artillery to bear on it. We sent out a reconnaissance patrol that evening to search out a known enemy bunker to our front. The patrol returned with the information that no enemy personnel were using the pillbox and that it could easily be blown and made useless to the enemy.

The first platoon engaged the enemy with small arms for the first time that same evening when they spied an enemy patrol trying to infiltrate their position. They killed one Heiny and caused the rest to disburse and retreat. No damage was done to us.

That night we received another batch of new men. Since we had occupied all the entrenchments, they were made to dig their own holes. For the first time since the night we had entered Simmerath, the enemy unveiled his nebelwarfer. Two of our men were wounded and one was killed when these rockets covered our area. It was a tough break for these men to be so initiated on their very first action against the enemy. Things quieted down after this debacle and the lines remained stable with very little enemy artillery falling in our zone.

For an entire week we stayed in these same positions. We were alerted several times for probable enemy attacks, but none came. We sweated out enemy shelling and direct fire and repelled a couple of patrols from penetrating our defenses. We endured the hardships of the weather and we munched our "K" rations in silence. We pulled endless hours of guard duty and we actively patrolled our area to the front. We laid formidable wire defenses and placed anti-vehicular and anti-personnel mines to our front. Just routine duties in the lives of combat men.

On Christmas Eve, our first sergeant surprised us by throwing a little party at the C.P.'s. He had gotten the CO's permission and with the aid of some of the boys from the mortar section had fixed up a small tree and had set up a table of delicacies and candy for us. He had scraped up this sweetstuff from packages that some of our men, who had been killed, were still receiving. There was no sense in returning these packages, so

he had retained them for this purpose. I'm sure the senders of these packages would not have begrudged us this Xmas feast. Even our "K" rations tasted and smelled better that night.

On December 28 we took up a mobile reserve position in town. We had had it fairly rough in our holes so that it was nice to get out of them even for a short while. It was grand getting back into a building where we could once more acquaint ourselves with the luxuries of combat, meaning soap and water, heat and hot coffee. We could relax our wearied bodies and we could set our minds at peace.

Enemy shelling and self-propelled fire were still covering the town, so that we never were out of actual danger. Of course, our basements and cellars provided us hearty protection, but every time we exposed ourselves to certain necessary missions and details, we were always risking our lives and limbs.

For two days and two nights we stayed as battalion reserve, then we moved forward to the front lines. Again we relieved B company; but this time, we took up positions which were originally C company's. Our set-up here was much more favorable than what we had had previously, since the defense here was a series of eight outposts manned by sixteen men. This meant that only one-third of the company were needed on guard on the line. This definitely was a good break for us for the amount of guard duty was cut to one-third.

On the whole, enemy action was slackening. Unexpected mortar and artillery was still a constant menace that hung like the sword of Damocles over our heads, but as long as we took the proper precautions, we were in no immediate danger. Our company's spirit was on the upgrade. The new men had recuperated from their terrifying experience of their first night. Everyone was friendlier and more cheerful; appetites were increasing and a mutual feeling of good fellowship became more pronounced.

We spent our New Year's Eve in these positions. To welcome in the new year our artillery put on an excellent display of noise and fireworks for us. Shells were thrown at the enemy in a manner that must have made him feel very unhappy. White phosphorous shells said that he too had a hot time, but I'm afraid that the Heinies' sense of humor

didn't allow him to enjoy this merriment and this warming reception we gave him.

Snow fell on New Year's day and covered the countryside with a blanket of white. Enemy shelling had annoyed us several times during the day, but we didn't sustain any casualties. That afternoon a "must" mission was handed down to the second platoon leader from the company. It was left to him to accomplish it.

That evening at 1800, a patrol of eleven men headed by the second platoon leader glided into the open with their snow capes blending into the whiteness of the terrain. They trod noiselessly and silently. It gave one the impression of ghosts as they made their way forward. They had one set purpose in mind. That was to bring back one Jerry prisoner, alive. It was a necessity which our G-2 demanded imperatively. Enemy information was nil and our intelligence was hard up for this want of knowledge.

They moved down the middle of the main road which led to a known Heiny position. Cautiously they strode, stopping every so often, hitting the ground and becoming a part of it. Listening and scanning for the symptoms of the Jerries. They had approached within striking distance of an enemy outpost which held two Heinies. Here they were spotted by the enemy from another position about 100 yards away. Small arms and machine gun fire hailed the discovery. Our men had to seek cover and safety. All pretenses and precautions were then thrown to the winds. While most of the patrol returned the fire of the enemy, the Lt. and one other man ran forward and threw hand grenades into the enemy outpost. One Jerry was killed and the other stunned by the explosion. The dazed Heiny was lifted bodily from his hole. The two Rangers withdrew with their prize to the positions held by the fighting patrol. A hasty retreat was instigated and the men took off down the road at a quickened pace. We had sustained one casualty when a hail of machine gun fire tore over the heads of our men. One of these slugs struck a man in the upper jaw bone causing a nasty and serious wound. He withdrew under his own steam and was immediately given first aid and evacuated upon his return to the CP. We had completed our task at the cost of one of our comrades. But, in return, we had gotten our prisoner and had left behind two other known Jerries, dead. This was a typical Ranger job, daring, planned and boldly executed.

That night was spent in comparative quiet. Our own mortars and artillery were doing all the shooting and making all the noises. The Jerry was fairly well subdued in this sector. We were plastering his every position in this area.

The next day on January 2, a battalion of the 78th Infantry affected our relief. We withdrew from Simmerath in a manner similar to that which we used entering the town, except this time we went on foot. We marched to Lammersdorf where our vehicles awaited our return. We boarded them and rode to our destination which was Roetgen. It was a comforting feeling to be off the front lines and to be set up in a rear campsite again.

With another job well done, we could once more review our parts, which we had so gallantly played and starred in. Although we had not made any physical gains for our armies, we had done our labors well. We had contained the enemy in our sector of action which was then one of the critical zones of operations during the Battle of the Bulge. We had repelled the enemy in our sector in all his attempts to counter-attack or infiltrate our positions. We had held our ground at all costs and we had secured the area to our front by our vigorous and fighting patrolling action. Once more we had looked horns with the enemy and had emerged as the victors.

## ROETGEN

Although we had spent our Thanksgiving, Xmas and New Year's days in holes, there was no doubt or lack of confidence on our part to the fact that this new year would bring the happy ending to this struggle against Nazism. We now became detached from the 78th Inf. Div. and took up new duties under 9th Army, XIX Corps, which was then under the command of the English Marshall Montgomery. We became attached to the 102nd Cavalry Group and received the mission of being a counter-attacking reserve in this area.

Our labors consisted of constructing a series of emplacements protecting the vital communications and supply center of Roetgen. We built our defenses on the high grounds in the woods south of the town. We labored on these positions for four days, digging fox holes and constructing wooden roofs for added protection--giving us a pillbox effect.

Our company strength on arrival had been fifty-one enlisted men and three officers. We received ten new men when the battalion recruited volunteers to make up for our previous losses, so that our company was in fairly good -sized strength.

It was fun to go into the woods and hew and cut down trees. Since the ground was too solid for digging, we blew our holes. All day the cries of "fire in the hole" could be heard echoing and reechoing throughout the forest. The loud boom of the explosion as it ripped apart the bowels of the earth gave us the menial task of just throwing out the dirt and stone that remained.

New ratings were made by men who had proven their leadership ability under actual combat conditions. The new men of the company earned the right to take their respective places in the outfit. At an informal ceremony at Corps headquarters in town, the 2nd platoon leader and several other men received the Bronze Star from the CG for their outstanding labors in the Brest Campaign. There was a lot of congratulations and back-slapping during our short stay here.

Our trying experiences of the past were being buried by the pleasantness of the present and the brightness of the future. So when the day of January 8 rolled around and we received the order to vacate, we packed our possessions and prepared to move. We were really on the beam.

## SCHMIDTHOF

Our new base of operations was to be the Siegfried Line town of Schmidthof, which lies just inside the German border about five miles northeast of Eugen, Belgium. Here we were to continue our mission of being a counter-attack reserve and to effect a united organization of the battalion. We were also to undergo a period of training so that the newer boys would get themselves more firmly acclimated with the Ranger style of battle.

We were released from the custody of the 102nd Rec. Cav. Gp. and took up our functions under the guidance of the 2nd TD Gp., an exchange which brought no material change to us.

Fourteen new Rangers were received by our company so that for the first time in a couple of months, we were to have overstrength. A training schedule was drawn up and we underwent a program of a basic and fundamental training.

Experts in the line of demolitions and explosives were brought in to teach us how to handle enemy explosives and grenades. Others were to fill our minds with all the knowledge of German mines and booby-traps.

Since we were in the heart of the Siegfried Line, we had no need for simulation. Many an interesting afternoon was spent in blowing up Heiny pillboxes which were abundant in the area. We blew dragon's teeth, trees, steel rails and anything we could find that had a military value to it.

