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Burns, Robert J.

The 68th Tank Battalion
in Combat

UNIT HISTORY
68TH TANK BATTALION

In Memoriam

Homer Armes
Tobea Avino
Williford D. Bland, Jr.
Fred K. Blaylock
Charles J. Brand
William G. Busby
Ausley D. Bush
Duane H. Callister
Louis J. Capozzi
Thomas O. Carriker
Dominick D'Amico
Vincent L. Dixon
Edward N. Doyle
Lawrence B. Dunford
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Alfred R. Ehlers, Jr.
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William P. Pendergraph
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James T. Smith
Norman Spanier
George E. Stark
James F. Sullivan
Aulsey M. Sutton
James L. Sutton
Joseph D. Taylor
Maxon P. Thomas
Albert C. Thompson
William J. Tobin
Raymond G. Wall
William H. Walls
Webster W. Willis
Herman C. Wilson
Oscar G. Wilson
Walter Yadlosky
Joseph A. Zay, Jr.

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5th Tank Battalion



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In Combat



TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE 68TH TANK BATTALION:

This is a history of an organization which did a great deal of hard effective fighting, of a unit which received little credit, but which was truly one of the "work horses" of the western front. It is a history which each of you helped to write—and one in which you can take deep pride. It is a history made possible by your skill, courage, stamina and determination. And it is a history written in blood, the blood of those of us who failed to return. To them, it is therefore dedicated.

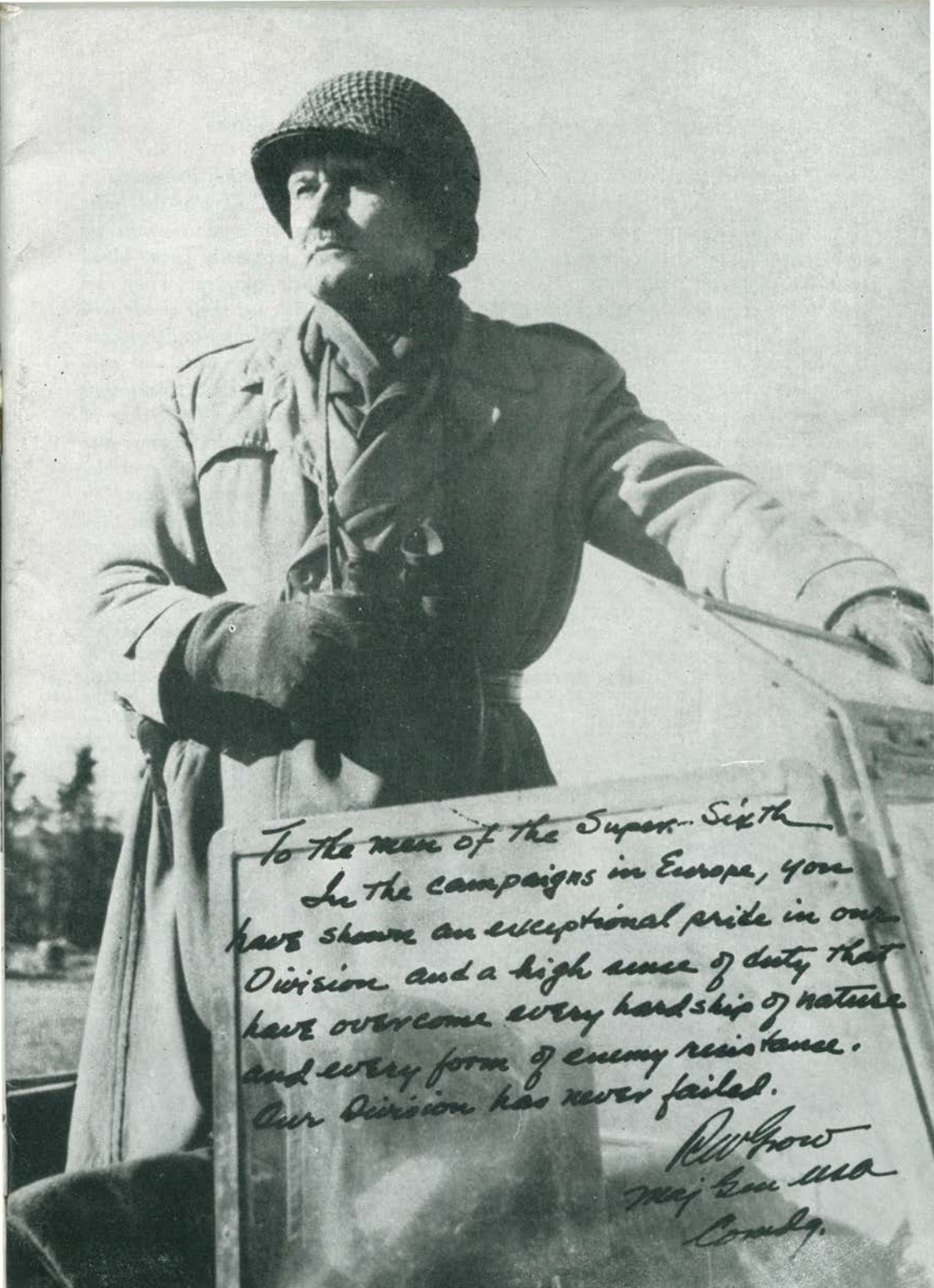
It was my honor to command the Battalion during much of the time in which this history was made. Of that, I am very proud.

In your future life, I hope that each of you, individually may attain every happiness. And may your individual efforts be as successful as those you made as a unit. To you and yours, the best of luck.

Sincerely,

H. C. Davall

LT. COL. INF.



To the men of the Super Sixth
In the campaigns in Europe, you
have shown an exceptional pride in our
Division and a high sense of duty that
have overcome every hardship of nature
and every form of enemy resistance.
Our Division has never failed.

R. W. Grow
Maj Gen USA
Comdg.

UNIT HISTORY OF THE 68TH TANK BATTALION

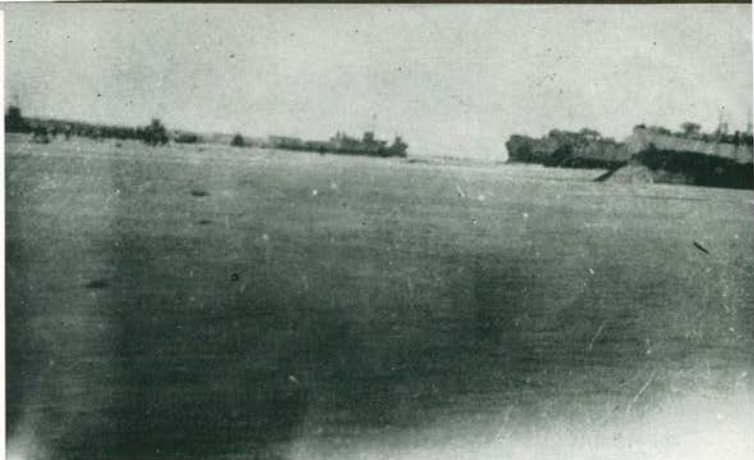
This will be the record of the 68th Tank Battalion's participation in successive campaigns from the historic breakthrough in Normandy to "VE" Day in the heart of Germany. Before beginning this narrative, however, there are some remarks we must make. Firstly, this history was made possible by the heroically spent blood and sweat of American men, who gave their best for their country. They did well, these men, and though some of them are no longer with us, their deeds will never be forgotten. Some were singled out and cited for their gallantry and heroism, they cannot be praised too highly. Then there were those who were not conspicuously recognized, but who, day in and day out, week in week out, month in month out performed steadily and efficiently, these men under the leadership of their Battalion Commander, Lt. Colonel Harold C. Davall, and his Officers and non-commissioned Officers, are the unsung heroes who made this writing possible. The word "Defeat" never had any meaning for them, unless it were inflicted on their enemy. So, although five campaign stars or this story cannot tell all that they accomplished, we hope that this will help recall, in part at least, why we are proud to have been members of the 68th Tank Battalion.

Lt. Robert J. Burns, Jr., Linguist, recon platoon leader S-2 and good man to have around. Co-author of this history.



Lt. John S. Dahl, formerly 1st Sgt. of "Charlie" Co. and commissioned on the battlefield. Co-author of this history.





View of Utah Beach with landing craft the day we landed.
Photo by Moustache.

Brittany Campaign

The 68th Tank Battalion had been well trained in the United States and the United Kingdom. It had studied, maneuvered, and exercised long and assiduously for the grim business of war. Commanders knew their men; the men knew their jobs—all this from training and the book. But, suddenly the chips were down. We had just recently crossed the channel from England, and had regained our land legs. We were ready. We were alerted; we wondered what sort of a job was in store for us. Preparations were being quietly made, and we all felt that something big was up to break through that stalemate down by St. Lo and Lessay. And then, surely enough it began.

On July 28, 1944, at 1115, under Combat Command "A," we moved out from the vicinity of Fierville toward Lessay. Company "A," commanded by Captain Raymond Polk, was attached to the combat command advance guard under the 44th Armored Infantry Battalion. Then after un-eventfully and successfully passing through the 79th Infantry Division at Lessay, the Battalion

The rubble which was left of Lessay after our Bombers and artillery had pounded it. Photo by Moustache.



bivouacked in the vicinity of Montsurvent. Thus the first day was over, and the big move had begun, but the world had no inkling that the breakthrough was under way. At 1040 the following day, the battalion moved out of its bivouac area toward Pont de la Toque, when resistance was met by the head of the column at Pont de la Roque, we moved off the road into a temporary assembly and remained there until 2115, while the attack on the river crossing developed. When the combat command deployed for the attack, one platoon of Company "A," under the command of 2nd Lt. Donald A. Kratzer, was ordered to take up direct fire positions on the high ground north of the Seine River, and this fire was delivered on predesignated targets with excellent observed results. Then, after the attack by the 44th was successful, this same platoon forded the river under very difficult conditions and went into positions to support the Infantry in case of counter-attack. At 2115, the Battalion moved into bivouac one mile north of Pont de la Roque, and remained there for the night.

On the 30th of July, still under "CCA," we went into Division reserve, while elements of "CCB" passed through early in the morning. Then, at 2115, the battalion moved out again, and marched until dawn, at which time it closed bivouac near Muneville-Sur-Mer, where a successful operation was marred by the death of Pvt. William Wall, "A" Company, who was killed by a booby trap. Although our lightning strike up to this point had been veiled with secrecy, everyone knew that the outfit had broken into the clear, and from here on in it would be a question of stamina and some plain and fancy broken field running.

After only a few hours rest, the battalion moved out again and closed bivouac near La Tapiniere at 1415. Still driving hard and fast, we moved out again at 1900 and reached a point near Sartilly at 0315 the next morning. We were then under the control of the Third Army, destined to later and even soon cover itself with glory and also its colorful leader, Lt. General George Patton, Jr.

Early in the afternoon of the first of August, we headed for Avranches. After moving out we were strafed by enemy planes, and suffered one casualty. It was our first experience with strafing planes, and we shot at them perhaps a little indiscriminately. Perhaps the trigger finger was a little itchy. At 1930, the column was strafed again, this time south of Avranches, but we suffered no casualties. Then, we closed in bivouac shortly before midnight north of Antrain. The battalion S-2, Captain Raines, went forward to contact the FFI for information and found that they had cleared the town of enemy, and had seized and held an important bridge there, vitally necessary for the continued advance of the combat command. Our Reconnaissance Platoon, commanded by Lt. Harry Linebaugh in the meanwhile had reconnoitered for additional crossing of the river to be used in the event the bridge was blown. So ended another day, and we were really starting to roll.

At 0720 the next morning we continued the march, and swiftly steamed to a point near Medreac. Although we sidestepped most of it, we encountered scattered resistance, and captured during the day twelve prisoners, including one each badly confused Major. Also, "D" Company was strafed at 1410 by enemy planes firing rockets, but their accuracy was nil, and they were successfully driven off without any harm being done. The weather was ideal now, and, in spite of the strain of continual driving, we were in fine fettle and full of confidence. "CCB" was paralleling our spearhead and the enemy was in confused rout, that is, what remained of him, for we were well within his outer shell by this time. On the third of August, we moved out at 1225. Company

"A," marching with advance guard, had been receiving continuous small arms fire, but Captain Polk had found it necessary to use only limited deployment to clear the route of march. However, upon entering Mauron, one platoon, as part of the advance party encountered stiff small arms and cannon fire. So, with this platoon acting as a base of fire, the remainder of the company enveloped the town from the north. During this action, they destroyed several machine gun nests and caused heavy enemy casualties. As a result of this attack, what was left of this kraut force fell back from the town. And here's an interesting note—for the first time we found that quite a few of the heinies were wearing Red Cross arm bands. Was Jerry getting a little desperate—maybe? Well, when this action was completed, the battalion moved into bivouac one mile south of Mauron at 2200. At this time, one platoon, the second, of Company "D" was assigned to "CCA" trains for rear guard protection. Our supply lines were stretching a wee bit.

At eight o'clock the next morning, the battalion was detached from "CCA," as also was the 44th AIB. Col. Davall was placed in command of this newly formed force, and was ordered to remain in the area and await further orders, and was also assigned Battery "A" of the 777th AAA Bn, but then at noon, we reverted to "CCA" control again. Then Col. Davall was given the charge of leading the combat command column, at 1350 we pulled out, heading west. At Pontivy, the column ran into a blown bridge; there Sergeant Malcolm Helton, later decorated with a Bronze Star for his action, reconnoitered and found an alternate route across the river and canal, which permitted the force to proceed with minimum loss of time. In order to accomplish this, Sgt. Helton penetrated twenty miles, reportedly, into an area held by the enemy, and used only one section to perform his hazardous mission. With the column now in "free wheeling" we knifed our way sixty-one miles beyond Mauron, where opposition was swiftly dealt with, the task force refueled and remained along side the road to grab forty

S/Sgt. Malcom Helton—The Reconnaissance Platoon Sgt. who performed his every task in an outstanding manner.



winks. Thus ended one of the most daring, brilliantly led, under pressure armored stabs made thus far in the march.

At nine thirty on the fifth of August, CCA resumed its westward trek under the command of Brig. General James Taylor. Then east of Merdignac, Company "C" was fired on by organized sniper fire from a trench system. The company immediately returned fire, killing five enemy, and wounded many others. When the head of the column reached Huelgoat, Lt. Col. McCarrison was ordered by the Division Commander to clear the town, and two platoons of Company "A" were ordered to support one company of the 44th in accomplishing this mission. This force closed on the enemy in two directions and drove them into the northern end of the town. At this point, resistance grew very stiff, and the task force came to grips with the enemy at close quarters. One tank was hit by Panzerfaust fire at a very close range, and was set on fire. However, the tank crew remained inside and continued to machine gun the krauts until the heat became unbearable; crawling out of the vehicle they found themselves surrounded by Wehrmacht troops who called to them to surrender. Unanimously they refused, and immediately opened fire on the group in the face of overwhelming odds, and almost certain death. Technician 5th Grade, Santo De Nunziato, Fred K. Blaylock, were cut down by machine gun fire. Nunziato was immediately killed and Blaylock died of wounds later in the hospital. Technician 4th Grade Charles E. Pidcock continued to fire his sub-machine gun at close range until his tank exploded, and threw him into a nearby hedgerow. The enemy had been dissipated; all three tankers were later awarded the Silver Star for their gallantry in action. After the above action the column passed through the town of Huelgoat and bypassed the fighting. Company C commanded by Captain Daniel E. Smith was ordered to relieve Company A as part of the advance Guard. The actual transfer, however, did not take place until next morning, and that night enemy patrols infiltrated through a company bivouac area in the forward area, throwing grenades and causing one casualty before being driven off.

