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# BLACK HAWKS

## Over The Danube

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The History of The  
86th INFANTRY DIVISION  
IN WORLD WAR II

*Richard A. Briggs*

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By  
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Dedicated to Comrades of the U.S. 86th Infantry  
Division who spent themselves selflessly and  
gloriously in the service of our country.

*"I can think of no more fitting tribute to the valiant  
deeds of the men of the 86th Division than to say that you  
accomplished what I expected and had faith you would do;  
that you accomplished no more was because there was  
nothing else to be done. I am indeed honored to have com-  
manded the Black Hawk Division in this engagement.*

HARRIS M. MELASKY  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding General



# *Black Hawks Over The Danube*

## FOREWORD

This is the story, told as factually as possible, of the activities of the US Army's Eighty-Sixth "Black Hawk" Infantry Division in World War II.

For eight years, the fighting record of the Black Hawks has been fading into oblivion. The author has attempted in this volumn to bring to light for future generations the part played by the Black Hawks in winning the war. In so doing, he requests the indulgence of all of his former comrades, as the length of time that has lapsed since the end of the war has erased many memories and likewise official records of the divisions activities.

Much of the information in this book originates from the various after action reports, and other official classified documents in the office of the Adjutant General Army Records Center. Without these documents this book would have been impossible.

The author also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of all former members of the Division who furnished material when requested. This list would be large, but special recognition must be given to Maj. General Harris M. Melasky, our former Commanding General, who is still heart and soul a Black Hawk.

The author invites correspondence regarding the Black Hawk History, and has indicated a desire to see a permanent Black Hawk Division Association formed, with an annual reunion in some central location in the states each year.

The book is dedicated to all former members of the Division who gave their all for the success of its mission in World War II. Composed almost entirely of selective service inductees, the unit became known as the "Kid Division," because of its youth. The average age of the entire division, officers and all, was only 22. In writing a history of an

infantry division, far too many noble acts and deeds are overlooked, because the act dropped where some obscure doughboy fell. Many a battle was won when some infantryman fired one last round from his M-1 rifle as he fell in battle. These are the acts that will never be recorded, as they fell with the individual that carried them through.

As this book is read, many memories will come to light. Some of them will be pleasant, others will not. The purpose of this book is not fiction, nor is it to glorify any particular unit or individual. It attempts to tell only the story of the Black Hawk Division, as documented from official army records.

The author of this book served as a rifleman in the 86th Infantry Division for over two years. Joining the division at Camp Livingston and remaining with it thru the Philippines. After his discharge from the army in 1946, he studied Journalism at the University of Louisville, and until 1951 was the editor of a Kentucky newspaper. In 1951 he was appointed Postmaster at West Point, Kentucky, and since that time has served in that position.

## THE CALL TO COLORS

The history of the 86th Black Hawk Division dates back to the days of Kaiser Bill. During the early days of American participation in World War I, this reserve component of the US Army was called into service at Camp Grant, Illinois.

The original manpower of the 86th Division in World War I came mostly from the three states of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. When these young reservists, along with a mixture of conscriptees, reported to Camp Grant in 1917, they were immediately rushed through a period of basic training, in preparation for an early overseas shipment. Commanded by Maj. General T. H. Barry, the 86th Division of World War I days soon gained a reputation as an outfit with a future, in other words, the 86th would be widely used on the stalemated western front.

As the 86th Infantry Division neared its period of training at Camp Grant, the unit became known as the Black Hawk Division, in honor of the old Sauk Indian warrior, Makataimeshekiakiah, or Black Hawk, as he was commonly known to the early pioneer settlers. Black Hawk was not a chief, or the son of a chief, he was only a warrior, and this modern day Infantry Division maintains its tradition from him. Black Hawk was the leader of the Sauk tribes in their war with the Osages, and then when white settlers attempted to force his tribe from the upper Mississippi valley, Black Hawk led numerous raids against the settlers. It is interesting to note that Black Hawk, even while engaged against the United States army, was never captured, he was betrayed. He was taken before President Andrew Jackson, where his only greeting was, "You are a man, I am another." Black Hawk was kept a prisoner at Fort Monroe, Va., for a month and then released. He traveled through all of the large eastern seaboard cities where he greatly im-

pressed the citizens. He then returned to Iowa where he died in 1838. It is for this great Indian warrior that the 86th Division took its nickname. The Division patch shows a large black hawk, on a shield of red, with the letters BH imposed on the hawk.