The work was very interesting. I suppose a Ranger is like a baby when it come to playing with dynamite. He enjoys it and derives a great deal of satisfaction from it. The more he uses the stuff, the more he wants to play with it. It was lots of fun to blow these huge pillboxes which were from six to eight feet in thickness. It required hundreds of pounds of dynamite to destroy one of these masses of steel and concrete. We got a big bang out of the tremendous explosions.

Our favorite pastime though was to go fishing with hand grenades or blocks of T.N.T. There was a stream that ran near our area. All day long you could see the boys placing their charges in the stream, watch the spray of water spout into the air as the charge went off and then see them pick up the fish that floated on top of the water, too dazed and stunned to swim away. Many were the fish fries we had in the evenings after these



classes.

As the days wore by, our training increased in scope and intensity. We had now graduated from our basic training and we were taking a course in the advanced principles of warfare tactics. We ran problem after problem of all kinds; section, platoon, company-- until we got the desired results and coordination.

I'll never forget the wet run firing problem our company ran on February 3. It was very realistic and also due to a short mortar round, we suffered several casualties who needed medical attention.

It was a typical company problem. Our objective was to cross a river and to attack several enemy defensive positions which we had set up with the aid of dummy targets and the nearby pillboxes.

We started out alright making our crossing under a cover of smoke. We advanced and overcame our first enemy objective by the skillful use of fire and movement. Once we overran this first stronghold, we were in a flanking position to rout the enemy from his supposedly main defense line.

It was during this phase of the problem when the accident happened. Our 80 mm. mortars were supporting us by throwing protective fires upon the enemy pillboxes, when a shell fell a bit short and landed in one of the assault line sections area. A short halt was declared as the men were treated for their wounds. After we had sent them off, we continued the attack. We launched our final assault with a vengeful zest and esprit de corps that won for us the praise of the old man and of Major Arnold, who was the umpire for the exercise.

Besides our day's work, it was inevitable that the Rangers should participate in night exercises. We tested out new and novel methods of night firing with the aid of flares and mortar illuminating shells. We ran compass and map courses and we set up a series of infiltration problems, where one company tried to penetrate the defenses of another.

For our recreation we had a movie hall and a beer hall. We'd be able to get beer almost nightly, but shows were few and far between. Once in a while we'd get an S.S. unit

to visit us and entertain us; and every so often we'd be honored by the presence of the Red Cross donut wagon in our area.

We lost our diminutive first Sgt. White to a pair of golden bars. It seems that his fine leadership and courageous deeds on D-day had earned for him a battlefield commission. This reward had finally caught up to him. Lt. White was transferred to F company, where he took over the duties of a platoon leader. Our loss was their gain. To fill this vacancy and to reign over the enlisted personnel of the company, we got Sgts Klaus, a good man who had landed on the beach on D-day.

Our armies in the interim were clearing the enemy from the west bank of the Roer River, the last river barrier before the Rhine. They were now battling desperately for the dams which controlled the river's flow, as they were a paramount and of high importance as a military objective.

On February 4 our battalion received the mission to make the initial crossing of the Roer, south of of Wollseifen. That night we were briefed and oriented on the situation which was very fluid. We readied ourselves to move forward the next morning.

## CROSSING OF THE ROER

### Chapter III WOLLSEIGEN

February 5 was one of those cold and damp days. The skies were overcast with dark, heavy clouds which gave forth the prediction of miserable weather ahead. We had boarded our trucks early that morning and had rode to a point one-half mile from town. Here we had detrucked and had continued our journey on foot through the town to our new assembly area, which was to be a group of houses about one half mile east of the town.

We set up in these houses which formerly had sheltered civilians workers in this area. These buildings sat out on a high piece of ground overlooking the Roer and gave us commanding observation of the river, which lay about a mile east of our front.

We became attached to the 9th Inf., V Corps, the outfit who was responsible for taking this key position. We had the mission of protecting their flank and of making the initial crossing of the river.

That same afternoon, we were thoroughly briefed. The enemy situation was vague. Information was nil. We were to have forded the river over the dam, number 5, which lay at the southern tip of the river. We were to have made the crossing over a treadway bridge, and we were to push forward to the top of the high ground on the eastern shore. The dam was known to have been damaged by our bombing and shelling and it wasn't ascertained if it was crossable or not. We also had an alternative plan where we'd actually wade the river just in case we couldn't make it across the dam. This was to be a night job and we were to make the attack under the cover of darkness with surprise being our chief element for success.

Our artillery was incessantly hammering away at the Heinies' positions on the eastern bank. Shell after shell found its mark into the known enemy positions. Enemy counter-battery was negligible and none landed in our immediate area.

All that afternoon we sweated out a slight drizzle. We rehearsed our plan of attack over and over again. We learned our individual roles so well that we could have pulled the job blind-folded.

That evening a patrol was sent out to reconnoitre the condition of the dam and to gain information concerning the flow of the river. They were also to find a shallow crossing point and to make arrangement with friendly troops concerning the crossing.

They accomplishe their mission and brought back all the desired information. The dam was found to be too damaged for a crossing. They also had arranged with the friendly units to give us protective fire during our crossing.

We were now all set to pull the job, but a last minute cancellation and postponement gave us a twenty-four hour lease on life. So we relaxed and prepared to get a good night's sleep, and to get it over with on the following night.

We set up a defensive position about 200 yards to our front. We put out guards to keep our immediate area under surveillance, while the rest of us said our good-nights and retired to our boudoirs to hit the hay (figur tively speaking) as our beds consisted of hay strewn on the ground covered by our blankets.

The next morning found us alerted for the task on hand. The weather had taken a decided turn for the better. We thought surely that this day would be it. We rehearsed and went over all our battle plans and t ctics. We checked and rechecked our equipment and made sure that everything was all set and ready.

We scanned the enemy's side of the river and watched as our artillery unmercifully hammered away at their positions. Some return fire did fall into our area, but no casualties were sustained.

The day passed uneventfully. We ate a good hot chow for supper. We once more donned our battle equipment in preparation to make the crossing. Again a last minute's cancellation intervened in our going out. So we unpacked, cursed the fates, which were causing all these nuisances and prepared to spend another night here.

The same defensive outposts were set up as the night before. We all went to our private nooks and crannies and tried to make the best of the situation which confronted us. So went to sleep and erased the thought of combat from our minds and dreamed of better things and times to come.

The next morning, February 8, the entire project was called off for the time being. No definite reason was given and even today, I haven't the slightest idea why the job was called.off.

We pulled out of our forward assembly area and retrace our foot steps by traveling

back through the town of Woolseifen down the side of one hill and up and over a bigger one. We reached our waiting vehicles and entrucked here. We rode to our new base of operations, Kalterherberg (Monchau area) which was now our battalion headquarters.

Thus closed another chapter in the history of Company A, at least for the time being. We had gone forth to do a job, but due to circumstances beyond our control, this task was never begun. Nothing ventured, nothing gained--or lost. So we entered our new town and awaited further orders for a new undertaking.

## KALTERHERBERG

Kalterherberg at one time may have been a beautiful mountain resort, who knows? But now, after having been exchanged three times during the present conflict, the town was a heap of rubble and a mess of houses.

Our company managed to find a couple of houses that were fairly habitable. They were terribly filthy inside. Our first job here was cleaning and dusting. We hauled junk and trash all day long from these billets. When evening fell we were all perspired and dirty, while the houses were made presentable.

We resumed rear echelon functions and took up administrative duties. Although the Roer River job had been cancelled, it had never been completely postponed. So when a training schedule was drawn up, river crossings and night work were highly emphasized and stressed.

Our armies had now taken the vitally strongly defended town of Schmidt and had gained full possession of the entire west bank of the Roer. On February 11 we were once more briefed and alerted to make the river crossing, but as before, a last minute cancellation put a crimp into our plans before we even moved out.

When the Heinies blew the main dam on the Roer and flooded the countryside bordering the river, we knew that it would be some time before we participated in the crossing of that river. So we nonchalantly faced the true facts and settled down to resume a garrison way of living.

To make our present situation more comfortable, we cleaned out an old barn and converted it into a movie hall, so that we could have some form of entertainment to while away the time. We bettered our billets by an industrious work program and resumed better relationships with our dear ones in the States and ourselves. The battalion inaugurated a pass quota and some characters were allowed to visit Eupen while others were more fortunate to receive seventy-two hour passes to Paris.

On February 19 we ran a three day problem which put the finishing touches to our maneuvering in the Kalterherberg area. It was a river crossing exercise which was very similar in tactics to our mission of crossing the Roer.

It was a real rough and tough Ranger problem made as realistic as our officers could

devise. We had actual enemy details and positions set up. There was nothing simulated in the wading of that ice-cold, waist-deep water on that early morning of the 20th. On the whole, we gained valuable experience and knowledge from that exercise and it gave us fair warning of what to expect when the real McCoy crossing of the Roer came off.

On February 23 we quit Kelterherberg and took up our duties in the Roer River town of Dedenborn. We got ourselves hooked up to the 102nd Gp., our old friends of Rastgen, and prepared to settle down in this area.