Then on the 6th of August, the 1st Platoon of D Company was attached to the advance guard to support the point. Also the third platoon of this company was attached to advance guard with the mission of reconnoitering an enemy strong point on the flank of the column. The third platoon proceeded on an independent route and encountered a road block defended by small arms, machine guns and bazookas. The platoon drew very heavy fire from all weapons, deployed and withdrew under their own supporting fire after inflicting heavy casualties and driving off some of the enemy machine guns and bazookas. This action cost the Company an important casualty, Captain Robert B. McKenna, Company Commander of Company "D," who was wounded in the left arm. The first platoon in the point encountered small arms, bazookas, and mortar fire while reconnoitering an enemy strong point while in the vicinity of the route march, but received no casualties. The main body moved out of the Bivouac area at approximately 1745.

Company C, now in the advance party, ran into stiff enemy resistance at Blouveaut, and came under fire from small arms, machine guns, mortars, and a battery of artillery. The enemy was dug in on well prepared positions. Enemy observation was good. However, a section of medium tanks, under the command of 2nd Lt. John Lundh, pushed into town and pressed the enemy back into the west end of town, while the CCA column bypassed the town and the strong point. This tank section knocked out two enemy machine gun nests and inflicted heavy personal casualties on the foe. It also admirably succeeded in

screening the main body on the south end of the town, but the cost was heavy. Both tanks of the section were knocked out. Lt. Lundh's tank was knocked out by direct fire from a captured enemy French 75, and Sgt. Capozzi's tank was knocked out by bazooka fire. The casualties were two killed, one wounded, and 4 missing.

At 2050 south of Plauveaut, when enemy artillery began to shell CCA column, 1st Lt. Elzie Hickerson went forward in an attempt to locate enemy guns and to direct our fire. In order to do this Lt. Hickerson had to go into the area where the fire was falling: this he did, and located the gun positions and remained there directing our counter-battery fire which immediately silenced the guns. For this action, Lt. Hickerson, the assault gun platoon leader, was later awarded the Bronze Star Medal. Thus the enemy was once more driven into headlong retreat. The Battalion finally closed in bivouac at 0200 the following morning in the vicinity of Gouesnou. Thus completed a continuous thirty-two hour march, which took the column through the towns of Bodtis and Plabennec.

Early in the morning of the 8th of August, the advance guard, to which was attached Company "C" and one platoon of Company "D," was heavily shelled by enemy artillery, direct fire and heavy mortar fire. Our vehicles were immobilized because of lack of gasoline; our drive had gone so far and so fast that our supply lines were stretched almost to the breaking point. Jerry had excellent observation, and his gun batteries were perfectly camouflaged; his ground troops were well dug in. And, although liaison planes vainly attempted to spot the concealed positions, our counter-battery fire was ineffective, and the merciless pounding continued for four and a half hours without respite.

During this action many acts of heroism were noted; for example: Captain Daniel E. Smith, Company Commander of Company "C" attempted to locate enemy installations, boldly stood on tank and hedgerow, and so exposed himself on countless occasions without concern for his personal safety. An Infantry attack was expected; we needed better observation. Sensing this Captain Smith maintained constant watch, paying no heed to the hail of shells bursting about him. For this heroic conduct, he was later awarded the Silver Star Medal. Also, Pfc. James T. Smith discovered that his buddy lay wounded in a slit trench; he climbed on top of the turret of his tank to find the first aid kit. A shell struck the turret and seriously wounded him. Despite his mortal wounds, he secured the kit and crawled to the aid of his fallen comrade. Then, after treating his buddy, he collapsed and was himself evacuated. several days later, he died in a field hospital. For his gallantry in action, he was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal.

During this costly action, our reconnaissance had further ascertained that we had run into outer defenses of fortress BREST. The Division objective loomed so near and yet so far. Our commanders followed the only logical course—withdrawal to more advantageous positions, stabilize our line, and prepare to attack this strategically important port. It should be noted here that the final reduction of Brest later

Moustache Hickerson and Cpl. Magnoni in their Forward Observers peep.



proved to be a major military operation requiring the commitment of a corps reinforced and lasting several weeks. And here we were—having nearly completed a two hundred and fifty mile piledriving breakthrough which had sapped our armored virility. The men were tired. Then from higher headquarters came the order to our Battalion "Attack and seize that portion of Brest which lies within your zone."

Automatically plans were made and we prepared for what we thought would be a last, futilely suicidal, sacrificial dash to glory.

As part of CCA, Task Force Davall was made up of the Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon, Battalion Headquarters, three subordinate assault forces, each composed of three medium tanks, one F.O.'s tank, one platoon of armored infantry, one tank destroyer. The Infantry was mounted on the tanks and T. D. The task force also had a reserve under 1st. Lt. Elzie Hickerson, which was composed of our 105mm Assault Gun Platoon, Mortar Platoon, the 44th AIB AT Platoon, and Engineer flame thrower squad, and an engineer mine detection squad. Remaining elements of the Battalion were also employed to form two other major Task Forces, similar in composition to Task Force Davall. One task force was under the command of Captain Raymond Polk, CO of Company "A." Also, the combat command reserve included Company "D" and service and administrative elements of the 68th.

After a lengthy artillery preparation, the attack jumped off at 0700 on the ninth of August. Task Force Davall was fired on by well placed 20mm dual-purpose ack-ack guns before it reached the line of departure. Our counter-battery silenced these guns, we knew exactly where they were, for 2nd Lt. Harry Linebaugh with elements of his platoon had reconnoitered, had even dangerously worked his way right up to the very gun muzzles the night before, and had pinpointed their location. Lt. Linebaugh was later awarded the Bronze Star Medal for this feat.

All Task Forces were working their way closer to the enemy's defensive position. Task Force Davall encountered a road block, and instantaneously began to outflank it, when suddenly there came over the radio the order to halt the attack and to withdraw. Whew! That was close! We were not disappointed that the attack was called off for everyone knew how enormous was the task, how well prepared he was to greet us on land, sea and air.

So, retaining the composition of task forces, and under the control of CCA, Task Force Davall marched to the vicinity of Plouvien. The Recon Platoon went forward and found the town clear of enemy; the column turned west just south of town and proceeded to its bivouac area, but before we had cleared this turning point, fighting broke out in the streets. We later found out that an enemy force of about 1500 members of the 265th Infantry Division had approached Plouvien from the Northeast, unaware that we were there. Captain Polk was Johnny-on-the-spot; he saw that the column's safe passage at this critical point was seriously menaced. So, quickly he took a section of his medium tanks into the town proper and contacted there a mixed group of 44th and 9th AIB doughs, but no accompanying Officers, so he immediately took command of the situation. He organized a tank-dough Task Force and drove through the town until fire from enemy mortars, artillery and machine guns became so severe that farther advance was impossible. In the meantime, Lt. Col. McCorrison, CO of the 44th AIB had arrived on the scene, and it was decided that Col McCorrison would press the attack in the original direction while Captain Polk

took a light Task Force around and whacked the krauts from the west. Captain Polk, having sent for an additional section of medium tanks, fought his way around through the west side of town and pushed in the enemy right flank. The kraut force, finding itself pinched in between the two attacking forces, withdrew from town and retreated up the road, at which point our fighter planes dove into view and worked them over. Needless to mention, for his display of courage and his initiative and aggressiveness Captain Polk was awarded the Silver Star.

Also, during the above action, we must tell what the outstanding soldiers under Captain Polk achieved. Staff Sergeant Vernard T. Brock-Jones, and Sergeant Myron N. Switzer, Platoon Sergeant and Section Leader respectively of the section called up by Captain Polk to reinforce the original force, arrived on the scene with orders to join an Infantry Platoon on the west side of town. They found only two Infantrymen there, but immediately took enemy positions under fire and fought their way forward. Infantrymen arrived and they continued forward against heavy mortar, artillery and machine gun fire. S/Sgt. Brock-Jones's tank was hit by bazooka fire, but he kept going and kept pouring lead into the jerries until they were either mowed down or flying out of town. Although un-hit, Sgt. Switzer did likewise, and so both of these leaders were later awarded the Silver Stars for their intrepid gallantry in the face of great odds.

Then, after the smoke had cleared away and the battle was won, the 68th Tank Battalion went into bivouac for refueling and badly needed, much deserved rest. We remained in that location through the twelfth of August, recuperated and refitted as much as possible.

T/Sgt. Vito Del Moro—"Baker" Company Maintenance Sgt. who, with his crew, kept their vehicles in tiptop shape.



Lorient

With the famous break-through to Brest over, and the Battalion refreshed from the succeeding rest at Plouvien, Higher Headquarters didn't waste any time in picking another job for us. The Division was ordered to the vicinity of Lorient, which had been reached by the Fourth Armored Division almost abreast of us. We were to relieve them, and from what we had heard they needed it. Well, anyway we left Plouvien on the thirteenth of August, and headed toward Lorient. We arrived at Le Heles later in the day, and bivouacked there for the night.

The Battalion Staff and Company Commanders left the Battalion area the next morning and went forward to reconnoiter the area held by the 8th Tk Bn., 4th A.D., preparatory to relieving them. Then, at 1600 the battalion moved out of its bivouac area and closed in the vicinity of Arzano at two o'clock the following morning.

Then, we were relieved from being attached to CCA, and were attached to CCB. Our mission was to contain Lorient, in support of the 44th Armored Infantry Battalion and elements of the 25th Armored Engineer Battalion.

On the sixteenth of August, while the Battalion remained in bivouac near Arzano, Col. Davall, his S-2, Assault Gun Platoon Leader, Reconnaissance Platoon, and one platoon of light tanks from "D" Company departed on a reconnaissance in force to the east. The mission was to determine the number and disposition in the area generally between Vannes and Nantes and to sever the main road between those two cities. The patrol reached Vannes in the late afternoon, contacted elements of a French Paratroop Regiment and went into bivouac there for the night. The S-3 returned to Division with the information gained from the French, and rejoined the force before midnight.

On the following day, while the battalion's status remained unchanged, the reconnaissance force continued on its mission. They found the bridge at La Roche Bernard blown, and they continued to the east generally along the axis of the River. When they reached Redon, only peeps could cross the flimsy bridge, so the rest of the force remained in assembly west of town. At Fegreac, element of the patrol drew small arms and machine gun fire, and lost one casualty; other elements of the patrol went on to Bloin and contacted a friendly cavalry group there. No feasible bridges nor crossing sites were found between La Roche Bernard and Bloin, so the patrol reassembled. Mission accomplished, they started back, and Col. Davall proceeded directly to Major General Grow at Division Headquarters, to report on all the information he had obtained.

The returning patrol found the rest of the battalion in the same place, with its status unchanged; and so it remained until on the twentieth of August, "A" Company was detached from the Battalion with a separate important mission connected with the reduction of Brest, and so, under orders from Higher Headquarters, they proceeded ninety miles overland to the vicinity of Landerneau, and went into bivouac there.

While "A" Company was moving toward the Daoulas peninsula, Companies

"B" and "C," and the Medics proceeded to the rear area north of Arzano and established a rear bivouac for training purposes.

Things were getting pretty quiet; Jerry, cooped up in his snug little fortifications in Lorient, realizing he wasn't going anywhere in a hurry, and we, on the other hand were only supposed to contain the city. But, while the remainder of the battalion enjoyed the comparative peace and quiet, our recon platoon, under Lt. Linebaugh, made daily trips to reconnoiter areas west of the River. Col. Davall generally went along with the patrol, and observed from little La Pouldu the various kraut activities on the other side of the river over near Lorient. And so it went until the 28th of August.

However, while the above activities were taking place at Lorient, "A" Company up on the Daoulas peninsula was taking part in quite a scrap. For, on August 25th they jumped off in support of foot-slogging sad sacks in the attack on Daoulas peninsula in an attempt to secure more advantageous positions for the artillery siege of Brest. On the 26th they were assigned the objective of Lesquivet, and attained this objective at 1730 after a bitter fight; the next day, without respite, and forced to forage for supplies, they continued their attack with Plougastel as the objective. An interesting sidelight on this action was related by Captain Polk: It seemed that in the heights of the melee, he found himself in front of a huge wine and cognac store. However, he was too busy mowing down krauts to thoroughly investigate the store, but he vowed that at the earliest practicable moment he would return to reap the fruits of a hardwon victory. He returned some time later, after he and his men had erased all opposition, only to find that some atrocity-committing enemy artilleryman had zeroed in on the building and left nothing but broken bottles. The following day "A" Company was employed to bring direct fire on Brest installations; in so doing they found that every time they moved up on the overlooking heights to fire they became the target of practically every gun in the fortress. But this did not phase the Polkmen and they caused destruction until their ammunition gave out. It must be admitted that this company was assigned missions for which it was not suited, and although performed under stiff protest, each one was

Capt. Fred W. Parker or "Bernie" as he was known over the air. A well-liked officer who served as communications officer for the Battalion as well as Able Co. Commander.



successful in spite of the handicap of working with the commanders who were not too familiar with armored operations.

On August 29th, the remainder of the battalion at Lorient relieved the 44th AIB and occupied dismounted defensive positions with the mission of containing that portion of Lorient within its zone. We must mention here that this was the first time the tankers were called upon to function as doughs, and that we were not particularly well set-up for such an operation, as our small arms consisted of Tommy guns and Carbines for the most part of short range, and very few dismounted automatic weapons.

Captain Williford D. Bland was placed in command of the forward C.P. and had the following troops under his command: his "B" Company tankers (dismounted), Company "A" of the 25th Engineers, Company "A" of the 9th AIB, Mortar Platoon 68th, and elements of Headquarters Company of the 68th. A regular infantry OPL was set up, complete with wire communications, and booby traps and other warning devices ringing forward outposts. The line ran generally from Pont Scorff to just short of Quimperle, the outposts were set up on dominant hills, and No Man's Land was wooded, ravined, and observation was poor except from these high points. Jerry would send out small routine foraging and reconnaissance patrols, but never in considerable strength. The men had orders not to fire except when absolutely necessary, and often heinie patrols would come as close as fifty yards from OP's and yet our well concealed positions were not disclosed. But Jerry knew darn well that we were there somewhere, and didn't try to come too far. Discipline and training, learned in garrison, was now paying off.