In the first world war, the 86th Division was composed of the 171st Infantry Brigade, which consisted of the 341st Inf., 342nd Inf., and 332nd MG Bn.; the 172nd Inf. Brigade, which consisted of the 343rd Inf., 344th Inf., and 333rd MG Bn., the 161st FA Brigade, which consisted of the 331st and 332nd Lt. FA Bn., the 333rd Hv. FA Bn., and the 311th Trench Mortar Bn.; and the following attached units, 331st MG Bn., 311th Engr., and 311th Field Signal Bn.

The 86th Division was sent overseas during the summer of 1918 and arrived at Bordeaux on September 21, 1918. Headquarters were set up at St. Andre de Cubzac. The division was soon depleted by urgent calls for replacements at the front and what remained of the Division was sent to Le Mans. The division was returned to the US in January, 1919, soon after the Armistice.

Upon its return to the states, the units were de-activated and returned to a reserve status, in which capacity they remained until the United States became involved in World War II.

Soon after Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japan on December 7, 1941, and the United States became involved in a global war, the War Department commenced a program of enlarging our armed forces as rapidly as possible. Reserve divisions were being activated almost daily at various training camps throughout the southern states. As the older regular army and national guard divisions were shipped overseas, more divisions were activated in their place, until the army reached a peak of some 90 divisions.

On December 15, 1942, the army officially re-activated



the 86th "Black Hawk" Infantry Division at Camp Howze, Texas, with its officers cadre strength coming from the 79th Inf. Div. and the 42nd "Rainbow" Division. The original manpower which assembled at Camp Howze to attend the activation program was 139 officers and 240 noncoms.

As the 86th Division Headquarters opened at cold, bleak, and wind swept Camp Howze, on that dismal December day in 1942, the allies were still falling back on all fronts. The first General Order of the 86th Division in World War II listed the following units as forming the 86th Division.

#### **Combat Troops**

341st Inf. Regt.  
342nd Inf. Regt.  
343rd Inf. Regt.  
86th Cav. Recon. Troop  
311th Engineer Bn.  
86th Div. Artillery  
Hq. Bty., 86th Div. Art.  
331st F.A. Bn.  
332nd F.A. Bn.  
404th F.A. Bn.  
911th F.A. Bn.

#### **Service Troops**

Hq. 86th Inf. Div.  
Hq. Co., 86th Inf. Div.  
86th Div. MP Platoon  
786th Ord. L.M. Co.  
86th Q.M. Co.  
86th Signal Co.  
311th Medical Bn.

The first Commanding General of the 86th Division was Maj. General Alexander E. Anderson, army officer from New York City. General Alexander had served on the Mexican border in 1916 and saw action in France during World War I with the 165th Regiment of the old Rainbow Division. He afterward remained active with the National Guard and was called to service in 1940. General Anderson was awarded the DSC in World War I. After being called back to service, he commanded the 54th Infantry Brigade of the 27th Division, before it was streamlined into a triangle division. It was General Anderson who gave the 86th Division its motto, "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

At the activation ceremonies, Major General (later Lt. Gen.) Courtney Hodges, commander of the X Corps, was present and delivered the welcoming address. The call to

colors was rendered by a band from Perrin Field, Texas, and the invocation was made by Chaplain John K. Connelly, Division Chaplain.

The division was activated in compliance with letter, The Adjutants General's office, 1 September, 1942, subject, "Ordering into active service the 86th and 87th Infantry Divisions, during December, 1942."