Our company strenght as shown on the morning report was seventy-three enlisted men and three officers. Our morale was good and spirits better. We occupied one house in the valley that led to the town. We were to be shacked up here until we got the order to make that long-awaited crossing of the Roer.

## DEDENBORN

Dedenborn lives vividly in my memory for physical reasons. Our new billets were in a deep valley, while our kitchen was on top of a hill in the town proper. At every chow formation, we had one long climb to reach to summit of the hill. If it weren't for our splendid physical condition, I'm afraid half of us would have starved to death.

Our first acquaintance with manual labor was when we made our new home habitable. Dedenborn was another one of those war-torn towns; debris and rubble littered the rooms and the outside of our house was messy and filthy. We cleaned out the place, threw out furniture, swept the floors, and in general fixed up the house to make it livable and sanitary.

A light training schedule was drawn up for us with emphasis on river crossing as the Roer River job was still to be accomplished.

The weather finally smiled at us. The skies cleared up and the sun shone down brightly, bringing about the warmth and cheer that only sunshine can bring. It became more like spring than winter. We cleaned and oiled our weapons thoroughly and made sure all our equipment was in the prime of condition and working order. We didn't want to risk anything going snafu on us, especially during a combat operation.

We regained three men who had fought side by side with us at Hell's Corner and Bergstein and who had been hospitalized by trench foot. It was good to see them back and we bade them welcome and proceeded to make them feel at home.

Our favorite sport here was to go fishing with T.N.T. or hand grenades, just as in the days back in Schmidthof. We could see the boys tramping down to the river with their pockets bulging with the necessary explosives and their eyes twinkling with the merriment that only the mischievous can have. They'd find their favorite spots and plant their charges. After a short while, we could hear the explosion and watch the water as it sprayed in the air. Practically every night we were here, there was a fish fry going on.

On February 29 our brother companies D.E. & F. moved out to make the initial crossing of the Roer. They waded the river southeast of Schmidt and established a beachhead on the Kermeter peninsula. They had crossed the Roer in broad daylight. Enemy action was light.



Our company, meanwhile, was in reserve. We didn't cross the river until three days later. It was early morning on March 2 when we boarded vehicles and rode to Schmidt. Here we detrucked and prepared to ford the river, south of the town. Information was negligible and outside of the fact our brother companies on the peninsula were having light action, there was no news about the enemy. We proceeded by foot, through the town across the top of a bald hill, around and down the wooded part of the hill and into the clearing that led to the river.

It was early afternoon and the weather was pleasant. We could see the highwater mark that had been caused by the flooding of the area and we could note how much the water had receded. Our place to cross was to be at a bend in the river where the width could not have been more than fifty yards. There was no enemy shelling to herald our crossing and we were very thankful for that. That afternoon saw us on the high ground that bordered the east bank of the Roer. All we had to do now was to clear the peninsula, break out into the Cologne Plains, and head for the Rhine. And, as future days of combat brought out, this is exactly what we did do.

## FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE

### Chapter IV

The terrain bordering the Roer was steep, mountainous and wooded. We were all laden down with full basic loads, so that when we reached our first objective on top of the high ground, we were very much peaked. We had a short rest as the front of the column held up for the rear to catch up and close the distance which had accordianed out during the crossing. We took advantage of this short halt to dry our feet and change socks. We checked our weapons to see that they were in good firing condition.

We then took up an approach march formation and proceeded to go cross country. Enemy action was missing, but the passive resistance in the form of mines and booby traps were very much present. Great care and caution had to be taken to avoid this unseen menace. We were quite fortunate that our company didn't sustain any casualties.

After a while of rugged marching over this mountainous and wooded ground, it was decided to conform to the road. It was becoming physically unbearable to maintain our advance on this cross country march. A decided change in the weather for the worst found us battling our way through a light snow storm that was turning the road into a cesspool of mud.

We finally contacted our brother Ranger companies who were set up in a defensive position and who were in control of the main crossroad on the Peninsula. It seemed as though they had pushed out and had expanded their beachhead in this area to about three miles. They had held up so that we could continue the drive by pushing through their positions.

We were forced to abandon the road, since mines and booby traps literally covered every inch of the ground. Again we proceeded to go cross country guiding on the road. The snowfall had abated by now, but clouds still hung dark and heavy. We contacted the left flank of the 78th Division and held up as formal arrangements were made between them and our officers.

Till now there hadn't been any enemy action, but now during our halt an enemy mortar opened up on us. A shell struck a tree, causing an air burst. We suffered our first casualty from the shrapnel that whizzed by. A Heiny machine gun which opened up on "C"

company, who were on our right flank caused a death there. In retaliation, our forward elements wiped this nest out. More mortar shells landed in our area, but no one was hurt. In a duel between their artillery and ours, we came out the victors as the enemy's firing ceased.

We continued our advance until we got orders to hold up. We were on the high ground in the forest about two miles west of Heinbach. We took up positions on the left flank of the 78th Division. Our battalion, it appears, was sandwiched between the 2nd and 78th Divisions, acting as a connecting file.

We held up here while we awaited for future orders depending on the results of the infantry units whose flanks we were protecting. When no new commands came down to us, we took up a defensive position and rested up for the time being. Our area was full of Heiny log cabins. These cabins gave ample evidence of the recentness of the Heiny's leaving. We had to be extremely careful, since mines and booby traps were all over. We tested these structures and found them free of these devices. We fixed up these cabins with the field expedients on hand and proceeded to spend the night in these woods.

Enemy activity was negligible in our area. Our other companies though picked up a few Heinies that night. Our company was untroubled by these nuisances. The next morning we sent out reconnaissance patrols to search out and clear out our front and to bring back all enemy data they could uncover.

No physical contact was made with the enemy by our patrols. All information brought back was of a negative nature. The only thing found was the signs of the enemy having been here very recently and that their departure had not been more than several hours past.

Again we took up the approach march formation and took off in the pursuit of the enemy. Our advance was continually halted by enemy minefields. The ruggedness of the terrain was a handicap that even the hardy of us could hardly overcome.

Engineers who were following us up were having a field day blowing and neutralizing the mined roads. Tanks and vehicles dogged the heels of these combat engineers and were waiting patiently for the signal of clearance.

Enemy resistance on the whole was very light. Occasionally, the enemy would throw a few shells at us, but they didn't do any damage. We picked up a few prisoners as we overran an enemy position which had been left behind as a rear guard. Not much activity. The thing which hampered our advance was the infernal mines and booby traps. We couldn't take an unwary step on the road or cross country because of mines. It was miraculous that our company escaped injury from this form of enemy ingenuity.

At one time, we had to halt our advance to let the engineers proceed to clear a path. We presented a funny sight, as we were all grouped about--tanks, infantry, engineers, and ourselves. I hated to think of what the results would have been if a mine which perhaps had been overlooked should accidentally have been set off. I had the gruesome experience of seeing some minutes previously, the result of what did happen to a doughboy from the 2nd Division when he stepped on one of these contraptions. Believe me, it wasn't pleasant.

Darkness was falling quickly over us. Our physical advance for the day couldn't have been over two miles, yet it had taken us several hours to cover this distance. We took up positions in a wooded area off the main road about one half mile northwest of Wolfgarten.

The Kermeter Peninsula was now entirely cleared of enemy. We had accomplished our mission in good style and order. We set up a defensive position and waited for further orders.

For the first time in forty-eight hours, we were to get hot chow. Thanks to some excellent foot work by a carrying party, we were able to partake in our first decent meal since our crossing of the river. Originally our chow was to be brought in by vehicles, but when our truck was blown up by a teller mine, it was necessary to get our feed by foot.

We had prepared to bed down for the night after chow since we had undergone a strenuous day. Many of us had already fallen asleep when word came down to us to move to the rear. It must have been about one o'clock in the morning. We donned our equipment, bitched and cursed under our breaths and prepared to move back.

For two and a half hours we trudged back. We were tired and miserable. The cold

rain and snow which fell didn't do our spirits any good. We finally reached our rear assembly point where we met up with and married that grand outfit, the 38th Cavalry, with whom we were to fight side by side til V-E Day.

We broke open our rolls, threw our blankets on the ground, buddied up with our neighbor and said to hell with everything, especially the weather, and took off for slumberland.

That same morning, March 5, we got orders for a mission in conjunction with the 38th Cavalry. We atera hearty breakfast, boarded our respective vehicles and rode into combat. The 2nd Ranger Battalion was now a motorized and mechanized force.

We had come through the first phase of our Roer to Rhine campaign in splendid order. We had established the initial beachhead on the Kermeter Peninsula and had cleared it of the enemy. Although our contact with the enemy had been of a small nature, we had to overcome the obstacle of the most rugged terrain we had ever encountered. The ever-present menace of hidden death, buried in the earth, had been carefully and skillfully avoided. Now we were ready to take off in pursuit of the enemy to strike him wherever and whenever possible and to bring the curtain down on the final act of the most historical play in the drama of the world.

## MARCH 5 to MAYCHOSS

Before our advent of the crossing of the Roer, all our gains had been measured in inches and yards. Now we had broken out into the Cologne Plains. We were no longer the foot sloggers and doughboys of the Siegfried Line. We were motorized and destined to race across these wide open spaces, advancing many miles in every attempt. We were free to roam over this broad level valley that extended from the Roer to the Rhine, to hit the enemy where he was the weakest and the most unprepared.