All this time, our Reconnaissance Platoon made daily patrols west of the river, combining excellent training with practical observation of German positions, and the Assault Gun Platoon fired many successful indirect fire missions to the great delight of its leader, Lt. Hickerson, and to the obvious dismay of the Krauts. Later on, Company "D" gave the Recon Platoon a much needed relief on these patrols, and for the first ten days in September, operations went on much the same as previously, with companies successively taking their turns on the OPL. On the 11th, there was a great deal of activity around the outposts, and five enemy prisoners were taken. Perhaps it was due to the presence of elements of the 94th Infantry Division, was prepared to relieve us of our sectors and Jerry sensed that there was some sort of a change taking place. We have omitted one separate action which should be mentioned before we pass on to the next phase. On August 5th, the enemy launched an attack in the direction of outpost 14 at 1420, and by 1450 had succeeded in outflanking and cutting off the OP. This outpost, commanded by 1st Lt. Thomas Hill, held fast, and with the aid of our artillery we were able to drive back the attackers, causing many enemy casualties; our losses were one dead and two wounded. Our Battalion Surgeon, Captain Duane H. Callister was seriously wounded in the back while attempting to go forward to the aid of a wounded Jerry; he was hit by enemy mortar fire.

On September 13th, the 301st Infantry Regiment relieved our outposts by infiltration. All our units came off the line and moved to a rear area, preparing to march to Orleans where we were scheduled to be refitted and rested. One Platoon of Company "D" under Lt. Siedentop was attached to elements of the 86th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and the remainder of the battalion moved out at 1330 toward Orleans, and bivouacked that evening in the vicinity of Augan.

"A" Company, relieved from the Task Force at Brest on the 6th, had moved out by a separate route and already was at Orleans. On the 14th, the battalion continued the road march having traveled a distance of a hundred and sixteen miles. The next day, we reached the Orleans area, and work began on vehicles, weapons, and equipment. Entertainment was furnished for the men, and passes to Orleans and nearby Montargis were issued. Captured Wehrmacht wine and cognac was distributed. Morale was sky-high.

Pfc. Jose Ruis Hernandez—known as "Amigo." Served as the Colonel's left-hand man and morale builder-upper throughout the battalion. There was something to be desired in his English, French, and German vocabulary, but by the use of his hands and gestures, he could usually make his wants known.



Nancy

On the eighteenth of September, we were relieved from CCA and joined Reserve Command. The next day Company "D" minus the platoon which was still at Brest, moved out for the "Colombay area" and on the twentieth the battalion moved out at 0910 and headed for Colombay; we closed in bivouac fourteen miles west of Troyes on Route N-60. The following day the Battalion continued marching to the east and closed in a tactical bivouac in the vicinity of Colombay at 1745, and was relieved from Reserve Command and assigned to Division control. We were subsequently assigned to XX Corps. On the 23rd of September we were ordered to join CCR at Toul, but on arrival there we were met by Corps Liaison officer and ordered directly to Briey. We remained at Briey until September 29th when we were ordered to move to Nancy. At 1800 the column was closed of Saulxures-Les Nancy and troops were billeted in the town. The following day we made minor shifts in troop billets and the CP moved to Tomblaine. At 1830 we were alerted to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Pettencourt where we closed at 2340.

Our duties hadn't been arduous at Briey; quite the contrary, we had become quite comfortable there in the enviable position of the corps reserve, but then toute de suite came the fast road march, the assembly at Pettencourt, and we were back in the thick of it again. This job was to be a line-strengthener, a nasty limited objective attack, designed to secure for the army more advantageous positions from which to launch later a large scale offensive. In other words, elements of the division would be attacking, and there draw the undivided attention of the krauts in front of us.

The battalion jumped off at 0600, after a considerable artillery preparation, with Companies "A" and "B" up and abreast. Companies "A" and "B" of the 9th AIB followed in the second wave and Company "C" (—) of 603rd T.D. Battalion disposed with one platoon to cover the left flank of the attack, and the other assembled as a covering force in the event of an enemy counter-attack. Companies "D," 68th, and "C" 9th AIB were initially in task force reserve, while Company "C" 68th was in division reserve. Our objective was the high

The 68th in that rough show outside of Nancy on
1 October 1944.



ground south of the Seille River east of Gremecy Wood. We were operating in this coordinated attack under CCR, and at the same time CCB was making a similar attack on our left flank in the woods.

The attack was methodically carried out, and by 1040 our objective was obtained by the first and second wave. The control of all leading elements was exceptionally good under conditions which lent to confusion, for enemy small arms fire was heavy, and their artillery fire was extremely heavy, and also the infantry were not employed at the proper time. At 1100, Company "D" was committed to hold the ground west of Chambrev, covering the elements and screening the task force's right flank. While the lead elements waited there for elements of the 35th Division to come up and secure this hard-won objective, the enemy artillery became intense, and our sharp-shooting Assault Gun Platoon was called up to nullify direct fire weapons to our left front in a well defiladed position; they consequently poured merciless fire on the positions with excellent observed results. At 1330, the task force withdrew to its forward rally point prepared to support the doughs in the event of an enemy counter-attack. The artillery fire continued to rain on our vulnerable positions, but finally at 1940 the battalion went into reserve and assembled in the vicinity of Pettencourt, while Company "C" remained in position to cover the withdrawal of the force and to support the 35th doughs as they perfected their defensive positions on the objective. Then, at 2340 Company "C" was relieved and returned to the battalion assembly area. Its mission had been accomplished, but the battalion had suffered greatly in so doing; our casualties were four killed in action, 24 wounded, and a vehicular loss of 2 tanks destroyed. But the greatest blow was the loss of Captains Polk and Bland who died in the heroic performance of their duties, and Major Brown, who had two tanks shot from under him and was seriously wounded while trying to get to the third. There were countless acts of heroism during this costly action; it would take pages to recount one tenth of them. There was the Recon Platoon intrepidly blowing paths through a mine field under terrific artillery fire: there was Lt. Olan Hafely, who took over "A" Company, when Captain Polk was killed, and successfully led it to its objective, and who was all the while seriously wounded. These are only two of many.

The next day, the battalion moved back to billets in Tomblaine; we left "C" Company near vicinity of Pettencourt, for they were assigned the mission of blocking Route N-74, and were attached to a Third Army task force. As you can well imagine, the men were exhausted, and we were badly in need of reorganization and rest, so Col. Davall prescribed the maximum rest possible and the men bedded down. Before going any further, and before the memory of bloody October 1st fades away (most of us will never forget it), we would like to quote one statistic which sums up the action in a few words: Of the thirty-seven tank commanders in the first attack wave, eighteen were either killed or wounded.

One whole day of rest passed without interruption, and things began to look a little more normal; it has never failed to amaze us how quickly these Davall-men recovered from such a wracking ordeal. Then on the following day, Task Force Britton, composed of Company "B" 68th, Company "D" 9th AIB, and one platoon of the 603rd T.D.'s, moved out to take over the Third Army road block, and relieved "C" Company. General Patton was taking no chances on losing our hard-won ground to an enemy counter-attack.

As the remainder of the outfit rested and reorganized, TF Britton, with Major Britton, Battalion Executive Officer, in command, and 2nd Lt. Burns,

his exec, completely organized and consolidated the position and got set for an enemy counter-attack. The expected attack never came, although Jerry's artillery never stopped, and each night we went to sleep to the tune of screaming shells and the washing machine sound of Bed Check Charlie (kraut observation planes). Then, on the sixth of October, Task Force Britton was relieved by elements of the 86th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and returned to the battalion area. However, immediately upon their return, the battalion was put on a two hour alert status, and all commanders and platoon leaders were out for a reconnaissance in the vicinity of Chenicourt. Was another of those line-straighteners in the making?

The next day, the battalion was relieved from CCR and assigned to CCB, with "B" Company being attached to Task Force Godfrey (an armored infantry task force). We were alerted to move at 0700 the following morning. Then, at 0730, Task Force Davall moved out to an assembly area in the vicinity of Leor. A short while later we moved a little farther north and closed in a tactical bivouac at Chenicourt at 1530.

This was to be another limited objective attack, and the whole division was to occupy more advantageous ground north of Nancy, in preparation for the push which we all felt was building up. TF Davall moved out at 0630 for the line of departure, and jumped off in its attack on the BOIS DE TRAPPE at 0740. Enemy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire was intense, but ours was more so, and by 1300 the objective had been taken. Our division artillery, supported by heavier corps howitzers, poured several TOT's on the kraut positions and these had a devastating effect. Elements of the 6th Infantry Division were supposed to take over the objective once we had gained it, and while we were waiting for them to take over, a small counter-attack developed, but was repulsed. It seemed as though the 80th would never get around to relieving us and we sweated it out until 1600 when they completed the job of tying in and digging in on the position. Then the task force moved out to a bivouac in the vicinity of the Agincourt from which point we were to support the 80th Division in the event of counter-attack. Our move was very difficult, as it was as black as pitch, the rain was coming down in torrents, and Jerry never stopped shelling us, but we finally closed at 0420 on the tenth.

We remained in the position uneventfully until October 19th, and while we were not called upon to assist the 80th, it rained cats and dogs all the time, and Jerry, if he thought things were getting too peaceful, would occasionally lob over some big stuff. Everyone was completely miserable, and was not a bit sorry when we were eventually relieved. So, we moved back to Tomblaine to our billets, and stayed there without interruption until November seventh.

S/Sgt. (Later Lt.) Burger, Sgt. Sullivan, Pfc. Ninfo, Sgt. Haney, and Sgt. Foutch entertain Red Cross Girls near Nancy.



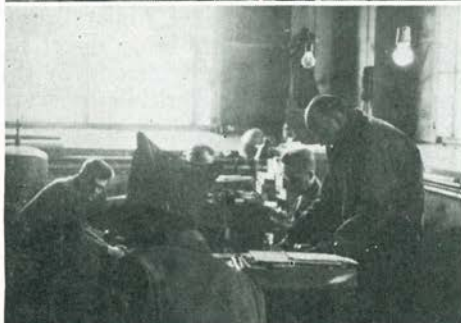
We spent this period of tactical inactivity in rest, rehabilitation and maintenance. Also, once we were shaken down, and prepared for anything, passes to Nancy were granted, we had daily moving pictures, and beer was plentiful. Dances were organized, the local belles invited, and friendships between French and Americans mushroomed here and there.

And all this time, supplies were being built up and stored, equipment was replaced, tanks tuned up. Toward the end of the above mentioned period, there was a preceptible step-up in the tempo; plans were made and discussed, and while all was top secret, there was that feeling in the air. Something big was up! Then, we were all told what it was all about. We were going to crack Jerry's outer defensive shell, and then push to the Saar River, through the Siegfried Line if we caught him sufficiently off balance, keep going to the Rhine if we could drag him down, and knock him out! All the armies poised all along the line were to jump off. And we knew where the armor would be, as usual, out in front, running broken field, if we were shaken loose.



CWO Joseph H. Exner

The hard working Personnel Section. Although they weren't where the shooting was taking place, they often put in from 12 to 18 hours each day in compiling various reports which had to be forwarded to higher headquarters. CWO Exner has been complimented many times upon the accuracy and prompt accomplishment of these reports, and when it was time to come home, the service records were in excellent shape. Pictured below are T/Sgt. Hogan; T/4 Lawrence, Hq. Co.; Sgt. Michel, Morning Report Clerk; a view of their office in Germany; and finally, Cpl. Pennal of Charlie; Kelly of Baker; Leapley of Able; Vintza of Service; and Lenz of Dog.



The November-December Offensive

Completely ready in every sense of the word the battalion moved out of Tomblaine at 0800 on November 8th to an assembly area south of Leyr. It was raining heavily when we closed in bivouac there at 1000, and we spent the night there.

The following day, with the rain still pouring down and the ground becoming increasingly muddy and boggy, TF Davall travelled to a forward assembly area in the vicinity of Menoncourt. But, even such miserable conditions did not dampen the men's certainty that we were starting on the final drive to end the war by Christmas. In addition to the downpour's muddying up the ground, the Seille River had reached flood level, and during the night the approaches to the pontoon bridge north of Menoncourt were washed out. So, unable to cross the river, we remained in our assembly area that night.

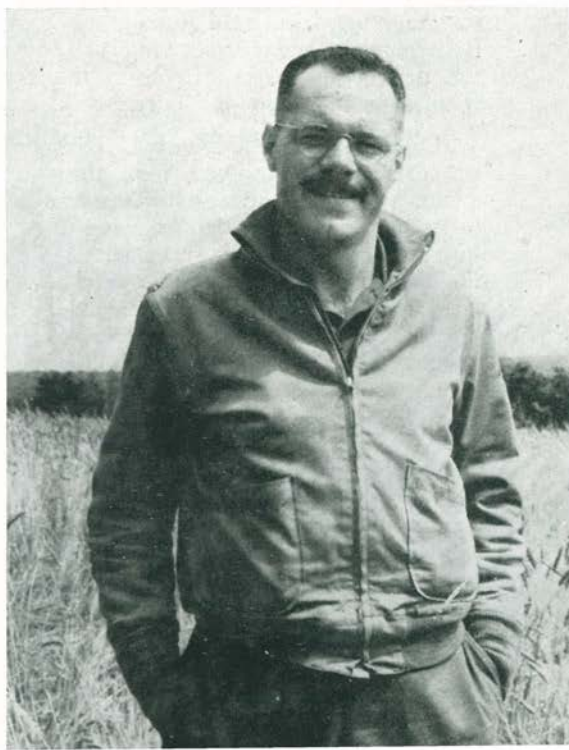
On the morning of the tenth, we moved up to Nomeny and crossed the river there, and as continuous maintenance of the approaches was necessary the pontoon bridge proved to be a traffic bottleneck, and our tail didn't clear until early in the afternoon. Then, we proceeded north through Maily-Sur-Seille to the Bois De Seigneur. We contacted no enemy on this approach, but our progress was greatly hampered by fallen trees on the road, and we couldn't risk taking to the open fields because of the terrain's boggy condition. With the task force in an approach march formation, "A" Company was in the advance guard, and it used the dozer tank to clear the trees from the route. The advance guard moved from Secourt by way of Saily to Achatel, and as the bridge across the railroad north of Achatel was destroyed, "A" Company left the road and forced a crossing in order to support an attack by the 318th Infantry Regiment on the town of Moncheux. The remainder of the task force turned back to Secourt, and proceeded northeast to a grade crossing of the same railroad, and thence southeast to Moncheux. When they arrived there, they found the town already captured by the doughs. So, Task Force Davall went into bivouac northeast of the Moncheux. During the night, we were subjected to severe shelling.

Next morning, the task force jumped off and continued its drive east. The advance guard encountered a culvert on the road to Tragny, and the bridge across the stream southwest of the town was completely demolished by the enemy early that morning. An attempt to cross was impossible, so the force turned back and tried to proceed on secondary roads through the BOIS DE JUVILLE, but all trails through these woods were discovered impassable. Our leading element became bogged down while trying to bypass the woods to the south; this also resulted in their being subjected to heavy artillery and mortar fire. Then, a new combat team was formed from elements of the task force, which included Companies "A" and "D" under the command of Major Britton, Battalion Exec. Their mission was to move cross country and to be in direct support of Task Force Elm, made up mainly of the 318th Infantry Regiment, in their attack on Tragny and Thimonville. Meanwhile, the rest of Task Force Davall returned to the main road to Tragny to await the completion of the engineer bridge. During this time Combat team Britton was busy cleaning out Thimonville of enemy troops who had remained hidden or filtered back into the town after the infantry regiment

had passed through. After finishing this task, Major Britton moved his unit toward Morville sur Nied and thence toward Baudrecourt. The ground was still not suited to tank warfare and General "Mud" still held full command of the area. The bridge south of Baudrecourt was found destroyed and the combat team was ordered to bivouac southwest of the town. The remainder of Col. Davall's moved east when the three bridges in the vicinity of Tragny were completed, then later closed in bivouac at Morville sur Nied after dark, and remained there for the night. During the night, an attached engineer platoon was sent forward to repair the blown bridge holding up Combat Team Britton south of Baudrecourt. The unit under Maj. Britton was once again under the direct control of the Battalion commander.