The response to General Hodges' welcome was delivered by General Anderson, the CG, and it was indeed an inspiring speech. However it proved to be General Anderson's last official speech, as he died suddenly less than 10 days after the 86th Division was activated. General Order No. 3, of the 86th Division, announced his death to the troops. He was temporarily succeeded by Brig. General George Van Whyte Pope, the assistant division commander. General Pope was to serve until a new Division Commander could be appointed and reach Camp Howze.

In early January, 1943, Major General Harris M. Melasky, assumed command of the 86th Infantry Division, and he, more than any other man became an integral part of the Black Hawk Division. General Melasky commanded the division from that time through its entire period of training and combat until late in 1945, long after it became the occupational unit in the Philippines.

Born in Austin, Texas, on April 11, 1893, General Melasky graduated from the Military Academy and was commissioned a second lieutenant on April 20, 1917.

Upon graduating he was assigned to the 35th Infantry at Nogales, Arizona. He subsequently served at the Presidio, Fort Sill, and at Camp Fremont, California, before going with the 12th Infantry Regiment to France. Upon his return from France in 1919 he served in Washington and Virginia. During the Siberian campaign he commanded the elements

of the 31st Infantry at Razdolnoe. In 1920 he was serving in the Philippines.

During the peacetime years, following 1920, Melasky served in Tientsin, China, Camp Little, Ariz., Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, Watertown, Mass. Arsenal, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Fort Jay, N. Y., Governors Island, N. Y., Fort Benning, Ga., and in 1933, entering the coveted Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. After completing that two year course, Melasky was assigned to the 34th Infantry at Ft. Meade. Then he was sent to the Army War College at Washington, and after graduation, was assigned to the office, Chief of Infantry, at Washington.

In 1941 he was given his first major troop command when he became Commanding Officer of the 550th Airborne Infantry Regiment in the Canal Zone. In 1942 he was assigned to duty with the 77th Infantry Division and in January, 1943, became the Black Hawk CG, a command he was always proud to hold.

Promotions for Melasky came rapidly after his graduation from West Point. He was made a first lieutenant less than a month after leaving the military academy, and by August he was a captain. A few weeks later he had risen to the temporary rank of Major. In 1940 he was promoted to a full colonel, in 1942 he was made a Brig. General and in February, 1943, was promoted to the rank of Major General. General Melasky is now retired from the army as a Major General.

When General Melasky joined the 86th Division he found the outfit still just at cadre strength. The small group of officers and enlisted men were preparing for the day when the fillers would begin to arrive and the Division could get down to the task of training for combat. In those early days at Camp Howze, it was a common thing to see two or three lieutenants mired in the mud as they built sidewalks, did

carpentry, and other manual tasks. Soldiers from other outfits stationed at Camp Howze used to take bus rides past the 86th Division area just to look on in astonishment at officers and high noncoms working harder than the lowest of yard-birds. This went on for over two months.

During January and February, 1943, the fillers began to arrive. Every state in the union sent some of its sons, with the biggest representation coming from Texas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, but the entire 48 states were represented. It was a great treat to go to the PX and hear the drawl of the deep south, the clipped accent of the New Yorker, the correct talk of the New Englander all clamoring, "Gimme a beer, willya huh?" It took a month or so for the girls working at the PX to realize that no matter how it sounded it all meant the same thing, when properly translated.

As the fillers were assigned to the regiments, a system of block training was inaugurated for the purpose of instructing the new men in the basic principles of military life. Basic training for the Black Hawk Division was commenced on March 1, 1943. The men were given lectures on hygiene, first aid, military discipline and courtesy and many other subjects. In no time at all the fellow who couldn't walk to the grocery store for his "Ma" was taking 25-mile hikes with a heavy pack and rifle. The same fellow who thought a rifle was used only in western pictures had learned how to take it apart, clean it, name its parts, and frequently hit the bulls eye with it.

From this training phase, leaders began to emerge and were awarded with stripes, proudly sewed on by men who used to give others the needle but never used it themselves. The flash in the pans began to fade and many of the quiet unobstrusive boys showed that they were always there in the clutch.