Our first mission to be was to take the town of Hergarten, which lay about seven miles east of Heimbach. Our plan of battle for the attack was a simple enveloping movement with one platoon coming from one flank, while the other hit from the opposite side. It felt queer, this new method of motorized infantry. We rode our vehicles in eager anticipation of battles to come. There were approximately a couple of jeeps, one half-track, and a two and one half ton truck for each platoon, plus the extra support of light tanks and reconnaissance cars of the cavalry.

We had started out late that morning. We passed through Heimbach and cautiously rode forward. Enemy resistance was extinct. We stuck to the hard surface roads as there was less danger of mines. We could clearly observe other columns of vehicles moving out. It did our hearts good to see this fine array of military might.

We rode clear up to our town and found that the town already had been occupied by our brother "B" company. They had beaten us to this prize by a matter of minutes.

While we instigated a search of the houses, Baker company took up a defensive position outside the town. A few mortar rounds started to fall about us. They were being fired from a patch of woods to our right front which was in "C" company's area of action. The firing didn't last long as "C" company took care of that. No casualties were suffered by us.

So far in our fighting days in Germany, we had never been concerned or bothered about civilians as there weren't any around to annoy us. Now we were operating in an area where the populace presented a problem. These people rightfully were non-combatants, and yet, in this total, all-out war, is there any such creatures as non-combatants? We worked out what we considered a workable solution by searching the premises of these

people and by making them give up all their possessions pertaining to the military. The burgomeister was made responsible for the attitude and the behavior of the residents within his jurisdiction, and we set up some sort of local police force. This worked out ideally and we never had much trouble from the civilians.

We remained in town all that day and night as reserve troops. This was to be our first night indoors since our Roer crossing. It felt good to be sheltered from the weather, to wash and clean ourselves and take care of all other needs that we had no opportunity to attend to while we were on the move.

The next morning found us prepared and set to move forward again. Our old man finally made his well-earned captain's bars. Congratulations and best wishes were extended. The next town that was to be our victim was the small village of Berg. We rode right up to it. We found it undefended and clear of Wehrmacht personnel. We then continued to drive ahead to our next objective, the town of Firminech.

Our procedure was a bit different in taking the town. We dismounted before we reached our objective and took up a tactical formation. Meanwhile, our mechanized units took up positions to give us protective and overhead fire if emergency called for it. We entered the town and found no enemy resistance. We searched out every building in town and sent all the civilians down to the church in the middle of town. There they were questioned and processed by our interrogators. Although we didn't uncover any military objects, we were searching for, we did find some drinking substances and edibles. So we fed our faces and quenched our thirsts and thought it very hospitable of the Germans to welcome us in such a grand manner.

We outposted the town by sending squads of men with a couple tanks to the high ground east of the place. We sent out a motorized combat patrol to clear out the nearby town of Shwerfen, which lay about one and one half miles to our front. It was found to be void of enemy personnel.

Our company was working as two separate units. Each platoon was operating on its own and in different sectors. While one platoon was taking care of one village, the other platoon was adding another to its credit. This way we got two distinct and sepa-

rate actions at one time. (Note--during our race across the Cologne Plains, we overran and took many small villages, but due to neglect, we never took the pains to mark the names of these small inconsequential communities down, so that there is no manuscript for me from which I can gain record of these towns. So bear with me if I leave out a few names of certain places that may have some place in your memory.)

When our combat patrols returned, our company reorganized and prepared to push off again. Our battalion had received a new mission, that of screening the left flank of the 78th Division, our old friends of Simmerath.

We headed in a southeasterly direction with the two platoons heading in different directions for two towns. While the 1st platoon was overrunning and taking the town of Satzvey, the 2nd platoon added the town of Ober Gartzzen to its long list of captured towns.

The only enemy resistance we encountered was the hasty roadblocks that were set up by the retreating Heinies, plus an occasional minefield which blocked our movements. We took the proper precautions and actions against these passive obstacles and overcame them easily. We did run into some enemy artillery, but the shelling was light and negligible and didn't halt us more than momentarily in our merry pursuit of the elusive enemy.

That same night of March 6 the 2nd platoon was in possession of the town of Lessinich. They had dismounted some distance from the objective and had proceeded to take the town on foot. A burning house on the outskirts of the town illuminated their entrance, and skylined them against the crest of the hill which gave egress to the town. It was a ghostly and eerie scene as the men passed one by one, in front of this blazing pyre which so distinctly outlined them momentarily, only to have them vanish and to blend into the darkness again. No enemy resistance was encountered so they advanced through the town and took up a defensive position. They were pulled back as the cavalry took over the town, while they received the job of searching out the town.

This was a bastardly mission. It was one of those dark, rainy nights where you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. The situation was tactical and no lights



could be used. They stumbled from house to house cautiously searching out cellars, bedrooms, attics. No enemy personnel or equipment was found. They did uncover some alcoholic beverages which they confiscated as the spoils of war. That night they imbibed freely and forgot about their miseries and harrowing experiences and went to sleep in their house, which they had taken over previously.

In the interim the 1st platoon was taking over the town of Antweiler. Their entrance was heralded by some enemy artillery, but no casualties were sustained. They searched out the town and found it clear of enemy personnel. They then proceeded to out-post the town, by placing sections at all entrances. One of these sections was called back into town and no sooner had they left their protection when enemy artillery opened up on them. A shell which landed in their midst killed one of the sergeants outright, and seriously wounded four others. Expert first aid on the scene of action was administered. They were evacuated as soon as the situation allowed and sent to the rear. No more casualties were sustained that night.

Morning of the 7th of March found our entire company assembled and reorganized in the town of Lessenich. We mounted our vehicles and advanced towards the retreating enemy.

The 2nd platoon moved through the town of Freishum, which had already been cleared by leading elements of the 78th Division and advanced to the town of Hilberath. The town was found clear of enemy, so they held up for awhile to consolidate their gains and await further instructions. Meanwhile, the 1st platoon was making speedy headway in their advance. They had entered and occupied the town of Calenborn and had found it empty of Wehrmacht, so they held up there for the time being.

That same evening the 1st platoon moved out to take the small town of Dietz. Enemy shelling greeted them and forced them to take certain measures of precaution. After the shelling, they formed and pressed their way forward. This time they were welcomed by the hail of hot lead, fired from an enemy machine gun from a defensive position in town. Tommy guns and M1's replied. Automatic weapons chimed in and the enemy was forced to holler "Kamerad." They killed four Jerries and captured five, while no harm was done

to them. A typical Renger action with a typical Ranger finish.

That evening the 2nd platoon received the mission of clearing out a known Heiny position in the woods on the outskirts of their town. They proceeded to scour the area. Contact with the enemy was made and after a sharp and furious skirmish, in which one of our boys was seriously wounded by machine gun fire, they completely wiped out the enemy, killing three of the sons of bitches and capturing three.

That night saw the 2nd platoon moving again. They advanced again cross country to the town of Vischel. Here they held up as darkness and the ruggedness of the terrain in this area, plus their exhausting ordeal of the day, limited further actions on their part. A contact patrol was sent out, but due to the above mentioned facts, this mission wasn't completed. But, our communications gained us the wanted results, so that all in all we gained what we sought.

The next morning we were on the march again. The next town about to feel the wrath and fury of the Rangers was to be the grape-growing center of Maychoss. It was a fairly large town, situated in the vineyard region halfway between the Roer and the Rhine.

The countryside here was vastly different from the broad, level plain we had been operating on. It was mountainous and wooded, with massive forests and dense underbrush covering the tops of these majestic mountains while vineyards covered all the bald spots on the sides of these hills.

Our plan of attack was to go cross country with one platoon entering the front of the town, while the other platoon swung around and attacked from the rear. Our intelligence had informed us that known enemy troops were in the area, but that the number was unknown. So when we attacked, we were fully prepared and expected a battle.

While the 1st platoon went cross country and hit the town from the rear, the 2nd platoon hit the town frontally. The terrain was ideally suitable for the defense. There were many key terrain features that could have held off the attackers very easily, as we couldn't have brought to bear our mechanized forces.

Both platoons advanced boldly and aggressively, taking advantage of all the natural cover and concealment. No enemy resistance was encountered. We took over the town and

instigated a thorough search of the place. We found sixty defending Germans, sitting nonchalantly in the town's hotel and cafes, calmly drinking their beers and taking life easy. They had decided to call it quits and were awaiting our arrival. We took these characters into custody and set up a defensive position about the bridge and railroad tunnels that ran alongside the town. This was to be our final and decisive action in our Roer to the Rhine campaign. We held up here and stayed at Maychoss until we received the orders to cross the Rhine.