That night the engineers, while working under very difficult conditions, completed the bridge at Baudrecourt, and on the morning of the twelfth our elements crossed and entered the town. Our leading elements ran into light resistance and small arms fire but continued forward. Company A was sent to join 9th Armd. Infantry Battalion and moved north from town with the mission of seizing and holding the bridge across the La Rotte River, between Baudrecourt and Vati-mont. The bridge was found to be demolished. While in that area the unit was ambushed just north of the railroad tracks which ran by the river. Company A having two platoons back as a holding and covering force was able to extricate the one platoon receiving the fire. Meanwhile Company C was dispatched northeast of the town to block all approaches in that area. Company D moved out of town on a road south and east of town, blocking that approach. Reports from prisoners, and aerial reconnaissance were that the enemy was well dug in in all areas east of Baudrecourt. They had good artillery and direct fire support, plus terrain features which were to their credit. At 1400, some units of the 318th Infantry Regiment who moved into to town prepared to attack across the river and establish a bridgehead on the north side so that the engineers could repair the bridge. Company A took up positions generally along the railroad track south of the river and prepared to support this attack by direct fire. The new attack began shortly after 1400 and coincided with an attack by Task Force Godfrey on Vati-mont at our left. Little opposition was encountered and the bridgehead was successfully established. Meanwhile Companies A, C, and D were drawn into defensive positions around the north and east side of town, and a security detachment was provided for the engineers during the construction

Major Frank K. Eritton—served as plans and operations officer from the beginning of the campaign until 1 October, and then as Executive Officer until he assumed command of an infantry battalion early in November. A very aggressive, but well-liked man.



of their bridge. The enemy had used a great deal of artillery while in their defensive positions and as we neared their batteries these guns were fired as direct fire weapons. We paid a high price in officers during this small offensive: Lt. Thomas G. Hill, company commander of Company C was killed by artillery fire while dismounting from his tank. Also, Capt. Klotz, commanding Company A was wounded and evacuated as well as some much needed platoon leaders. In many Companies Platoon Sgts. were now placed in charge of platoons. The loss of two company commanders as well as some platoon leaders meant a complete reorganization of the leaders of the Battalion. The Task Force, meanwhile, remained in Baudrecourt during the night. Heavy shelling continued at night, which meant that "Jerry" was not moving out and was going to hold his ground.

By this time, it was evident to all that a piledriving breakthrough, as was the case in Normandy and Brittany, would not be on the menu here; more in the order of a steady hammering, grinding drive for time in order to withdraw the necessary troops to the Siegfried defenses. Also, quagmire fields restricted our mobility and maneuverability, and Jerry was defending ground and towns that he knew and chose. But the attack continued.

Shortly after noon on the thirteenth, we left Baudrecourt and struck out for Vatimont, but soft mud at the crossing site and the necessity for continuous road repair resulted in extremely slow operation. So it was late afternoon before the column had cleared the north bank of the river. Thence, we proceeded to Arraincourt and secured the town for the night.

Here is an interesting sidelight on our capture of Arraincourt: When "B" Company entered the town a hysterically glad character rushed out to meet the lead tank. It was an American pilot, Walter Jensen by name, who had been shot down in that vicinity several weeks before, and who had been hidden and fed since that time by a French family; he stayed with us that night, and we evacuated him the next morning, with his gratitude knowing no bounds. We on the other hand told him how sincerely we appreciated the support his fellow fighter pilots had been giving us, and how much better we felt when we saw the destruction-bearing P-47s in the sky, and how eagerly we were waiting for them now; the rain and overcast skies had grounded them for a long time now.

On the following morning, Task Force Davall jumped off in an attack along the axis of an east-west road through Boulange, Suisse, and Landroff. (The attack was systematically undertaken, and each of the towns was taken in the following manner). Before going into a description of the assault, there is an important factor to be considered. It was becoming more and more apparent that Jerry was sticking close to the towns in his defense, and ignoring dominating terrain features from which he could much better halt our advance. So, after careful scrutinizing and estimate of the terrain and condition of the ground, Colonel Davall employed the following plan with success: Company "C" moved east along the high ground north of, and generally paralleling the road. Company "A," reinforced by one platoon of tank destroyers and a platoon of infantry, moved east on the road. As each town was reached, it was taken under fire by Company "A," while "C" Company began a limited enveloping movement from the high ground. When "C" Company had reached a position dominating the town, it covered by fire, while "A" Company moved in and seized the town. Forward elements were ordered to hold up at Landroff, and Captain Smith, battalion S-3 was sent forward to organize and hold the town. Company "D" was committed to secure "C" Company's left, west flank on the high ground north-

west of Landroff, and extend along the high ground to the west, thus blocking the approach from the north, and protecting the Suisse-Landroff road, the only line of communications between the two towns. Our neck was sticking out, and we had to thoroughly tie-in and organize our positions. With the battalion CP in Suisse, the force in Landroff was reinforced by a second platoon of infantry, now placing in the town one medium tank company, two platoon of infantry, and one tank destroyer platoon.

At about 1800, the enemy launched a counter-attack on Landroff. He was in considerable infantry strength, and was supported by eight SP guns or tanks. Two were knocked out by "A" Company's sharp shooters, and the rest withdrew. The dismounted elements, however, continued to press the attack, but were finally driven off by all the fire we could muster, including artillery. This attack had been launched from the north and approached town along the main north-south road; it was preceded by a marked increase of artillery concentration which had been falling constantly on Landroff since the entry of the task force, and it continued to fall throughout the night, in spite of our counter-battery fire. Then, at 2100, Jerry tried another counter-attack, again from the same direction, and again he suffered heavy losses and was repulsed at 2140. The situation was becoming grim, and so the garrison there was reinforced by Company "C" of the 44th Armored Infantry Battalion. But the krauts hadn't given up by a long shot, and they attacked again at 2330. Once again, however, our hard-bitten defenders drove them off with more losses. At this time, several TOTs were fired on the woods northeast of Landroff, where we determined that the Germans were forming their attacks. A total of 18 battalions, all types, fired this artillery mission.

So far so good, but it soon developed that what had taken place up to now was only the entree, for at 0130, Jerry made his main effort. Also, this time again, he launched his strong infantry attack along the same axis of approach. Our defenders stood fast, and although the main force of this attack formation was broken before it reached the town, they threw aside their attack formation, and desperately carried on with infiltration tactics. The night was pitch dark, and so, under this natural concealment, they succeeded in getting many men into town, and in cutting the east-west road at the west end of Landroff. Here began a melee at close quarters and hand-to-hand that went on for the rest of the night. There were countless individual acts of heroism, and it would be impossible to recount all of them. To name only a few, there was Captain Smith, who performed a herculean

Major General Grow, the Division Commander pinning the Distinguished Service Cross on Major Daniel E. Smith for his actions at Landroff, France on 14-15 November 1944.



task in the defense of the town, and emerged from countless hand-to-hand combats unscratched only to be finally shot in the course of the night by a kraut dough at point blank range, but he killed him in spite of the slug he was carrying in his leg, and carried on without even stopping. He was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his part in the heroic defense. We can single out only a few of "A" Company's brave defenders such as S/Sgt. Shumway, Sgt. Foutch, S/Sgt. Berger, Lt. Kratzer, and T/5 Joe Kaminski, but in order to really do justice we should submit the entire "A" Company roster for heroic gallantry in repelling the foe. There was T/5 James Pye of the Medics, to mention only one of our detachment there who labored without concern for their personal safety. Suffice it to say that all there covered themselves with glory in their magnificent stand, and in so doing wrecked completely what amounted to almost an enemy division in total strength. That hectic, never-to-be-forgotten night at Landroff broke our opponent's back, and although he would still be able to delay us by bringing other troops in before us, he was never again in our sector to offer a serious threat!

We held our defensive positions there until we were passed through by elements of the 80th Division. They had finally seen the light somewhere way upstairs, and had decided that this was no spearheading breakthrough, but an infantry show. Nevertheless, when passed through by the doughs, we consolidated our positions around Landroff and Suisse, and remained there until the twenty-second of November, reorganizing, and giving our vehicles some badly needed

Our "Gold Dust Twins" of the Medics—T/5 Ranck and T/5 Pye. Both very capable medical men, but in addition had an inquisitiveness which loaded their peep with items which weren't always of a medical nature.



maintenance. However, while this shake-down and rehabilitation was taking place, Company "B" was assigned to Task Force Brown, and took part in the attack of Bincheville, before reverting to 69th control. Task forces of the division alternately kept pushing Jerry back toward the Saar, and this grinding was coordinated with attacks by the doughs; the 80th had slid north to screen the corps flank and the 35th, another veteran infantry division, was now working with us. The 68th, skillfully brought along in this rehabilitation by a commander who was tops, was rounding into shape again.

On November 23rd, a platoon of engineers, a platoon of infantry, Company "D," and the dozer were placed under CCA's direct control for a reconnaissance in force mission in the vicinity of Lelling, and while they were on this job, Company "D" was attached to Task Force Brown (44th AIB), and Task Force Davall moved out for the Freyhouse-Fremestroff area. Then, when its action was no longer required at Lelling,

"D" Company, now under 1st Lt. William H. Collins, returned to the fold.

We almost forgot something! Here it was "Thanksgiving," and even though the setting wasn't exactly a holiday one, our commanders were determined, front line or not, to see that everyone enjoyed a thanksgiving dinner. The kitchens were brought up, and the cooks prepared excellent turkey dinners with all the fixings. At one company in particular the holiday feast will never be forgotten. "C" Company, with Task Force Brown, was undergoing very heavy shelling at Gessling-Hemering, and all the tanks were on the line. As the mess was set up in town, it was necessary for the men to infiltrate to their chow by a series of zig-zag dashes from the line. Dinner music was furnished by the screaming meemies. And while the festivities were in full swing, some heinie artilleryman, showing no respect for American customs, decided to liven up the party. He sent a well placed eighty-eight shell into a nearby manure pile, thus giving both men and food an unwelcome shower. That was how "C" Company celebrated Thanksgiving!

At 1000 on the 25th, Company "B," 68th, and Company "C" of the 44th AIB jumped off in an attack on the high grounds and woods north of Fremestroff. But the condition of the ground was still too soft, and the attack bogged down. However, the force took up defensive positions on the southern slopes of the hill north of town. Then on the following day, Companies "A" and "C" 44th launched another attack on the same hill, and had secured the objective at 1300, while undergoing heavy mortar fire. Our Companies "A" and "B" moved up to the crest and consolidated the position at 1430. The attack was preceded by heavy artillery concentrations on the woods, and on the ridge. No resistance was encountered on the ground. Incidentally, this was part of the rear zone of the Maginot Line, and concrete pillboxes were built around the ground, supplemented by earthwork entrenchments. Had Jerry chosen to hold these fortified positions, he could have made it very difficult for us, but he abandoned them without a struggle; his position was untenable as Task Force Brown was in a position to outflank him from the northwest.

For the next two days we maintained defensive positions on this high ground north of Fremestroff, and awaited further orders.

On the 29th of November, we were ordered to attack and seize the towns of Lanning and Lixing. The plan called for the platoon of the 86th Recon to move out first, and slide off to the left flank, followed by "B" Company directly attacking Lixing and "C" Company of the 44th to encircle Lanning and Lixing from the high ground north of Fremestroff. But when "H" hour arrived none of the deployed elements were able to move out as they were hampered by the boggy condition of the ground. So, Col. Davall ordered his Reconnaissance Platoon, commanded by 2nd Lt. Robert J. Burns, Jr. to push an aggressive swift reconnaissance in force into Lixing, and to go as far beyond it as they could. So they moved out quickly, barrelled down the road to a point just short of the town, worked through the town dismounted, reported no opposition, and the presence of large craters blocking armored advance on the main road, discovered a bypass, found an abatis road block north of town, slid around it, and were finally brought to a halt by a huge anti-tank ditch. And here is a point which makes every member of that small force thank their lucky stars when they think of it. For, when the elements in the rear finally hit the road to Lixing, the second peep was blown sky-high by a mine in the middle of the road short of the town, and many more were later discovered in carefully concealed positions.

And yet, every vehicle in the Recon Platoon had sped over the same spot previously, miraculously missing all the mines.

Thus were the battalion objectives taken, and were later secured with the arrival of "B" Company and "C" Company of the doughs. We remained there, until late the following day, when it was decided by higher headquarters to dissolve Task Force Davall. There was no longer any need for further pushing north, as the 80th had hooked down and had made contact with us. Once more as a battalion we moved into billets in Lanning, Maxstadt, and Leyviller.

For the first four days of December, we spent our time in maintaining our vehicles, weapons, and personal equipment. Then, on the fifth day, Companies "C" and "D" were attached to Task Force Brown, Company "A" was attached to Task Force Wall (50th AIB), the Assault Gun Platoon to the direct control of CCA, and the balance of the battalion was attached to CCR. These attachments were made in preparation for the divisions assault on the important Diebling, Tenteling, Metzing area.

The attack by Task Force Brown and Task Force Wall jumped off at 0630 from the vicinity of Henrville in a northeasterly direction, with TF Wall on the right. The advance went slowly as the Wall force met stiff opposition on the southeast flank, and Col. Brown's doughs took a great deal of methodical time to screen through the Buchwald woods. Two bridgeheads were gained across the stream at Farbersviller and Farschviller, the first by the 80th Division, and the second by Task Force Wall. Company "D" crossed at the Fabersviller site, and proceeded along the road screening the left flank of the task force. Their commitment was hurried and their indefinitely assigned limit was reached so speedily that the Collinsmen were precariously out on a limb for a while, waiting for the advance of the other elements of the attacking force. However, they took every advantage of cover and concealment and sweated out further developments. Company "C" in the meanwhile, crossed the stream at Farschviller and supported the doughs in screening through the Buchwald woods, thence pushing through to take Diebling. Company "A" crossed at the same place and, moving up with Task Force Wall, took Metzing.

The action continued hot and heavy as Company "D," receiving fire from Ebering, latched onto a platoon of infantry and swung north to clean out the town. The "lights" were hot that day, raring to go, and, under the leadership of their company commander, went through Ebering like a dose of salts. "C" Company, crashing along in high gear, flushed out Tenteling. This attack had



Lt. William Siedentop, Lt. George Hughes (Battlefield Commission), and Lt. Brown. All of Dog Co.

originally started out as an infantry show, supported by tanks, but it gained momentum, the tanks slammed ahead, leaving the doughs behind to mop up. Several heinie artillery batteries were overrun and smashed during this hectic action. The breakthrough had reached a point now that rendered close cooperation between task forces impossible.

After the capture of Diebling by Company "C," its calm unhurried C.O. Captain James A. Russell, was ordered to attack Cadenbronn Heights. Moving quickly up on the right flank was Company "B" under Captain Ross C. Brown. The attack had been so vicious that we had now advanced beyond the objective assigned by higher headquarters, and Cadenbronn had previously been reckoned a difficult objective to be assaulted at a later date. However, here was considered a chance to kill two birds with one stone. This attack jumped off at 1700 from Diebling; Company "B" while moving up the slopes northeast of Diebling came under heavy anti-tank fire from the vicinity of Metzting. It was dusk. Visibility was poor, and ground was extremely soft, thus greatly hindering their mobility. Company B, partially bogged down, was unable to extricate itself from this quagmire. Enemy anti-tank guns in well defiladed positions blazed away at "Baker's right flank" and knocked out seven tanks. With their two remaining vehicles they took their part of the objective. The final objective was secured by both Baker and Charlie at 1750.

During the above mentioned assault a very unusual incident occurred. Before Company A reached Metzting Lt. Kratzer's tank was hit and all members of the crew bailed out. Unknown to them Tech. 4th Grade Shunk, the driver had been instantly killed and he was in such a position that his foot kept the accelerator depressed and the vehicle rolled on in low gear, a dead man at the levers, through the enemy lines into the town, and beyond it, describing great lumbering circles before it came to a halt.

This proved to be a costly, yet amazing successful day's operations, and all involved were rightly proud of a job well done. We Tankers had stabbed deep into the enemy's underbelly. We had them on the run but darkness dropped a curtain on the day's operations.

On the sixth the remaining elements of the task force closed in the vicinity of Tenteling, and when all the attachments reverted to Bat-

Captain Ross C. Brown—an officer well-liked by everyone. Very meticulous in everything he did, let nothing excite him, and was always dependable in delivering the goods.



talion control, we were assigned a defensive sector north of Ebering-Tenteling, under control of CCR. During the succeeding days until the 13th of December, we held and improved our defensive position. Then we were relieved in this sector by elements of the 9th AIB and 69th Tank Battalion. When the relief had been completed the Battalion went into Division reserve and moved into billets in Lanning, Maxstadt, and Biding, where we remained until December 17th and devoted our time to rest and refitting.

Then, on the 18th of December the Battalion moved to Merlebach where all troops were comfortably billeted in town. We continued our program of rest and maintenance there, and entertainment was provided. Shower facilities were excellent.

T/5 Willie Call—Susie and he traveled quite a few miles in the resupply of the battalion.



Cpl. Daniels—One of the most popular men of the battalion—The ration corporal who brought rations, cigarettes and chocolate for eating or whatever purpose presented itself.



The Battle of the Bulge

Our stay at Merlebach was a very pleasant one. We enjoyed recreation of every sort, and had, in our reserve capacity, ample time to catch up on our maintenance of vehicles, weapons and equipment. But, just when we were beginning to get very comfortable, things started popping in the northern sector of the allied line, and Von Rundstedt pulled his famous counter-attack, and conditions up there began to look pretty serious. We immediately anticipated that the "Super Sixth" would be called on soon to help put out the fire. We'd had things too easy lately! Then, and on December 22nd we were alerted for movement in this direction.

On the following evening, with other elements of the division, the battalion set out from Merlebach on a night march back to Metz. The move west was smooth and swift, and we closed there at 0600. The troops were billeted in the City, and devoted the rest of the day and evening to celebrating Christmas Eve, most of the time was spent on personal maintenance with special emphasis placed on lubrication!

Merry Christmas! We did manage to have a wonderful holiday dinner and recover, and then we moved out on another night concealed march to Lanningen, Luxembourg. The reason for the last two night marches was, as you can well imagine, because enemy air in support of Von Rundstedt's attack was very active and out in force. But we closed at our assigned destination without mishap at 0600 the following morning, where we remained until the 29th, waiting for further orders. We were still operating under the control of CCA, but when we were ordered to Haberu, Belgium, and closed there at 1730, we came under the control of CCB. Then, just before midnight on the following day, we departed from Haberu enroute to Bastogne. The roads were ice covered and so very dangerous, causing several accidents and changes in routes. Our progress was carefully slow, and at Vaux-Les-Rosieres, CCA of the 11th Armored Division turned on our route of advance from the east, thus blocking the road and causing us several hours delay.

Previous plans had called for our making an attack north of Bastogne at 0800, but the above-mentioned difficulties held up our approach march to the line of departure in the vicinity of Bizory so that we were ordered into a bivouac with the rest of the combat command in an area south of Sibret. At 2300 we resumed our march to the Bastogne area.

The NEW YEAR started off with a bang. With the CP closed at Bastogne, and the companies in an assembly area at the road junction northeast of Bastogne. Our attack, after a careful reconnaissance by all troop leaders involved, jumped off at 0840, and Col. Davall employed the following plan: Company "B" 68th, took up direct fire position on the nose of the hill which lay in the triangle of roads northeast of Bastogne and north of the main east-west road covering the high ground west of Magaret. Company "A," with a platoon of tank destroyers swung around through Bizory, and began an envelopment of the hill overlooking Magaret, covered all the while by "B" Company's base of fire. When ABLE had secured position on the approach to the hill, Company "B"

50th AIB moved through our Baker Company's positions to the stream west of Magaret, where the men dismounted from their half-tracks and began the assault of the hill on foot. "A" company was held up for a short while by a mine field in the vicinity of Bizory, but the attack was resumed at 0940. Our initial objective was taken at 1010. The force moved out at 1030 toward Magaret, and at 1145 Company "A" followed by the infantry, entered the town. Our attacking force encountered considerable resistance from enemy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire on the approach to Magaret, but inflicted severe casualties on the foe, and captured 68 prisoners. The town was finally cleaned out and secured by 1400. Then Company "B" swung north of Magaret and pushed up to take the higher ground overlooking Arloncourt. With the CP in Magaret, Company "D" was sent to the northern portion of the task force sector to connect with Task Force Wall; Baker Company pulled back on the line with Company "D," and "A" Company took positions on "B" Company's south flank and tied in with Task Force Kennedy south of us. Thus, this defensive line, running northwest-southeast, north and east of Magaret, was held during the night.

Perhaps it will help bring a better understanding of our situation, if you recall that Von Rundstedt's drive had been hitherto quite successful; it was a highly geared drive, up to now unchecked, that had gained a great momentum and although they had been momentarily stymied at Bastogne, the krauts had spread out on the flanks and were still rolling. The Sixth Armored Division, however, was attacking in the face of all this, and, faced with this tremendous task, was knifing in to check this push firstly, slow it down, probe for weak spots in the enemy's lines, and then started grinding them back. A not too pleasant prospect—a job that was to go down in our books as one to call on the greatest possible courage, stamina, and bitterest fighting we had ever known! The men of the 68th faced this prospect, knowing full well what it would entail, calmly confident of their ability to defeat the best that Germany could hurl against us again.

So we settled down for the night in Magaret which was still burning in places from the shelling we had subjected it to earlier in the day. Then at two o'clock in the morning, Jerry launched a strong dismounted counter-attack from the direction of Benonchamps along the axis of the Benonchamps-Magaret road. At the same time bombs were dropped in and around the defensive positions by a lone enemy plane, and helped us here by dropping them in the midst of the counter-attackers. When we had frustrated this attempt, the enemy side-slipped to the west, approaching Magaret along the draw and stream bed from the south. The attack was finally stopped at 0400, after some of the krauts had infiltrated into town and gotten to within 75 yards of the Charlie Peter. This was our first taste of what was to happen time and again in a seemingly endless succession.

Shortly after noon on the 2nd, the attack on Arloncourt was resumed. "A" Company took direct fire position to cover the approach of "B" Company moving from the west. Then, Baker Company assumed firing positions in the draw south and west of Arloncourt, while "B" of the 50th was brought up and screened the woods south of the town. At this point, our attacking force was taken under very heavy anti-tank fire and small arms fire in and around the town. As a consequence, all but one of "B" Company's tanks were knocked out, and the doughs suffered very heavy casualties and were pinned down. The positions became so untenable and exposed that it was necessary to withdraw the force under cover of smoke. Company "B" and the platoon of infantry were pulled back into Magaret, and Col. Davall shortened his defensive line,

tying in with TF Kennedy (69th Tk Bn.) who moved up from the south and assumed part of our previous sector.

On the 3rd of January, Task Force Davall maintained its defensive position. The enemy counter-attacked in the morning with tanks and infantry, but was repulsed with many casualties. At that time AT guns, in well concealed and defiladed positions fired on "A" Company's line of tanks, destroying four, and making their position untenable, it was imperative that they be withdrawn. Then at 1500, the task force withdrew in orderly fashion to better defensive positions north and east of Bizory. We must mention the fact here that while it was a necessary move and one to better our position, it was the first time in our experience that we had had to move to the rear due to enemy pressure. It was a bitter pill to swallow—to yield ground that we had fought so hard to gain, but it had to be. However, every mother's son there vowed to turn the tables with a vicious vengeance as soon as possible!

The Battalion CP withdrew to a point north of Bastogne, and Captain McKenna took command of the forward CP in Bizory. S-3 of the Battalion indomitable and experienced veteran of all preceding campaigns, Captain McKenna took over the hot spot swiftly and efficiently, and with the aid of Captain Raines, S-2, immediately tied in and stabilized the new line which extended from the road running north from Bizory around the town to the north, thence east connecting with TF Kennedy on the Bizory-Magaret road and about mid-way between the two towns. Task Force Davall also connected in the north and east with TF Wall. By observation during the day and by periodic patrols at night, the line was organized with the Assault Gun Platoon generally in the sector bounded by the roads running north and northeast from Bizory. "B" Company tanks covered the eastern sector, exclusive of both roads with one section in support of the assault gun section in the center, and the others disposed to dominate the high ground from there east to the Magaret road. The TD platoon with four destroyers was placed in support of the line, with a section backing up the center road. Also two infantry platoons and one engineer platoon occupied defensive positions in support of the tanks, while two infantry platoons remained in reserve in town. These were rotated with those on the line. There was no enemy activity during the night except sporadic shelling of the road junction in Bizory (now more aptly termed by the tankers "MISERY").

The 4th of January saw continued heavy shelling in Bizory which increased to extremely heavy concentrations about 1700; these concentrations consisted mostly of accurate artillery and mortar fire and inaccurate nebelwerfer fire. Then be-

T/4 Mickey Rue with Little Nell the VII and the Battalion Insignia.



tween 2100 and 2200 enemy infantry made a series of short probing attacks, which were driven off by our braves without loss.

At about 0300 the next morning, Jerry made a demonstration attack with tanks and infantry, and at 0530 they launched a determined attack with infantry and supported by SP's and tanks. They failed to penetrate our lines! The shelling continued all day long. Then we were assigned a platoon of cavalry reconnaissance which relieved the engineer platoon on the line, and the latter were held in town as reserve. Also Company "A" relieved Company "B" of its sub-sector, and they returned to Task Force reserve northeast of Bastogne.

The strain was becoming terrific, the men were dog-tired, and faces became mask-like, without any feeling at all. While the above was occurring, Bastogne and the surrounding area was subjected to constant shelling by heavy guns, and the town was in a shambles. It will probably never be fully known how desperate our situation was becoming, and it can now be readily imagined what Von Rundstedt's forces could have done, had they been able to break through our position, for we were at the focal point of the whole deal. Had Jerry been able to take Bastogne, he would have secured a traffic artery with an excellent road network to all points. Then he would have shoved his push into high gear again, and there's no telling how far he could have gone, or how much time we would have lost. But he hadn't showed to us any signs of quitting, although all his futile buffetings against our stonewall defense had cost him dearly in manpower, equipment, and time. The sleepless tankers prepared for further attacks!

January 6th brought with it continued shelling, and then at 0400 on the 7th, Jerry launched an infantry attack along the axis of the trail running northeast from Bizory. We held this off but pressure continued until daybreak. Then the attack slipped to the west and a few fanatical enemy entered the town itself. There was some sniper activity in town at about 0900, so our infantry and engineers screened through the town and cleaned them out. There was no let-up in the intermittent heinie artillery fire during the morning, rather it increased to extremely heavy concentrations in the afternoon, raking thoroughly the entire defensive positions. There was present continual tank and artillery pressure and reported contacts from dark to midnight. But the amazing men of the 68th held inexorably.

Again on January 8th, the enemy made a coordinated tank-infantry attack against our right flank and along the axis of the Bizory-Magaret road. Six "A" Company tanks were knocked out like so many clay pigeons, and their fire couldn't effectively find Jerry in his positions along the draw; also the neighboring 69th's fire was long in coming, and ineffectual when it did. The enemy then swung the force of their attack against the hill south of the road and southwest of Magaret. Finally, however, before he could do more damage, Jerry was driven off again by our TD's and artillery fire. We reorganized our positions while the intermittent shellfire continued, and made preparations for an anticipated relief by the 320th Infantry Regiment.

Then, at long last, at 1100 on the 9th, we were relieved of the sector by the 3rd Bn. 320th; at the same time "C" Company was detached from TF Wall and to TF Hannon (320th) in support of an attack southeast of Marvie. The attack jumped off at 1000 and the objective was seized in the afternoon; the tankers remained there through the night in support of the foot-sloggers, while the remainder of the battalion returned to billets in Bastogne. The kitchens were

brought up, and a good hot meal awaited the returning warriors, but most of them were so exhausted, so drained of every desire but endless sleep, that they skipped chow and went straight to sleep.

The next day, elements of "D" Company relieved Charlie Company in support of the 35th Division task force, while the rest of the battalion took things easy. Then, on the 11th we moved to the rear to the town of Hompre for further rest and refitting. In spite of the excellent recovery and maintenance job that Captain Halloran's Battalion Maintenance men had done, we had suffered severe losses, and our total strength amounted to little better than a company of tanks. We needed refitting badly. On the following day, Company "D" was relieved from TF Hannon at 1500 and closed in the battalion area at 1700. At this point in the game, while the battle of the bulge raged fiercely, the tables were gradually being turned. Jerry was definitely stopped and our forces on both flanks were putting pincer pressure on the shrinking salient.

We were relieved from CCA and attached to the 320th Infantry Regiment at 2100 on January 14th; Company "B" went to the 3rd battalion, Company "C" to the 1st, and Companies "A" and "D" in reserve. Also, our Assault Guns were to support the 212th Field Artillery Battalion. All set to push the krauts back where they came from. We were to be used from now on as part of tank-infantry teams that were soon to make Von Rundstedt very sorry that he ever started this bulge business. The attack jumped off at noon, and the woods northeast of Bizory were screened through and cleared, but then we bogged down on the face of heavy tank and automatic weapons fire from the smaller woods to the southwest, so we called the affair to a halt and dug in for the night.