It had been adventurous and exciting to have worked with the Cavalry. It had been less tiresome and exhausting to ride than to walk. It had been convenient in carrying our equipment and rations and loot which fell into our possessions. It had been more advantageous, tactically, to strike the enemy so fast and so hard and to attack him from such unexpected quarters. And, it had been especially pleasant to have worked with the splendid fighting men of this cavalry outfit. There were no arguments or bickering. We hit off swell. I feel that I must take this time to pay these gallant soldiers a tribute, especially to the men of "A" troop. I wish to thank them for the keen, close support and the aid they gave us; for the friendly and unselfish manner they treated us; for the gallantry and bravery in fighting side by side with us; and for the sharing of the dangers and untold miseries along with us. The Rangers have been honored and privileged by having had their presence and loyalty in our war against totalitarianism.

## MAYCHOSS

While we held up here for a reorganization and consolidation, our noble armies continued the drive for the Rhine. They were relentlessly hammering away at the retreating enemy, causing him heavy casualties and destruction. The German defenses between the two rivers were disintegrating and our strength was unceasingly pursuing and taking advantage of the enemy's plight.

Our new homes were to be two large hotels that had all the conveniences and facilities that one would expect to find in a hotel at home. There were enough beds to accommodate all of us; there were real commodes and latrines; and the plumbing and electric systems were in working order. Besides, this we found several cellars full of wine and foodstuffs, so that we were able to supplement our stingy "K" rations and quench our never-ending thirsts. That night when we went to bed we were a bit flushed with success. There was a carefree and contented look upon our features as we gazed lovingly upon the clean, white sheets. We slept well that night, well-pleased with ourselves and happy in the thought of our activities in our latest campaign against the Nazis.

Maychoss presented us with our first opportunity to view the beauty of the surrounding terrain. We could note the splendor and grandeur of the Ahr River, the magnificent loveliness of the sloping vineyard and the quaintness and aesthetic wonders of the town. Maychoss had been very fortunate in that it had come unscathed through the main wrath of our air force, although there were some craters and bomb holes present to prove that it had not come through entirely untouched.

Even the people seemed unaffected by the war. They went about their tasks and businesses in a routine manner. They hardly paid any attention to us or took any undue notice of the fact that they were vanquished peoples, and that we were now in command of their community. They seemed friendly and subdued. We never had any trouble with them. I believe they knew they were licked and that our arrival had saved them from the unpleasantness of further air raids and shelling.

Our company's strength on arrival had been seventy-one men and three officers. Our morale and spirits were excellent. We hadn't suffered too many casualties in our Roer to Rhine campaign and we never had been under an mental strain such as we had undergone

at Bergstein or at the Hurtgen Forest.

Our company underwent a reorganization. The men who had left us to go home on rotation while at Bergstein, returned to us with one exception. We picked up two old men who had been in the hospitals. New ratings were made and again as before the ones who had proven themselves capable of leading were given squads and sections.

For the first week our company received the mission of guarding the bridge and the railroad tunnels in the area. It wasn't a fatiguing detail and it wasn't much of a task. After we were relieved, we got the job of clearing out and scouring the neighboring hills and forests for possible hidden enemy soldiers and saboteurs. For all of our troubles, we did not discover a single straggler.

To pass away our spare moments, our battalion transformed a large building into a movie hall. A pass system to Paris and Eupen was inaugurated and recreational and sporting facilities were made available to us.

In our travels across the Roer, we had come upon some Heiny vehicles. But until now, we never had the opportunity to tinker with them. Now, we had the time, place, and chance to get these beat up affairs to run. We got a couple of boys who were mechanically inclined to give those junk heaps a going over. After some manipulations plus battery transfusions, we got these decrepit antiques to moving. Of course, we had to push these vehicles more than we actually rode them and the brakes in these cars weren't of the highest quality, but it was lots of fun plus the excitement everytime we boarded them to take a spin around the town.

The question of fraternization reared its ugly head in this place. So far, we had been in places in Germany where the civilians were negligible, but in Maychoss there were many fair and tempting frauleins that made a young man's heart skip a beat. It was only natural and human that some of the love-starved Rangers, who were romantically inclined, hold clandestine and illegal rendezvous with those German maidens.

Our armies had now entered the heart of the Third Reich. The Remagen beachhead had been established and all German troops had been cleared from the west bank of the Rhine. Supplies, vehicles, ammunition, and guns were constantly being poured into our

expanding beachhead, and our giant military forces were exploiting their gains.

It was under this setting that our battalion received the order to move to cross the Rhine on the eventful day of March 26. That morning saw us in full preparedness to board our vehicles and take up arms against the Heiny once more.

We were now entering the final phase of the war. We had come a long way since that first day of the invasion. We had fought many rounds with the enemy and we had softened him up for this forthcoming knockout blow. The end which had seemed so far away in the opening battle was now looming over the distant horizon. That elusive day of victory was now just a matter of time away, and we were to achieve this triumph in only a short period; but only after some of the most hectic and furious battles were fought and bucketsful of blood shed.

## RHINE TILL V-E DAY

### Chapter V

If we had measured our Roer to Rhine gains in miles, we were now to measure our advances across the Rhine in leagues. For once we crossed the Rhine, we took off like the Army's proverbial "big ass bird," to literally chase the Heinies off the face of the earth. I don't know how many miles we had to traverse before the Heinies capitulated, but I do know that if that mileage were laid out in a straight line and journeyed westward, I'd be writing this account from my home in America instead of the European country that I am in now.\*

The enemy was putting up a losing, last ditch stand. He was being "kaputed" by our military might. The only reason he continued to wage warfare was because the fanatical Hitler and his gang of cutthroats had no more to lose than the lives of thousands of German soldiers. What did he care for the masses when his precious dream of conquest was tottering and crumbling all about him. So the Jerries fought, and we continued to pile up his dead, rain destruction upon his country, cause turmoil and havoc while throwing the final kiss of death upon the faltering Nazi regime.

We started out on our itinerary as a motorized column. The move was an administrative one. We followed along the main route that led from Maycohen to Sinzig. Here we did a right turn and followed the road that took us to our crossing point. We bridged the Rhine over the V Corps pontoon bridge, which was claimed to be the largest pontoon bridge ever built by Army engineers. I forget now which unit took the credit for this super structure. Our crossing was uneventful. But we couldn't help feeling a certain thrill in crossing this last great barrier between us and Berlin. This river which had repelled every attempt of all invaders in medieval times, the river where no aggressor nation had ever crossed before in all its history, and where for the first time an attacking force stood on its eastern shore.

We headed for our forward assembly area which was the industrial town of Neuweid, lying in the Bonn area. Here, our columns regrouped and reorganized as we received word of our mission.

\*This book was written in Czechoslovakia

We were to relieve the 27th Bn. of the 9th Armored Inf. who held the high ground just south of the town of Wallendar and to clear out the towns and area to our front.

That afternoon we advanced to our destination and effected a relief of the troops. No enemy activity hampered our movements. We set up a defensive position by forming a main line of resistance and put out outposts and listening stations. Combat patrols were sent to flush out the town of Wallendar and clear our front of enemy. Communications were rigged up and rations were obtained. Our patrols returned with word that no enemy was to our front.

We remained all night in these positions. No enemy activity was encountered. The next morning found us prepared and ready to roll again. We boarded our respective vehicles and rode through the undefended towns of Simmern, Immendorf, and Amberg. We picked up one enemy straggler while on this march. He was dejectedly walking down the road, unarmed and unconscious of where he was heading. We got rid of him at the first opportunity.

Our destination for that day was the town of Polzapfel, which lay a good distance away from our point of origin. We entered the town and found it free of the enemy. We took up a defensive position on the high ground southeast of the town and prepared to spend the night. No enemy resistance was encountered. Our combat patrols and reconnaissance patrols worked a good distance to our front, but no contact was made with the enemy.

That morning of the 28th found us on the go again. Our armies were really driving forward at a rate unheard of before in military annals. We had to do some hard pushing to keep abreast with them.

Our next mission was to relieve elements of the 9th Armored Inf. which held the vital ground southeast of the town of Diez. That afternoon we crossed the Lahn river on foot and effected the relief. Again we set up a defensive position and sent out combat patrols to clear out the area to the front. One of these patrols did contact the enemy. They got two P.W.'s for their efforts. That same afternoon we made contact with leading units of the 3rd Army. We were the first elements of the 1st Army to reach the 3rd Army.



That meant that a joining of these two great units had been effected and that we held an unbroken and continuous line of the east bank of the Rhine.

That night after three days and nights of constant pushing, we were relieved. We recrossed the Lahn River and took up reserve positions in the town proper. We secured two houses for our company and prepared to get some sleep.

We ate our first hot chow here, cleaned and refreshed ourselves, looked after our weapons and equipment and took care of the minor details that had escaped our attention previously.

The next morning saw us moving again. We headed eastward for the town of Wolfenhausen. We forced an entrance and found it clear of the enemy. We took up a mobile reserve position in the town. Here our old friends and comrades of the Roer to Rhine campaign met up with us. We found ourselves remarried to this swell outfit, the 38th Cavalry. One uneventful day was spent in that town. When April 1 ushered in, it saw us leaving our lodgings to head for new and distant towns.