So was the inauspicious beginning of the new phase in the battle of the bulge. The siege of Bastogne was, however, definitely over, and we recall that at that time there burst upon the world a flood of publicity, singling out for praise the crack 101st Airborne Division and the 4th Armored Division. The two had done good jobs in the initial stages of the campaign, the former having stood fast in and around Bastogne before and just after Christmas, and the latter having broken through to relieve them. But it was disillusioning and bitter for us, who had come in at the most crucial time and had borne the brunt of all that highly geared enemy pressure, had thrown back with heavy losses his every counter-attack, had without sleep or relief fought him tooth and nail until his terrific drive was slowed

Capt. Rene Jacoby—A hard working supply officer who served in that capacity from the conception of the Battalion until he was killed at Bastogne, 9 January 1945 from Nebelwerfer fire.



down to a standstill, to have so conspicuously ignored by the world our courageous stand. We wondered with no little amazement if this were a war fought by PROs, and prepared for the next move.

On the morning of January 15th, we called for and received an air strike on the small woods that had been so bothersome. Then after the welcome P-47s had worked it over thoroughly by bombing and strafing, the woods was attacked and cleared; this job being accomplished with methodical efficiency on the doughs part, and took them most of the day. On the following day, the task force jumped off at dawn, with the tanks initially in the rear, and cleared the area between the woods and Obourcy. When this was done, "C" Company swiftly moved directly in. This maneuver caught Jerry completely by surprise and the garrison was unable to escape; the remains of an enemy battalion, including the Charlie Oboe and his staff, were consequently mopped up and captured. The tide was turning!

The seventeenth found us continuing the attack; Michamps was taken at 1500 by elements of the 320th Infantry supported by Companies "B" and "C." Also, our Assault Gun Platoon went into position in the vicinity of Bizory and reinforced the fires of the 320th Cannon Company, while at the same time the Mortar Platoon moved into position near Obourcy in support of the 3rd Battalion, 320th Infantry; on the eighteenth the 320th, with our support, held a defensive line along the main road running southeast from Bourcy, tied up some of the loose ends, and prepared to press the advance.

The next day, Company "B," now refitted and reorganized, moved from the rear area in the vicinity of Hompre to Bastogne, and Lt. Colonel Sussman assumed command of the composite force at Michamps. Then, on the following day, elements of "A" Company relieved "C" Company which returned to Bastogne, while all along the line constant pressure was exerted, and our air support was very active, as it became more apparent that Jerry was pulling out and was throwing up his hands at a bad job.

On the 21st, we were relieved from our attachment to TF Byrnes (320th Infantry Regiment) and were attached to Task Force Miltenberger (134th Infantry Regiment), and on the next day Companies "A" and "D" supported the task force's attack on the woods east of Bourcy. At the same time, the Assault Gun and Mortar Platoons remained in position prepared to support the fires of the 212th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. It should be mentioned here, before going further, that we enjoyed working with the infantry. Our mutual cooperation was perfectly harmonious, and their commanders made careful consideration use of our armor; we were not abused, and we were sensibly employed.

The 23rd of January saw Companies "B" and "C" joining "A" and "D" in the vicinity of Bourcy, and on this day we were assigned a novel mission, we didn't have to fight, but rather became temporarily a transport battalion, and chauffeured the doughs on our tanks as far as Hofelt, Luxembourg. Then, when the move was accomplished, all companies reverted to battalion control at Hachiville. To clarify this transport business a bit, here is why it was necessary; the ground was snow-blanketed, and so made slogging on foot pretty tough for John Dough. Also Jerry was pulling out as fast as he could, and the infantry couldn't march fast enough dismounted to maintain contact.

Again on the following day, we were called upon to transport Task Force Miltenberger to an assembly area three kilometers northeast of Hachiville. Then, Company "B" supported the 3rd Battalion and Company "C" in the consequent attack on Basbellen, where the enemy had decided to delay. It was hard work

for the doughs fighting across snow-covered fields, but the objective was secured by 1800; the remainder of the 68th stayed at Hachiville and Hofelt. On the 25th, Companies "B" and "C" reverted to battalion control and closed in the battalion area at 1145.

All elements of the 68th were assigned the mission, on the 26th, of ferrying troops to task force Miltenberger to the vicinity of Hupperdange and Heinerscheid. "B" Company reconnoitered firing positions northeast of Heinerscheid, and closed in the town prepared to occupy the positions in the event of an enemy counter-attack. All other elements of the battalion, with the exception of Headquarters Company, closed in Hupperdange, and Headquarters Co. closed in bivouac in the vicinity of Asselborn, with the Assault Gun Platoon in position prepared to support artillery fires. The Battle of the Bulge was practically over, for we had driven Jerry right back to his original line of departure. We were now sitting just west of the German border, and could see from our positions along the Skyline Drive the famous Siegfried Line. The OUR RIVER lay between the krauts and us.

The succeeding five days were luckily uneventful. The Germans entertained no thoughts of attacking; quite the contrary, they were content to hole up in the Siegfried Line pillboxes, lobbed an occasional harrassing round over to our side, and sweated out our next move. We weren't going anywhere ourselves, for we had to pull in the reins, take stock of the situation, get "squared away," and prepare to hurdle a dual barrier, one natural and the other formidably artificial—the Our River and the Siegfried Line.

On the last day of the month, Task Force Miltenberger was relieved of the sector by Task Force Brindle (86th Cavalry Recon Squadron, Mechanized—our division reconnaissance). "A" Company was attached to Task Force Brindle, but remained in its present position. So ended the month of January and the Battle of the Bulge!

T/5 James Giles, T/5 (The ranking T/5 in the Division) Buff Lee, and T/5 George Farmer. These three are familiar to all members of the battalion—the two peep drivers because you probably had to jump out of their way at one time or another, and Cpl. Lee because he was always prompt to say, "No mail today—it must be on a boat somewhere."



The Siegfried Line

The most of the month of February was to prove relatively uneventful; the first three weeks or so were to witness methodical, then gradual accelerated preparations for the ultimate assault of the big bugaboo we had heard so much about during our military careers, THE SIEGFRIED LINE. But, it was not only for the breaching of this heralded line of fortifications that we massed troops and materials; we intended, once through, to go all the way, and bring Hitler's teetering, punch-drunk Germany to its knees with a series of merciless blows, and then finish it off with our specially trained Sunday Punch. That was inevitably to come.

So, we probed and reconnoitered, shifted troops and supplies. Our part in this preparation wasn't very tactically active, for while we maintained our defensive positions on Skyline Drive, there was a minimum of action. We supported. We carried on a program of rest, rehabilitation, and maintenance, and groomed ourselves for the ensuing action. Two vital bridges and bridgeheads across the Our River in our sector were secured and improved.

Then, on the 17th, things began to cook. Company "B" (-) was attached to Task Force Brown; on the following day, one platoon of Company "A" and one platoon of Company "B" were attached to Task Force Brindle. Company "A" (-) and the Mortar Platoon were attached to Task Force Britton; the Assault Gun Platoon was attached to the 128th Field Artillery Battalion. Also, on the 19th, Company "C" was attached to Task Force Ward, and Task Force Davall, composed of the remaining elements of CCB, formed and constituted CCB's Reserve.

At dawn on the 20th, the above mentioned task forces of CCB jumped off and by darkness had secured their initial objective along Skyline Drive east of the Our River. On the following day, Company "D," part of Task Force Davall, moved across the river into a forward assembly area on the high ground north of



Going through some of the fortifications of the Siegfried Line.

Dahnen (Germany!). The rest continued the attack north and south from the second and third objectives. We were through the LINE and were expanding our salient! The fighting was initially bitter, and the krauts refused to come out of their reinforced pillboxes until they were blown out by engineer demolitions. But, in general our softening up prelude by both air and ground had been successful, and we went pouring through. Task Force Britton had flanked Dasburg from the northeast, and Task Force Ward, subsequently committed, had swung northeast and then south to take Daleiden. There was barely a rock standing in these towns so devastating had been our air and artillery preparations. Now that we were through the line, and the enemy was threatened with our outflanking him in every position he chose to defend. Jerry was desperately trying to salvage what he had left, and to pull out, but fast, with every means he could lay his hands on. So we naturally wanted to close his escape gap, and for this mission a specially formed task force under Col. Davall was formed. Things were breaking so fast now that there was no longer time for studied, deliberate planning—only action hard and fast!

So, on February 23rd, Task Force Davall was ordered to Reuler, and then immediately dispatched to Jucken. At Jucken a new special task force was formed, consisting of: The Reconnaissance Platoon, Companies "B" and "D," one platoon of Company "A," plus Troop "D" of the 86th Recon., Company "A" of the 44th AIB, one platoon of Company "A" 603rd TDs and two squads of Company "A," 25th Armored Engineer Battalion. Our mission was to block the enemy routes of withdrawal along the axis Zweifelscheid—Leimbach—Kreuzdorf—Ackelshof—Obergeckler, and establishing contact with the 80th Infantry Division swinging up from the south to meet us. It was an end run play, with the accent placed on speed and surety. One platoon of Troop "D," reinforced with one squad of engineer mine sweepers, took off at 1640. Resistance was first encountered at Karlsruhen, and this town was cleaned out with the co-operation of elements of the 6th Cavalry Group which drove in from the southwest. By midnight, on a night that was pitch dark, Col. Davall's men had driven on and captured the towns of Finnehof, Wolperdorf, and Leimbach. Teller mines hastily strewn on the road and in the ditches were reported here by Lt. Burns, Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, and were immediately removed. The above mentioned towns were occupied

1st Sgt. Granigan and Pfc. Aho of Service Co., Lts. Hughes of "Dog" and Burger of "Baker" Companies pose beside the famous sign which denoted our entry into Germany.



by elements of Task Force Brown after our capture, and we pushed on. The task force then continued its drive to the south, clearing and capturing Hutten, Neu-hutten, and Kreuzdorf. When road blocks were established on all approaches to Kreuzdorf at 0430, patrols from Troop "D" set out to contact the 80th Division. Finally, in the vicinity of hill 502 between Obergeckler and Kreuzdorf elements of the dough division were contacted; also we contacted friendly elements of the 6th Cavalry Group on our right flank.

We held what we had accomplished on the following day, and at 1200 one platoon of Company "A" 44th AIB occupied Neuerberg across the Enz River. When elements of the 6th Cavalry had relieved this dough platoon at Neuerberg, Task Force Davall was dissolved and all elements reverted to their parent units. So ended an extremely difficult, yet brilliantly directed and ably accomplished mission. The 68th Tank Battalion, once more intact, was released from CCB, attached to CCR, and returned to the general vicinity of Neuhausen. The various companies moved into billets, and settled down to a program of rest and maintenance.

The remainder of the month of February was uneventfully passed, with occasional bridge guard details, and so we rested and prepared for our next assignment.

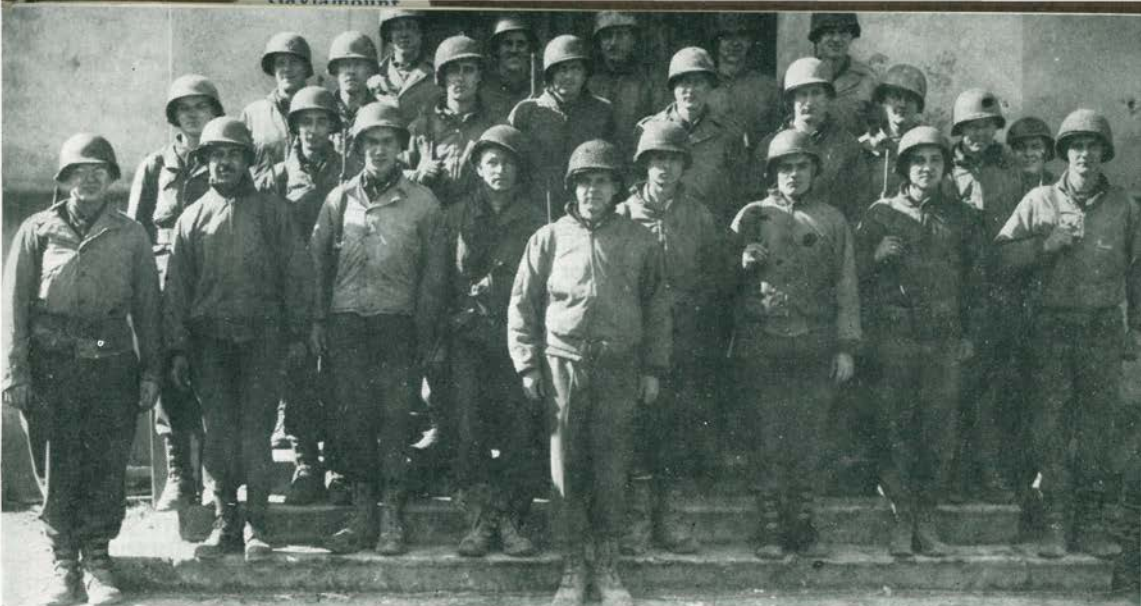
On the first of March, Companies "C" and "D" relieved Troops "E" and "F" of the 86th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron respectively. With the Assault Guns and Mortars in direct support, they continued the battalion's defensive mission in their assigned sector. By systematic patrols, contact with adjacent units was maintained. On the next day, in an incessant downpour, a tie-in point with the 4th Division at Watzerath was arranged, and the battalion continued its defensive mission without change or mishap. The same is true of the succeeding day both of continued rains and also of active defense without incident, and then on the 4th of March Companies "D" and "C" were relieved of their sector and returned to their former billets. The battalion remained in CCR.

T/4 Red McCrory, ARC Girl, and Pfc. Charley Taylor—Two "Baker" Company cooks taking time out from their chores, to entertain.



From the 5th to the 9th of April, the 68th's position was unchanged, and during this period there was initiated and followed a program of instruction in vehicular driving and maintenance; we had meanwhile gained a considerable number of reinforcements many of whom had never received armored instruction, and this was an excellent time to indoctrinate them into the technique of armored operation and necessary maintenance. Also, during this period the men had time to rest, catch up on correspondence, and see the latest moving pictures.

Then, on the tenth of the month,



The Enlisted section of Battalion Headquarters.

the battalion was ordered with the division to proceed to the vicinity of Dieuze, France. We crossed the IP at Karlshausen at 0710, and continued through Diekirch, Ettelbruck, Luxembourg, Thionville, and Pont-a-Moussen to the vicinity of Vi-Sur-Seille, Eezy, Juvelize, and Blanche Eglise. Although we remained in CCR, the division was now under 7th Army control. To clarify this a bit, the 7th Army on the south sector of the entire line had not been able to keep abreast of the 3rd in the north, were massing for their breakthrough of the Siegfried Line, and requested the "Super Sixth" to help them in their undertaking. So, the 4th Armored was given the beautiful set-up to break through on the north and dash unimpeded to the Rhine, while the ever dependable 6th was loaned out to the 7th to again break through this line near Zweibrucken

Battalion Officers at the briefing preparatory to jumpoff into the heart of Germany. Battalion Guidons in rear.



across the Saar. Tankers, what now! The entire division was marched to the 7th Army area. Out of Germany and back into the Saar again. We were going through the Siegfried Line again!!