After a monotonous haul of some thirty miles, we found ourselves occupying the town of Fritzler. No enemy resistance was encountered and no mechanical troubles hindered our march. We took over the town and found it free of uniformed personnel. We received a new mission of screening and protecting the right flank of V Corps. We proceeded to carry out this task by advancing to the neighboring town of Lohne.

We held up here and set up a series of check points and control stations on the roads in this area. Combat patrols were sent out to range far and wide to our front. No physical meeting was made with the enemy by our patrols.

The situation in this part of the country was very fluid. Although most of the immediate area was in our hands, cut-off Heinies were a grave problem confronting us. Infiltrating groups and active saboteurs were constantly harassing us so that it necessitated these systematic roadblocks and control points. We personally checked over all vehicles and personnel, both civilian and military and made positive that their identification were in order.

That same night saw the first platoon set up a new CP and check station in the town of Merhausen while the town of Sande became the new base of operations for the second

platoon.

The next morning, April 2, saw our motorized patrols taking over the neighboring towns of Balholm, Breitenbach, Elmshagen, and Niedenstein. No resistance was met and no Jerries were picked up. But to atone for this lack of military personnel, good hauls were made in the spoils of war. Such Heiny materials as flags, cameras, knives, swords, pistols fell into our hands. We also returned with basketsful of eggs, bread, and other food ransacked from the cellars of the Jerries.

In the interim, foot patrols were searching and seeking out hidden enemy in the dense woods on the outskirts of Sande. For all their physical exertion they didn't get a Heiny. The woods were found to be free; no evidence was uncovered to the effect that the enemy had used this area as a hideout. So a stamp of clearance was given to these woods.

We had a pleasant setup in our new roles as checking agents. We had nice billets, comfortable beds, plenty to eat and drink and an easy task on hand. It was a bit monotonous pulling guard duty, but every once in a while we could go out of these combat patrols and have a good time in looting. Then there was the matter of displaced persons. These foreign refugees had been slaves to the Nazis. They were billeted in shabby and crowded barracks in the town of Sande. Among them there were beaucoup frauleins who were very attractive and attentive to our advances. I'm afraid that even though it was against the rules of non-fraternization to converse with them, that some of our boys did have certain intimate relationships with these girls. It is not for me to say whether wrong was done, but I'm sure whatever did occur was only due to a human need that the conventional laws of both civilian and military has never been able to halt.

The next day found us on the same job. Beside our tasks of uncovering Nazi personnel in the guise of civilians, we had to act as M.B.'s to our own vehicles, pose as the military government in local civilian affairs, and be administrators in urban doings. We checked more passports, trip-tickets, and identifications than Carter has liver pills. We found ourselves entangled in civilian problems which we handled very diplomatically, we firmly but politely told these ex-Nazi-lovers where to go and gave them very direct

orders and specific directions of how to get there. I'm afraid that these Germans would have had a very red and embarrassed look on their faces had they been able to comprehend us.

We picked up a few stragglers on the following day. They just had walked up and gave themselves up. A motorized patrol which went to the town of Weimar to contact a friendly unit got themselves a couple more P.W.'s without a struggle. These birds were sent to a rear cage and processed there.

That afternoon enemy air activity was sighted. A group of planes resembling our P-51's were seen flying at tree-top level over our respective towns. No action was taken by them, so we let them alone. They continued on their merry way after a short period of reconnaissance. April 5 brought no new changes to our status, so we remained on our jobs, checking and rechecking civilians and military vehicles. Another Heiny straggler was picked up when he calmly walked out and gave himself up. More motorized patrols were sent out. No contact with the enemy was made because by now friendly troops who had come up on our flanks had now cleared out the area we were patrolling. We coordinated our positions and returned to our camp.

On April 6 we lost Lt. Porubsky, not as a war casualty, but as a matrimonial victim to an army nurse. It appears that our Lt. had gotten himself engaged when he was back in Schmidthof. Now after a couple of months of waiting, he finally had received the permission to marry the girl. That day saw the Lt. nervously packing his belongings and throwing them on a jeep which awaited him. That night we had one batchelor less in the company. "Congratulations and best wishes, Lt. May happiness and health follow your every footstep throughout your journey of life and may your marriage bring you the bliss and enjoyment you had so rightfully earned for yourself."

That same day a motorized patrol was sent out to the town of Landeverhagen (north-east of Kassel) to contact the forward elements of the 69th Inf. Reconnaissance. They ran smack into trouble when an enemy S.P. opened fire on them. Not being a match for this strong enemy force, they withdrew hastily. Outside of the few gray hairs which were added to these fast-aging men, no harm was done. The enemy had caught them flat-

footed. It had only been sheer luck that the German gunnery was poor and inaccurate. No contact was made with our friendly forces that day.

For two more days we remained at our stations in Merxhausen and Sande. We sent out our contact patrols and picked up a few more enemy stragglers. Things were getting dull. We were getting the travelers itch. So when April 9 rolled around and we boarded our vehicles, we were only too happy to resume our pursuit of the enemy.

Mile after mile we were to drive forward, unceasingly pursuing the retreating enemy. Every night was to find us tired and exhausted, not from battle fatigue, but from a weariness that comes from extensive traveling. We had the enemy going backwards and we couldn't let up in our chase of him.

We headed eastward for the town of Sichelstein. No enemy resistance interfered with our march. We entered and occupied the town. We set up a defensive precaution, went to sleep, and dreamed of better days to come.

The next morning found us on the go again. This time we received the mission of clearing the wooded area which lay south of the autobahn (northeast of Kassel) in the V Corps area. We rode our vehicles until we came to the outskirts of these woods, then we dismounted and formed one large company skirmish line. We proceeded to search out the woods in this formation. Meanwhile, the Cavalry had set up check points and motorized patrols on the outside of these woods in order to catch any escaping Heinies we flushed out. We covered our sector fully but didn't run into any enemy. We then entrucked and drove on to the town of Varnissen. The town was found to be clear. We entered and occupied it for the night.

That next morning we were on the march again. This time our objective was the dense forest in the Sonderhausen area. Reports of infiltrating enemy and saboteurs hiding out in this area necessitated our giving it the once over although units of the 2nd Div. had scoured these woods previously.

For our physical exertions we picked up eight Heiny prisoners, who had given us no trouble. We then advanced to the town of Wulfingerode and found it clear of enemy. We billeted ourselves here and spent the night in the town.

On April 12 we moved out once more. This time we had the job of combing the woods in the Nordhausen area. We formed our large skirmish line and proceeded to go over the rough terrain. Ten more enemy were added to our prisoner of war bag when we flushed out these woods. We then advanced to the town of Ruxleben where no resistance was encountered. We took over the town and set up our CP patrols, foot and motorized, patrols were sent out to search the neighboring vicinities, but no enemy resistance was encountered. Our patrols returned and we spent the night in this town.

When morning rolled around, we rolled with it. The next town to come under our wing was Landgrafroda. Like the rest of the towns we had captured, we found the community undefended. We set up our CP and sent out our usual patrols. For our active patrolling of the surrounding woods, we picked up thirty-seven Heinies, who gave themselves up without a struggle.

That evening we established a series of road blocks and checking points in the wooded area on the outskirts of the town with the cooperation of the cavalry. It was at one of those roadblocks, at a crossroad a few miles northeast of the town, that we accredited ourselves by killing a German Major General, Gen. Gustav Fellows, C. G. Panzer troops of Wehrkries IX and his staff, which consisted of one S.S. Lt., a panzer sergeant, and a corporal.

It appears although the boys there were going about their routine functions, checking personnel and inspecting vehicles, when along towards dusk a vehicle was heard coming down the road facing them from the west. The guard prepared to halt it to make the customary inspection. Instead of stopping at the guards call, the vehicle increased his speed. Not thinking that the vehicle was Jerry, but that perhaps the occupants had not heard the challenge, the sentry repeated his challenge. By now the vehicle was completely visible and it was seen to be Heiny. Our BAR man who was alerted by the opening challenge, promptly opened up on the car which was now approaching the crossroad and ready to make a turn to the right. It completed its turn, but the deafening and murderous fire of the other men on guard saw that the vehicle didn't complete its journey. It didn't travel more than twenty yards before it swerved into a ditch on the side of

the road and stuck fast there. More hot lead was dumped into the car to make doubly sure that no one was playing possum. A close inspection followed which ascertained that these Nazi big-wigs had breathed their last.

It was decided that a further examination should be put off until morning as night was fast falling. It was already too dark to make a complete and thorough search of the occupants and of the car. That night this outpost pulled guard and to keep them company, they had four Jerry stiffs that stunk to high heaven--not exactly a pleasant companionship.

When the first rays of dawn came, the searching unit got busy and looted these ex-members of the Wehrmacht. Positive identification was made proving the fact that we had gotten ourselves a genera. Invaluable maps and documents were uncovered in his briefcase, which this bigshot had been carrying.

For our individual labors of ransacking these dead bodies, we got several pistols, a couple of wristwatches, shoulder insignias, and other souvenirs which the American doughboy is reportedly fighting for.

While the General's body was being sent to the rear for a more stately funeral, the rest of the bodies were being laid to rest in a shallow grave, dug at the side of the road, where death had overtaken them. The graves were dug by a couple of characters we picked up at the check point. Upon thorough search of these birds, we had found that they had arm papers, hidden on their persons. When we called them spies and made them dig, they thought they were digging their own graves. They really were sweating it out. I never saw such a look of relief come over a person's face as came over them when they learned the real truth of the grave-digging job. We held these Heinies for further questioning and sent them to the rear.

That noon we regrouped at Landgrafroda where the company reorganized and prepared to go forth once more. We rode approximately thirty miles in a northeasterly direction and entered our new homes for the night.

Our company had split into two platoons. While one platoon occupied Steuden, the other one took over the town of Assendorf. Meanwhile, our company CP was set up in the

town of Dornstadt.

Active motorized patrols which covered the surrounding areas picked up twenty-five more beat-up Heinies, who had surrendered to us without putting up a struggle. The patrols returned to their respective towns and we spent a quiet night in these villages.

April 15 saw the entire company reassembled at the company CP in Dornstadt. Once more we entrucked and took off for parts unknown. Our great armies were really driving. Gains of fifty miles were the order of the day. Our poor derrieres were really taking a beating, keeping up with the increased tempo of our fighting forces.

The Germans were now in desperate straits. Hundreds of enemy soldiers were deserting, while many others just threw their uniforms away and became civilians. Their armies were being well chewed up and beaten. Yet we had to be wary as there were too many fanatical and die-hard Nazis who wouldn't stop at anything to cause us trouble. It was those characters whom we were interested in. Since we couldn't tell the difference between these two kinds, we took into custody all suspicious customers that fell into our hands and sent them to the proper authorities, who knew more about this subject than we did.

We headed due east, passing through the wrecked city of Kassel. We traveled for fifty miles before we reached our destination. We then took up a defensive position along the west bank of the Saale River on the outside of Korbetha. We established check points and sent out combat patrols. For our active measures, we picked up five P.W.'s who were thoroughly searched and processed before being sent to the rear.

For the first time since that motorized patrol back in Sande was fired on, we received enemy shelling. Some artillery landed in the 1st platoon's area, but outside of making them seek safety and disperse, no physical injuries were sustained. Our own artillery answered the enemy's and came out the better.

That evening we were alerted on a possible enemy counter-attack with the aim of trying to break our defenses in this sector. Nary a hair nor hide was seen of the Heinies, as we sweated out this forthcoming attack of that night.

Morning of April 16 found us in these same positions. A foot patrol was sent across

the Saale River to the town of Collenby, but no enemy resistance was met. The village was given a stamp of clearance and our patrols returned to its base. Meanwhile our vigilance on these check points gained eleven more Heinies to our P.W. toll. These stragglers were picked up in civilian clothes. It was only after a close examination had brought to light their Wehrmacht identification papers that we knew that these birds were soldiers.

That evening we quit our positions to take up a new one. We headed in a north-easterly direction and entered the towns of Moritzsch and Dolzig (in the Sckedwitz area.) Here we received a similar mission, protecting and blocking the roadnet in the area.

The 2nd platoon set up its outpost in the tunnels under an aqueduct, while the 1st platoon covered the roadnet in its vicinity.

The night was quietly spent here as no enemy action interfered with our snoozing. The next morning found us in these same positions with our erstwhile duties of checking civilians and establishing roadblocks. We didn't mind this new mode of warfare we were participating in because due to our active patrolling our fresh-egg supply was inexhaustible. Moreover, our packs, gasmasks, and bedrolls were crammed with souvenirs. Thanks to the German wine cellars, we never had to go thirsty.

We were rarely bothered by enemy activity. Our progress was more than satisfactory. We were doing more than our share in overrunning the towns, villages, and communities on our way. Our prisoner of war bag was daily increasing and our activity in patrolling had opened many a road and main route for supplies to our rear echelon columns.

We were working as a swell fighting unit. The cooperation and coordination between the cavalry and us was splendid. There was only the smoothest of teamwork between our respective organizations. Our constant watchfulness and alertness had rewarded us many times in limiting the operations of saboteurs and enemy agents in our sector of action. We were going strong and we were proud of it.

All that morning and night saw us in these same positions. Although we had been alerted for a possible Heiny attack, none came off. We pulled our guard duties and made ourselves as comfortable as the situation allowed us.



The next day a foot patrol was sent to the city of Sckeuditz. They entered the place and found it undefended, but occupied by fourteen Heinies, none of whom wanted to fight anymore. The Jerries were brought back and sent to the rear, while our patrol took over the city. A second patrol which later entered the city found eleven more Heinies. They too, were put under our custody and sent to the rear. These patrols were turning into farces. All they did was to go over to the local burgomeister, made him responsible for all military personnel in his jurisdiction, and forced him to surrender all uniformed members to us. Besides our gains in enemy soldiers, the loot we obtained was considerable. We did good business selling souvenirs to rear echelon troops who came too late to get any of the gravy.

We spent one more complete day on these outposts and just before we said auf weid-ersehen, we collected thirty more Heinies in our last patrol to Sckeuditz.

The day of April 20 saw us entering the town of Hirshroda after an administrative ride of thirty miles. Here we received the task of searching and clearing out the dense woods in this vicinity.

A joint skirmish line consisting of "A" and "B" and "C" companies flushed out forty members of the Wehrmacht from this natural hiding place. The woods were thoroughly scoured and when we were finished, a stamp of clearance was given to the area. That evening we reorganized back at Hirshroda and spent the night there.

The next day, April 22, we were on the move again. There were more woods that had to be cleared. Reports had filtered through that enemy agents and saboteurs were operating from these forests, and were proving to be a menace to our supply columns. We moved to the dense forests in the vicinity of FOREST BURGWENDER and FOREST ALLSTED and from here started our search of the enemy.

We formed our general skirmish lines and prepared to flush out all or any enemy in these woods. Meanwhile, the cavalry were setting up their roadblocks and motorized patrols. Over hill and dale, through streambeds, past dense foliage and underbrush, we traveled; but not one Heiny did we see.

On completion of these woods we sent a foot patrol to flush out all the Heinies in

the town of Bachra, but no resistance was encountered. We then entrucked and went to another sector of woods (in the vicinity of Ostramonda) where we had another job to do. Our S-2 was hollering the cry of "Wolf" in this area, but too many times previously had we heard that story.

We formed our combat formations and prepared for another journey through this wooded obstacle course. We hadn't advanced more than 200 yards when small arms fire opened up on us. One of our boys was wounded by this fire, but he still had the strength and courage to return fire. He got one of the bastards. The rest of the section, meanwhile, took cover and then by aggressive actions outflanked this small enemy force. They got two more Jerries for their boldness, but only after a skirmish had occurred where these Jerries fired their Panzerfaust (Bazooka.) Luckily we didn't sustain any further casualties. We evacuated the wounded man after our medic administered first aid. It was a fatiguing job to get him to an awaiting vehicle as he had to be ported.

More firing was placed on us by the enemy from another hill. More panzerfaust grenades landed in our immediate vicinity, but again, fortunately, no one was hurt. We returned fire, but due to poor observation we were inaccurate. We boldly pursued the enemy and got two more of them for our efforts.

When we finished this task of flushing out these woods, we returned to the town of Bachra. We spied a booby trap set up on the main supply route and neutralized it.

We were now maddened by our harrowing experience. We were boiling because of the roughness of the terrain we had had to transgress. We searched out every building in the town and picked up thirteen suspicious Germans. When three of these birds made a foolish attempt to escape, they put their signature to their own death. A torrent of automatic rifle fire cut them down before they got twenty-five yards. They were literally cut to ribbons. We left them lying in the middle of the road as a fair example and warning to all enemy agents which may have still been in the vicinity. That evening we headed for the town of Ostramonda, where we held up and whiled away the night.

The next day we were on the move again. This time we had the mission of clearing out the town of Stockhausen and the wooded area north and south of the place. After a

complete and thorough search of every nook and cranny in town, which we found clear, we regrouped and prepared to give the woods the once over.

All that afternoon we hunted, but for all our labors all we got was a bunch of blisters and a run-down feeling from traversing this rugged terrain. We were getting disgusted at the sight of a tree and felt a hatred for these forests that would have bode ill if ever we came upon any Germans.

We then headed for the town of Grossfurra, which we screened. No enemy was found so we returned to Ostramonda, where we spent the night. The next day at the request of the local military government, we picked up fifteen civilians of the Nazi Party. We sent them to our rear headquarters and let them worry about taking care of them. That noon we moved back to our former residence at Hirshroda. Here we reverted to mobile reserve and took up rear area functions.

On April 25 we traveled to the large city of Muncheln, where the battalion reorganized. Our corps mission having been completed for the time, we found ourselves divorced from the cavalry. We now became reserve troops of corps.

For the first time in over two weeks we were actually in the rear. This gave us our first real opportunity to relax and to sleep the sleep which was long overdue us.