So, from the 10th to the 17th, we shifted our training locations a bit in the general area, and prepared assiduously for the task ahead. We tried out all our new 76mm. guns, and the men grew used to them; it was a good thing, because the new gun, with its muzzle brake, and greatly increased velocity, was fired with a stunning blast to those inside the tanks, and experience in handling the weapon was imperative. We continued to train recent replacements, and carried on our maintenance so that when the day arrived we were in the best possible shape.

On March 17th, the battalion, still in CCR, received warning orders anticipating movement to a forward assembly area northeast of Sarre-Union, and became Task Force Davall, composed of Companies "A" and "D," 68th Recon. Company, 603rd TDs, one platoon of Company "C" 25th Engineers, and Company "A," 50th AIB. On the 18th, Combat Team Davall marched with CCR to its forward assembly area. We beg your pardon, but such an aggregation of troops is called "Combat Team" in the Seventh Army! and closed in its new area at 1415.

Just before noon on the 19th, we moved out to pass through two veteran infantry divisions which had been assaulting the Siegfried Line for the past several days. The column was hampered by poor road conditions, so its initial advance was slow, but we passed through Zweibrücken shortly after midnight; we had as yet met no opposition, for the doughs had pretty well erased the previously formidable line. Still hampered by poor traffic conditions and the delay of forces ahead of it on a poor road net, the combat team advanced slowly. Then, we started to shake loose, and shortly after noon on the 20th, we streaked rapidly to the vicinity of Gerardsbrunn against no organized oppositions; numerous elements of disorganized, highly confused enemy forces formed a continuous stream of ap-

athetically waved white flags along the column's axis of advance. Countless liberated slave laborers also choked the roads in a rear-ward trek. The Assault Gun Platoon fired on observed mission on a horse-drawn artillery column with excellent effect at co-ordinates (862835). Then, Battery "A" of the 231st Field Artillery Battalion joined us at Altheim. At 1630, we assembled in the vicinity of Gerardsbrunn and awaited further orders. Subsequently, we received orders to proceed to Grundstadt, and moved out promptly. The break through had been complete and as we swept along we continuously contacted friendly columns all racing to the Rhine.

Cruising up the German Highways in full pursuit of the Krauts who left a few of their belongings behind.



Having marched all night, Combat Team Davall closed at Hettenleidheim at 0500 on the 21st, where we bedded down for much rest. Then, refreshed again, we moved to a new area west of Grunstadt the following noon; Battery "A" 231st was relieved from attachment here, and we settled down to rest and reorganize for future operations.

We spent three days in our bivouac west of Grunstadt, until on the 25th we proceeded east and prepared to cross the Rhine. At 1730 the column continued east, crossed the river at Oppenheim, and thence made its way swiftly to the vicinity of Gross Gerau. The weather was ideal and we boiled along, virtually unopposed. At 1800, Lt. Col. Davall assumed command of CCR, and Major Daniel E. Smith assumed command of the combat team; Combat Team Smith closed in bivouac at 2000, and on CCR order, Werfelden and Scheppenhhausen were reconnoitered and found to be in friendly hands.

On the next morning, the combat team instituted a road reconnaissance to the east in anticipation of a possible move in that direction; one platoon from Recon. Company 603rd TDs reconnoitered the route to the vicinity of Langen. Then at 1730 we left our bivouac area, and proceeded north to the vicinity of Gespitz where Col. Davall resumed command of the combat team. The following day, we remained there, and took many prisoners, as they willingly came in to surrender from isolated out-flanked positions.

Company Commanders and Battalion Staff

Left to Right—Lt. Paul A. Warp, Adjutant; Capt. Elzie Hickerson, Hdq. Co. Commander; Lt. Col. H. C. Davall, Battalion Commander; Capt. William H. Collins, C Company Commander; Capt. Vincent P. Keville, Service Co. Commander; Capt. James R. Russell, B Company Commander.

Standing—Capt. William Halloran, Bn. Motor Officer; Capt. Francis S. Morris, Communications Officer; Capt. Raymond W. Raines, Bn. S-2; Major Daniel E. Smith, Bn. Executive Officer; Major Robert B. McKenna, Bn. S-3; Capt. James E. Burns, Bn. Supply Officer; and Capt. John D. Rosin, Bn. Surgeon.

Picture taken just before the jumpoff towards Zweibrucken, Kassel and the heart of Germany.





Crossing the Rhine River. Baker Company's Pea Shooter under the command of Sgt. Orr.

Next we proceeded from our bivouac area and proceeded northeast to cross the Main River. Other elements of the division, unable to take the city by storm, and hampered by enemy shellfire which interrupted their attempts to secure a suitable bridgehead in Frankfurt, finally slid off to the east to by-pass Frankfurt,

and left the complicated, time necessary assault of Frankfurt to doughs, who had by this time come up to relieve us. After crossing the river under cover of smoke, the column roared to a temporary assembly area several miles east of the river and closed there at 2230. At 0700, on the 29th, the combat team moved north through Nieden, Gross Karken, Assenheim, Berstadt, Griedel, and thence north on the autobahn (super-highway) to an assembly area near Oppenrod. This was a lightning thrust, and sporadic small arms and bazooka fire were encountered and dealt with summarily. The combat team suffered, however, no casualties, and captured an estimated thousand prisoners, although there were doubtless many more which could not be accurately tabulated, so swift was the advance. We closed in our new area at 1700, and prepared for further operations to the east.

Our drive was really under a full head of steam, and our opposition for the most part were not crack troops, but rear echelon commandos of the Wehrmacht. Surprising too, was the total lack of willingness to fight of the widely heralded Volksturm, old men and young boys, who, mutely bedraggled, lifted not a hand in resistance. In the vernacular, "They had had it!"

On the 30th, having lost Recon. Company 603rd TDs but having gained the 274th FA Bn., we shoved off in a generally northeasterly direction through Geilhausen, Obergleen, Wasenburg, Michelburg, Utterhausen, and Zennern, where we closed at 1020. This rapid thrust into the heart of Germany covered 66 miles; some small arms fire was encountered, but it was quickly disposed of. Then, immediately on arrival at Zennern, Company "B" crossed the river to Ober Molrich in order to relieve cavalry elements already there. They underwent extremely heavy artillery fire while crossing. Later that night Company "C" reinforced Company "B," and also when combat team reconnaissance elements reached Wabern and Zennern, they received small arms and bazooka fire, as a result of which one attached tank destroyer was crippled, but the combat team subsequently inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, and cleaned them out successfully. Then, too, during the night the Assault Gun Platoon fired missions to protect our bridgehead. One platoon of 603rd TDs was attached to the combat team, and we remained under the control of CCA.

On March 31st, Company "B," led by Captain Russell, and one platoon of "A" Company 50th AIB attacked Werkel from the south during which attack they encountered heavy direct self-propelled and mortar fire, and were forced to withdraw to the vicinity of Ober Molrich. Then, an air strike was requested, and P-47s consequently bombed and strafed the town. Next, Company "C" and a platoon of armored infantry attacked Werkel again, this time from the southwest, and lead elements succeeded in battering their way into town after a bitter fight. By midnight, Company "K" 261st Infantry Regiment, meanwhile attached, secured the bridge at Werkel, and were further reinforced by elements of the combat team, which made preparations to move in. We remained in CCA.

The beginning of April found Combat Team Davall continuing the attack, driving north to penetrate the defenses of Kassel. It is noteworthy that Colonel Davall's command was still the main driving, unchecked force in the division, as the other elements were probing and reconnoitering routes and possible river crossings to the east. Shortly after the jump off at 0820, lead elements ran into considerable small arms and self-propelled anti-tank fire at the outskirts of Gudensberg. However, this opposition was thoroughly dispersed and swiftly cleaned up, and the combat team went into a tightly tied-in assembly nearby. We quickly organized the town, and waited there for further orders. Then, later in the day, we were relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 261st Infantry Regiment, and were alerted to be prepared to cross the Fulda River the next morning; the division commander had elected, since CCA could not find a suitable crossing of its own, to shove them across on a bridge farther south secured by CCB.

So, on the following day, the column, refreshed by the maximum amount of rest under the circumstances, moved out to the south and in rapid succession passed through Zennern, Singlis, Hbel, and then swung east to cross the Fulda at Malsfeld; we continued in a north-easterly, then easterly direction, and reached Eschenstruth at 2010. Moderate resistance was encountered here, and also at Quentel and Furstenhagen, but it was cleaned out completely without loss; we had secured these towns by 2200, and prepared for further movement to the east.

At 0700 on the 3rd, Task Force Davall continued its easterly advance, passing through Walbourg, and Wickerode. We might mention here that other elements of CCA had continued advancing the preceding night and this morning, under extremely fatiguing conditions, pitch darkness, rain, mud, and a tortuous, hilly route. However, this morning we negotiated the same distance in a fraction of their elapsed time, and also our men refreshed by a night's sleep and really ready to go. At 1445 we closed in the vicinity of Hitzerode, in which general area the other elements of CCA had assembled. Reconnaissance elements were ordered to find a crossing over the Werra River, our next natural obstacle, and, in checking the bridge west of Bad Sooden, encountered a strongly defended road block, also, at 1430 heavy artillery and bazooka fire were received in that vicinity. So, with this knowledge, Colonel Davall organized a task force composed of one medium tank platoon, a light tank platoon, reconnaissance platoon, and Company "K" 261st Infantry to reduce the block and secure the bridge at Bad Sooden. However, just as final co-ordination of the attack was being effected, the show was ordered stopped by higher headquarters; the task force was withdrawn, and during the withdrawal further small arms, mortar, and self-propelled anti-tank fire was received although our supporting 274th FA Bn. fired continuous protective barrages, and continued with interdictory fires. With the above accomplished, we prepared to move east again.

Early on the morning of the 4th, we crossed the Werra River at a

T/4 Herman Bumgartner, Lts. Jannon, Jones, Long, and Capt. Russell on their way to look over the situation.



point secured farther south than our former position, and swiftly bowled along to the vicinity of Struth, where we assembled in readiness for participation in the attack of Mulhausen. Then, as part of the general encirclement of the city before the division's attack, the task force moved to Lengefeld; Company "B," plus a platoon of FOX (Company "A" 50th AIB), was ordered to attack and secure Ammern, and this force accomplished its mission without loss by 2200, while capturing some thirty odd prisoners of war. Then with Lengefeld as a base, the combat team participated in the perimeter containing of Mulhausen while dough elements moved into the attack.

In the afternoon of the next day, the city having been cleared, Task Force Davall moved into Mulhausen where it closed at 1800. Prior to this time, our attached platoon from the 603rd TDs was detached to CCA. We were then placed under CCR control and, while preparing for several days of necessary reorganization and refitting, were assigned the mission, in co-ordination with Task Force Ward, of defending the southeastern approach to Mulhausen. Also "A" Company 50th AIB reverted to its parent battalion's control.

So, we settled down to sit for a while, but, as it has happened on many previous occasions, this period of peace and quiet didn't last very long. For, later in the day we were alerted to prepare for an attack on the west in order to protect the division's rear and north flank.

With its mission to secure the high ground northeast of Kalteneber and having once again attached to it "A" Company 50th AIB and detached from it "A" Company 68th, Task Force Davall proceeded to Dinglestadt on the morning of April 7th. We left a block there to protect our exposed north flank, and continued west to Kefferhausen, where advance elements encountered strong small arms and bazooka opposition. The combat team commander immediately deployed "D" (-), Commanded by Captain Raymond W. Raines, on the high ground northeast of town, from which point they could support a frontal attack by "FOX" elements, which began attacking up the draw which leads into Kefferhausen. The Reconnaissance Platoon, having meanwhile lost one killed, one wounded, and one missing, withdrew to nearby cover. It soon became evident that the light

Capt. William H. Collins



During the lull in the advance, Doc Rosin, Doc Consroe, and Red Mitchell engage in a fast game of cards.



tanks couldn't adequately cover any further advance by our doughs, and the attacking platoon became pinned down by fire. Then, Colonel Davall ordered their withdrawal, effected with no little difficulty and exposure; having withdrawn, the foot-sloggers took up defensive positions south and east of town. Also, "B" and "C" Companies were deployed in firing positions south and east of town. We requested an air strike, and at 1400 the welcome P-47's bombed and strafed the podunk, during which assault one plane was shot down. In the meanwhile, Dinglestadt had been secured, and several hundred prisoners were taken. Then we withdrew into defensive positions around Dinglestadt, and infantry patrols went into the outskirts of Kefferhausen. We now had "B" Company 50th AIB, but had lost "C" Company, under Captain William H. Collins, to Task Force Ward, which had pushed parallel to and south of us to Wachstedt. Before midnight we had elements of Baker Company 50th in Kefferhausen, and a reinforcing battalion from the 76th Division had joined us in Dinglestadt, although their mission was to push farther northwest and further screen the division's north flank. In addition to losses suffered by our Recon. Platoon, "A" Company 50th lost several wounded and our "D" Company suffered three casualties during the day's operations, which was compensated in part by the heavy casualties which we inflicted on the enemy.

On the following day, proceeding methodically through towns yet swiftly between them, the combat team proceeded from Dinglestadt through Flinsberg, and Kalteneber to Furstenhagen where it closed at 1540. Scattered resistance was met, yet completely cleaned out; with our mission accomplished, we secured Furstenhagen where we awaited further orders, at the same time patrolling actively to the north, south, east, and west. During the latter part of the day we captured forty-three more prisoners in the area.

On the 9th, we continued our widespread patrols to contact elements of the 3rd Cavalry Group, reported to be coming up from the southeast and east. Finally "A" of the 3rd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and "B" of the 43rd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron were contacted. Also, we contacted elements of the 69th Division. So, as their relief of us began, the combat prepared to return to Mulhausen.

The following morning, we proceeded directly to Mulhausen, and all attachments were returned to their parent units. Maintenance and refitting were again begun, while the command anticipated further movement to the east and remained in CCR.

On the 11th, we took off again, as the entire division was on the move. Having again lost "A" 68th and gained "A" 50th Combat Team Davall made a fifty-three mile advance to Liebstedt. As part of the CCR column, we breezed through Hongeda, Dollstadt, Witerda, Kleinrudstedt, and Hottlestedt to Liebstedt. There was considerable enemy activity over the column during the day, and our maintenance elements were bombed and strafed near Udestedt.

Sgt.-Major Ed Knott grabbing a quick bite before shoving off again. Dead Krauts are something you can become used to.





Rolling over the
beautiful
German
countryside.