Our advance billeting party had done a fine job of securing billets. We had a lovely place in which to live. Our new houses were a group of buildings which had previously housed civilian workers for the nearby factories. They were modern buildings and practically untouched by the war. They were situated on the high ground north of the city.

We had all the comforts of home. We had private rooms for the individual soldier and soft beds. We had up-to-date plumbing and latrine facilities. We even had bathtubs which could have been heated up for baths. Most of us had confiscated radios during our escapades so that we could soothe ourselves with music. This more than atoned for our hardships while we were on the road, and appeased our lust for the better things in life which one sort of loses contact with while in combat.

Our battalion underwent its first reorganization in over a month. It was good to be under the folds of our battalion again, to be able to visit and talk over experiences with our buddies from other companies,, to learn of their adventures and to gain the true and complete role that our organization had played in this tremendous push across Germany.

At Muncheln our battalion received the mission of establishing a series of control points about the city. (Note--as was the case in all towns and cities in Germany, German soldiers and especially SS men were disbanding their uniforms and donning civilian clothes and did acts of sabotage against our rear headquarters and supply routes which caused great concern to our big brass.) A rotation system was devised whereby one company pulled guard, while the others were held in battalion reserve in town.

Our company received this guard task the first day we were in Muncheln. We hauled in twelve suspicious characters who were dressed in civilian clothes and had had army papers on them. A motorized patrol was also sent out to the neighboring villages, but no Heinies were found.

The next day our battalion received word that infiltrating SS men were causing troubles while spreading fear and terrorism about, especially among the displaced persons in the town of Brandenburg. The task of ascertaining the truthfulness of this report fell to "A" and "C" companies, who were sent to Brandenburg to check the situation there.

While "C" company set up a series of blocking and control points at the roads entering and leaving the town, our company entered the town proper.

We issued a proclamation that cleared all the civilians out of their houses and made them assemble at the local church in the main square. While these people were undergoing questioning and processing, we made a complete and thorough search of the houses. Our hunt gained us nothing. We did return with fifteen suspicious characters, though, and no more complaints ever reached us again.

In Muncheln we again found ourselves confronted by the question of fraternization. There were a good many DP's who were actually our allies, but yet we weren't allowed to converse with them, less have affairs with them. I'm afraid though that this non-fra-

ternization order didn't stop some of the boys as they were excellent at going around back alleys and side streets and knew all the angles so far as concealment was concerned, to carry on certain intimate relations with the fairer sex.

It was here in Muncheln that our battalion celebrated its 2nd anniversary. Although our birthday fell on April 1, this was our first opportunity to hold the affair. Better late than never was the idea.

We had obtained a large beerhall in town which formerly had housed Nazi parties to hold the affair in. We got hold of a U.S.O. unit to entertain us and we slaughtered a few cows and found plenty of full beer barrels to appease our hunger and thirst.

That evening a great time was had by all. The chow was good and the beer as stimulating. Our C.O. Col. Williams gave out with one of his informal speeches, which gave no flowery promises for the future, gave the highest praise for our performances done in the past while giving word of a job for the present.

It was only a couple hours after this splendid gathering that we were to board our respective vehicles and were ready to hit the road. Spirits were never higher and morale never better. We were proud Rangers. Now we had every reason in the world to be as our accomplishments were many and our noble deeds plentiful.

That night we were billeted in the town of Laucha, where we again joined up with the cavalry. Came the dawn, we found ourselves ready to move. We hit the road bright and early as our itinerary was destined to take us over 150 miles, due south, over the autobahn which led from Leipzig to Nurnberg.

That evening we entered and took over the town of Wilchereuth in the vicinity of Weiden, Bavaria. We were well exhausted from our lengthy trip. We were most eager to hit the hay as soon as was possible.

The following day, April 30, we were still at the same address. We stayed in our billets in Wilchereuth as we were now a mobile reserve in the sector.

We hadn't had many changes in our company since we left Maychoss to cross the Rhine. Our casualties had been extremely light and outside of the man wounded in the skirmishes at Ostramonda our wounded list was negligible. So that all in all our company roster remained unchanged.

That day we lost our 1st platoon leader, Lt. Wilson, to Easy company. It seems as though they were short a good leader and we had one extra. So, they got him.

The 1st of May brought no new changes to our status. We were still in Wilshersreuth undergoing normal functions and complying with a light training schedule.

The war news was now taking a most optimistic turn. Our hopes were high that this war was reaching its final stages. The German forces in Italy had capitulated and our mighty military forces had long since linked up with the gigantic Red Army. It was only a question of time now, and we were anxiously awaiting the surrender.

On May 2 reports reached us concerning enemy hidden in the wilds of the wooded area of Steinwald. It fell to our company to go forth and flush them out. We proceeded by vehicles to our point of origin which was the thick forest northeast of Steinwald. We formed our skirmish lines and moved out. After a complete and thorough search we had naught to show for our seeking except tired feet and general exhaustion.

After the woods were cleared we returned to Steinwald where we went through the wasted motions of uncovering the enemy in the town proper. That night we were all popped out. We shacked up in the town of Pullenreuth.

The next day we were again playing hide-and-seek. This time in the woods in the vicinity of Fichtelberg. This job of combing woods was getting downright monotonous. Once more we traipsed over wooded hills and dales, fording streams, tramping through underbrush, and once more the results our company obtained were negative. Baker company though who was operating on our right flank had quite a battle. They overran the headquarters of the 5th column elements in this area. They killed one Heinie while wounding another and getting two prisoners.

That evening we laid several ambushes for the Heinies in the Fichtelberg area. We set up outposts and check points but we didn't snare a single Jerry.

On May 4 we traveled back to our former residence at Pullenreuth. Here we tried to forget our experiences in the woods, but once more reports of sabotage caught up with us. Again we had more woods to clean out. The lucky 2nd platoon was taking baths at a shower point some distance away when the orders came down, so the 1st platoon re-

ceived the job and had to carry it out alone. No enemy was encountered in their combining, so that when they returned that evening, they were one tired and disgusted bunch of Rangers.

We stayed at Pullenreuth till May 6. The news of the war was so good that we knew it was all over but the cheering. Yet we were a bit on the reserved side as the enemy still had large forces in Norway and Czechoslovakia, and we were afraid that these jobs were just made of order for the Rangers. We were almost right in that thought as the day of victory, May 7, found us crossing the Czech border. We had started out early in the morning and the news of our country's triumph hadn't reached us yet. I don't know exactly what our mission was, but we headed for the town of Grun, which was some fifty odd miles from our CP at Eiden and which lay on the northwestern border of Sudetenland. Our egress through the towns were met with a smattering of cheers and yelling. Although we had crossed the German border and entered a conquered country, the people here were outstandingly German and looked upon us as conquerors rather than liberators.

We held up in the town of Grun and spent a most pleasant night in a couple large hotels, one for each platoon. The 2nd platoon got the better of the deal in its billets as there were beaucoup frauleins who were most willing to warm their beds and to see that some to the boys had sweet dreams.

It was here in the town of Grun that we heard Mr. Churchill's formal but authoritative speech declaring the war to be ended. All armed hostilities was to cease and that all German troops were to give themselves up.

It was hard for us to believe that the war was actually over. As yet too many vivid and haunting experiences remained in our minds and hearts. We took the news calmly. It seemed too good to be true, yet it was. We had at last taken that final step on the road to victory.

I couldn't help but go into a semi-trance and think of the good ole days back in England; to relive the harrowing experiences of D-day; to retrace our journey across the continent and to think of all my friends and of all the American soldiers who had lost their lives in this great struggle.

We had traversed a road which had had many traps and pitfalls in its ever winding contours. Many who had started out on this road fell by the wayside before they had taken a couple of steps. Others had managed to come part way, before they were overcome by the obstacles in the road. Yet some of us did make the complete journey. It must be those that must see to it that our travels weren't for naught. They must see that our buddies' wounds and deaths don't go unavenged. They must make sure that our children never have to transverse over a similar route.

It is hard to realize the starring role that our company and battalion played in this history-making epoch. It is hard to visualize that we were the actors in the greatest play of all civilization; that we performed our parts with perfection. It is not difficult to recall the trials and tribulations we had to endure in order to bring about the final curtain in this saga. It is heart-rending to review the time when we had to leave behind the main stars, because of the stark tragedy of the story; it is with the greatest of sorrow that we repeat their names and remember their features as they went forward so gallantly and so bravely.

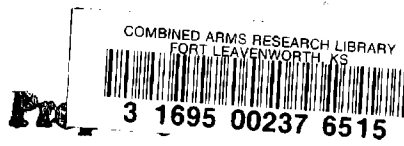
It is because of them that today this play had its successful conclusion; it is because of them that despotism, tyranny and Nazism are to forever banished from this world.

#### V-E DAY

Let us lift our faces to the sky, to pray  
 To give thanks to Him for bringing this deliverance day,  
 And to remember and immortalize those  
 Who gave their lives to pay,  
 So that all the peoples of the world  
 Could have this V-E DAY.



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PRINCE

... Overseas and then - over the top.

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**LIBRARY  
COMMAND  
AND  
GENERAL  
STAFF  
COLLEGE**