Smashing along, virtually unopposed, and gathering up prisoners in the manner of a reaping machine, we pushed off again and proceeded south to Pfuhsborn; thence we moved southwest to Gosserstadt where we joined the other elements of the division who were preparing to cross the Saale River at Gamburg. The column went into assembly there and awaited its turn to cross the bridge, remaining unusually widely dispersed, as the threat of enemy air was great. At 1310 we crossed the river and proceeded to Nauschutz. Just south of Goldschau, the Reconnaissance Platoon and lead elements of "D" Company discovered a bridge prepared for demolition. Then after the attached engineer squad had disarmed the charges, the point encountered a defended road block. Lead elements immediately dismounted, tanks were brought up, and under the personal direction of Lt. Col. Davall the opposition was quickly disposed of, and ten prisoners were taken. Having consequently screened through Goldschau, the task force went into assembly beyond town, awaiting further orders. At 1750 we moved out again to Meinweh, where a road block and small arms fire was encountered. "B" Company immediately by-passed the town, and barrelled down the main road to Doschwitz to clean it out and secure it. This proved no easy task, but by 2200, Captain Russell's men with only seven tanks, but meanwhile reinforced by "C" Company 50th, had the burg well secured. Sporadic sniping from the outskirts continued. A patrol was organized, and set out by circuitous route to check on the condition of the underpass and river bridge just east of Zeitz. Both were reported intact, and in the meantime the 1st Bn. 304th Infantry had joined and reinforced our force at Doschwitz. The infantry then began to make plans for a co-ordinated attack on the city the next morning, and during the remainder of the night considerable artillery and counter-battery fire was drawn by our supporting artillery. During this day's operations an estimated 150 prisoners were taken.

On the 13th, Companies "A," "B," and "C" and the Assault Gun Platoon took up firing positions generally along the river bank southeast, west, and northwest of Zeitz, prepared to fire on definite targets in support of the attack by the foot-slogging sad-sacks. "A" Company found the formerly O.K.ed bridge now K.O.ed,

so the infantry assault was held up; suitable river crossings had first to be reconnoitered. Eventually the doughs forded the river at several points, and with the close support of the above mentioned companies moved into Zeitz. Prior to this, our Assault Gun Platoon suffered heavy shelling while refueling. Then, Company "B" and elements of Company "A" crossed the Weisse River at a

Bringing the gas and supplies up in their
trusty peep are S/Sgt. Robert Macomber and
Lt. Jack Elder.



shallow point, and "B" company continued to closely support the infantry as they cleaned out the city. Heavy mortar, dual purpose ack-ack, and severe small arms fire was undergone during the expansion of our bridgehead here. Also all the while engineer attempts to improve the ford or construct a bridge were interrupted by heavy direct and indirect artillery fire. But, the afore-mentioned Baker tanks supported the doughs heroically in the cleanup of Zeitz; the remainder of the combat team left Grana, and crossed the Weisse farther downstream at Wetterzub. We picked up "B" Company here, and continued on, methodically and rapidly cleaning out Gleina (Where more Allied P.W.s were liberated, and several prisoners taken). Then in succession came Sabissa, Zipsendorf, the railroad bridge there secured, and Schleiditzrossitz. It should be noted here that after leaving Zeitz; the combat team's objective was extended farther east several times, so successful and rapid was its advance.

Since the burgemeister had declared Altenburg an open city, the combat team contained and guarded several important installations and materiel warehouses until relieved by following infantry. Then, at noon, we moved east again, and in quick succession passed through Windischleuba, Dolsenhain, Landau, Corba (at this point we had a bridge across the Mulde River blown in our face). We quickly found another bridge several kilometers south and crossed in the vicinity of Cossen. At 1730, the column, now pointed by "B" Company passed through Koenigshain, and Mittweida, and thence to Erlau, where they closed at 1810. Patrols were set up, and so contact with nearby units was maintained.

This point is the farthest east that the combat team as a whole had penetrated into the Reich. As a matter of fact, our task force had marched some sixty to a hundred kilometers beyond the occupational zone boundaries assigned to the U.S.A. at the Yalta Conference. We were way out in front; Germany had been split wide open, and was bursting at the seams. This point in time as well as distance also marks the virtual termination of combat in the ETO for the 68th Tank Battalion. Of course, we know that V-E Day was not declared until several weeks later, but for all intents and practical purposes we were through fighting. We were not sure of this, however, for the action still went on north and south of us. We were way out there, and so we waited and waited until the Russians joined us. We maintained law and order, and moved from billet to billet, never very far, or for very long. Then, at last the big boys made it official, and on May 12th we were told it was all over, that hostilities had ceased, and the Germans had surrendered unconditionally. Strangely enough, this announcement brought no wild demonstrations of joy. Rather, we were glad it was over, were secretly proud of the part we had played in this final victory and all that succeeded it, were sorry that our fallen comrades could not be there in Eschfeld with us on that day.

FINISH

M/Sgt. Elijah Shivers and WOJG Berry W. Russell out looking for parts to repair our vehicles. They usually found them too.



Notes from the Adjutant

As Adjutant of the 68th Tank Battalion from 19 September 1943 until 22 May 1945, it was my pleasure to know and work with many of you. In appreciation of those pleasant associations I want to share with you this history, facts, figures, and pictures, which will in a small way show our efforts in winning World War II.

In order that every member of the Battalion receives his copy, it will be necessary for each of you to fill out the enclosed card giving name and present address of as many of the men as you know. Kindly do this and return the card to me.

The best of luck to you and yours.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Warp



PERTINENT STATISTICS TO THE BATTALION

These facts and figures may give you an insight on the magnitude of our operations as a division and a battalion. In casualties, the Division had 110 officers killed and we had 9, the Division 1172 enlisted men killed and we had 75, wounded the figures ran 294 officers and 4,086 enlisted men for the Division and we had 27 officers and 185 enlisted men. Of the 52 people missing in action in the Division, we had one. In non-battle casualties the division had 272 officers and 4,885 enlisted men and we had 12 and 260. As a matter of comparison, our casualties were lower than either of the other two tank battalions. 187 personnel returned to duty from casualty status and 373 replacements joined the battalion during combat.

We had six battlefield appointments—1st Lt. Harry Burger, 1st Lt. Vernard Brock-Jones, 2nd Lt. Millard Watson, 2nd Lt. John Dahl, 2nd Lt. Everett Tourjee, and 2nd Lt. Waldo Shumway. All but Shumway served within the battalion after being commissioned.

The division awarded the following medals:

Distinguished Service Cross	Silver Star	Bronze Star	Purple Heart	Soldiers Medal
15	1457	5221	1633	31
We had— 2	97	327	126	2

The Distinguished Service Crosses went to 1st Lt. Vernon L. Edwards of Baker company posthumously for his work on the Han Sur Neid River Crossing, and Major Daniel E. Smith for his actions at Landroff, France. The soldiers medals went to T/4 Harold Stanisch of Maintenance for his quick thinking in throwing can of gasoline and thereby saving lives and equipment. T/5 George Farmer of Headquarters for his aggressive action at Dinglestadt, Germany in extricating a dead pilot of a P47 which had crashed nearby, even though the plane was burning.

The percentage of personnel who were still in the division on VE day and sailed from the States with us—Division 60% of Officers and WOs, 54% of NCOs of 1st 3 grades, and 66% of Enlisted men less the 1st 3 grades and in the battalion we had 48% of the Officers and Warrant Officers, 60% of the NCOs of the 1st three grades and 66% of the Enlisted men less the 1st 3 grades. (Personally, I feel these figures a little high, but have no records to back up my thoughts.) The division sent 5,500,000 letters and received 7,500,000 letters and we sent 375,000 parcels and received 425,000 parcels. In Money Orders, the division sent home \$1,351,220.77. 28% of total earned pay was sent home by Money Order, Personal Transfer Account, and other means after it had first been drawn in cash from the division finance officer. Only about 10% of the pay was retained by the troops.

The Provost Marshal processed 61,864 prisoners of war and the biggest batch came through during the period 9 March thru 8 May when 48,433 looked at the 6th Armored Patch and knew the jig was up. Four of the ten chaplains who started the campaign with us did not finish, one was killed, and three evacuated. The division had 847 Sunday Services with a total attendance of 53,590 and 813 week-day services with an attendance of 38,321. 57 Jewish services were held with attendance of 819. 38,171 received Holy Communion and 21,409 confessions were heard.

The 68th received 80 new light and medium tanks to replace worn out and knocked out equipment. 17 peeps and 10 6x6's were also replaced. As for shooting we used 1,837,750 rounds of 30 cal. MG.; 60,700 carbine; 63,172 rifle; 233,400 45 cal. ball; 2760 37mm.; 2439 81mm. Mortar; 16,155 75mm.; 6,408 rounds 76mm.; and 10,844 rounds of 105 mm. howitzer. (This can be explained by the action of "Battery Hickerson" who fired twice as many rounds as one tank battalion and 1300 rounds more than the other tank battalion. Those artillerymen who watched this battery fire, all agreed that it was doing top notch shooting.) We used 3,658 grenades, and 144,435 rounds of cal. 50.

Maps—the division used 144,435 sheets which weighed 21.4 tons.

Trucks—division trucking companies traveled far enough to go 37½ times around the world merely to bring supplies to the supply dump located in the division area.

4,211,074 rations (1 ration equals 3 meals for one man) were drawn in the nine month period. 19,769 pairs of socks were issued. 11,471 field jackets, 22,037 shirts, 18,032 trousers, 13,642 overcoats, 13,272 overshoes, and 73,821 underwear. 5,479,770 gallons of 80 octane gasoline were used. This amounts to a sizeable pile of supplies, even for a division.

The division evacuated 1,289 American dead and 800 german dead. Cemeteries in which division dead are buried are: St. Mere Eglise, Blonville, St. James, Chalons, Andilly, Limey, Grand Faily, and St. Avold, France; Fay, Belgium; Hamm, Luxembourg; Stromberg, Butzbach, Eisenach, and Brenau, Germany.

BATTALION OFFICERS

	July 23	May 8
Battalion Commander	Lt. Col. Davall	Same
Executive Officer	Major Brown	Major Smith
Adjutant	Lt. Warp	Same
S 2	Capt. Raines	Lt. Burns
S 3	Major Britton	Major McKenna
S 3 Air	Capt. Parker	Capt. Morris
S 4	Capt. Jacoby	Capt. Burns
S 5	Capt. Klotz	Capt. Halloran
Liaison	Lt. Burns	Lt. Sillins

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

Commanding	Capt. Brown	Capt. Hickerson
Motor Officer	Lt. Mohr	Same
Reconnaissance	Lt. Linebaugh	Same
Mortar	Lt. England	Lt. Glenn
Assault	Lt. Hickerson	Lt. Clapp

ABLE COMPANY

Commanding	Capt. Polk	Capt. Parker
Motor Officer	Lt. George	Lt. Hogan
Platoon Leader	Lt. Zimmer	Lt. Brock-Jones
Platoon Leader	Lt. Hafley	Lt. Houston
Platoon Leader	Lt. Kratzer	Lt. Pavlich

BAKER COMPANY

Commanding	Capt. Bland	Capt. Russell
Motor Officer	Lt. Edwards	Lt. Jannon
Platoon Leader	Lt. Russell	Lt. Long
Platoon Leader		Lt. Jones
Platoon Leader		Lt. Hughey

CHARLIE COMPANY

Commanding	Capt. Smith	Capt. Collins
Motor Officer	Lt. Schor	Lt. Metzger
Platoon Leader	Lt. Hoffmann	Lt. Lundy
Platoon Leader	Lt. Lundh	Lt. Farris
Platoon Leader	Lt. Elliott	Lt. Dahl

DOG COMPANY

Commanding	Capt. McKenna	Capt. Raines
Motor Officer	Lt. Halloran	Lt. Larsen
Platoon Leader	Lt. Siedentop	Lt. Allen
Platoon Leader	Lt. Lequire	Lt. Ketchum
Platoon Leader	Lt. Collins	Lt. Hughes

SERVICE COMPANY

Commanding	Capt. Burns	Capt. Keville
Motor Officer	Lt. Keville	Lt. Bierer
Transport Officer	Lt. Elder	Same
Supply W O	WOJG Morse	Same
Auto W O	WOJG Russell	Same
Personnel	CWO Exner	Same

MEDICS

Surgeon	Capt. Schlossman	Capt. Rosin
Assistant	Lt. Callister	Lt. Consroe

BATTALION NCO's

HEADQUARTERS

July 23

Sgt. Major
Intelligence
Operations
Supply

None
S/Sgt. Lander
T/Sgt. Etheridge
T/Sgt. Sunderland

May 8

M/Sgt. Knott
T/Sgt. Uszner
Sgt. Petrillo
Sgt. Nudelman

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

1st Sergeant
Reconnaissance
Mortar
Assault
Motor Sergeant

1st Sgt. Chinn
S/Sgt. Helton
S/Sgt. Hailley
S/Sgt. Kretchmer
S/Sgt. Brown

Same
Same
Same
S/Sgt. Haefmeyer
Same

ABLE COMPANY

1st Sergeant
Motor Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant

1st Sgt. Watson
T/Sgt. Bement
S/Sgt. Brock-Jones
S/Sgt. Burger
S/Sgt. Shumway

1st Sgt. Foutch
Same
S/Sgt. D'Orazio
S/Sgt. Sucharski
S/Sgt. Yadlowski

BAKER COMPANY

1st Sergeant
Motor Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant

1st Sgt. Doyle
T/Sgt. Del Moro
S/Sgt. Rewucki
S/Sgt. Mackay
S/Sgt. Tourjee

1st Sgt. Carter
Same
Same
Same
S/Sgt. Esposito

CHARLIE COMPANY

1st Sergeant
Motor Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant

1st Sgt. Dahl
T/Sgt. Harper
S/Sgt. Mays
S/Sgt. Reece
S/Sgt. Crumb

S/Sgt. Poppe
Same
S/Sgt. Hicks
S/Sgt. Haun

DOG COMPANY

1st Sergeant
Motor Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant
Platoon Sergeant

1st Sgt. Degnan
T/Sgt. Ebert
S/Sgt. Shevlin
S/Sgt. Sutton
S/Sgt. Karpinski

1st Sgt. Goldstein
Same
S/Sgt. Porter
S/Sgt. Colas
S/Sgt. Torrance

SERVICE COMPANY

1st Sergeant
Motor Sergeant
Transport
Maintenance
Personnel

1st Sgt. Knott
S/Sgt. Templeton
S/Sgt. Macomber
T/Sgt. Shore
T/Sgt. Hogan

1st Sgt. Granigan
Same
Same
Same
Same

The first group of 68th men to leave for home—Pvt. Bell, "Charlie"; T/4 Stratton, "Dog"; T/Sgt. Barry, "Medics"; T/4 Stanish, "Maint"; 1st Sgt. Knott, "Bn. Hq."

Back Row—1st Sgt. Bradford, "Dog"; Sgt. Green, "Baker"; and Pfc. Herbert, "Bn. Hq."—all these men had over 100 points.





1st Sgt. Archie Carter, Cpl. George Shepard, and T/4 Herman Bumgartner. Three well-known "Baker" Company men.



S/Sgt. Luther Brown, Hq. Co.; Cpl. Del Coglian, A Co.; T/Sgt. Paul Harper, C Co.; Lt. Millard F. Watson, B Co.; and T/4 Frank Falls, C Co.



The Company Runners—Holding an important job which was performed in a very creditable manner—Left to Right: "Baker's" Weil, "Charlies" Taubenberger, "Ables" Bratcher, "Medics" Schlessinger, "Maintenances" Barker, "Dogs" Dankel, and "Hqs." Macchiarola.

T/4 Scott amused at the trouble Major McKenna is having shaving.



Four braves from "Baker"—Sgt. Zaunbrecher, S/Sgt. Mackey, T/4 Hagermann and Cpl. Fuller.