In the early days of the 86th Division, besides the CG, and General Pope, assistant CG; the artillery was commanded by Brig. Gen. Clarence P. Townsley. Col. Charles P. Jones, Auburn, Ala., was Chief of Staff.\*

In the final stages of basic training at Camp Howze, the men crawled through the infiltration course, ran the close combat course and the Combat in Cities course. One regiment completed the entire X Corps series of tests without a single unsatisfactory rating. Morale was excellent and the Division was off to a fine start.

Basic training was over and unit training got underway on June 3, 1943. At this time the strength of each of the infantry regiments was slightly reduced by a new Table of Operations and a Cannon Company was added to each regiment. During this period of unit training, weeks were spent in the field. Men learned how to make a canteen of water last for 24 hours, with enough for drinking and a little left over for washing and shaving. With days upon days of field training the men began to adjust themselves to performing as a unit, and it was easy to detect that underneath the surface there was pride building up in the men for their outfit.

About this same time, the Division Artillery underwent the AGF Firing tests at Camp Gruber, Okla., and came back with the second honors for all the units in the army. In July, 1943, also, the 311th Engineers had its first field prob-

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\*There are several army histories that will be of interest to 86th Division veterans. The History of the 86th Division in World War I is covered in an excellent book, by John G. Little, entitled "The Official History of the 86th Division," published in Chicago, 1921. World War II histories of special interest to Black Hawks include the following: "Lucky Forward," the history of the 3rd Army; "Mission Accomplished, the Story of the Campaigns of the VII Corps"; "Mission Accomplished, a Summary of Military Operations of the XVIII (Airborne) Corps"; "History of the Fifteenth United States Army"; and "The Central Europe Campaign," a detailed history of the battle soon to be released by the Office of Government Printing. Also available are various other unit histories, such as the 78th and 99th Division Histories which cover phases of combat in which the 86th Division participated. A Pictorial Guide to the 86th Division was published in 1944 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

lem, when the battalion was sent to the Denison Dam area to demolish 14 bridges which was in the new lake backwash area. The bridges were down within 8 hours after the arrival of the 311th Engineers.

In November, 1943, the 86th Division completed its period of unit training at Camp Howze, Texas, and was ordered to the Louisiana Maneuver Area to participate in the vast mid-winter Third Army Maneuvers. The usual hustle and bustle at Camp Howze saw the departure of the Black Hawks, and the arrival of the 103rd Inf. Div. On November 25, 1943, the Camp Howze Howitzer, camp newspaper, announced in bold type headlines, "Catcus Division Arrives Here to Occuppy Former 86th Area."

Late November saw the 86th Division moving slowly into the vast maneuver area of southwestern Louisiana, by convoy. The 86th Division was the first division scheduled to participate in the maneuvers that was ready on the prescribed schedule.

The Louisiana maneuver area was a 40 by 90 mile sparse-settled area inhabited mostly by chiggers and ticks. The land was mostly bayous filled with pitch-pine. The chief land marks of the maneuvers area was Peason Ridge and Burr Ferry. Black Hawk veterans will never forget the pitched battles that took place in these two areas. Peason Ridge was a stump-marked sector that was cutover land from vast timbering operations. Burr Ferry, 15 miles west of Leesville, was the scene of the Black Hawks first river hopping, when they crossed the Sabine River in their maneuver operations. The only town of any size was Leesville, which was a bustling army town with all of its evils. For three months the dusty streets of Leesville with its famous honky-tonks, was all the Black Hawks found in which to pass away that few spare hours they secured.

Adverse weather was no obstacle, and for weeks upon



weeks Black Hawk GI's lived in the field, often staying in fox holes for days at a time, with water constantly filling the bottom of the hole. Christmas Day, 1943, was the most miserable of the entire maneuver, with an icy coat covering all the trees and the entire landscape. It was rumored throughout the various company's that the Russian observer asked to be returned to Siberia after that day in the field.

The maneuvers (named "D" series) ended on January 20, 1944, and as the Division returned to garrison, a new station was designated as the home of the 86th Division. It was Camp Livingston, La., located just north of the fine little city of Alexander. Camp Howze had been a new camp when the 86th Div. was re-activated there in December of 1942, but the Black Hawks contributed a great deal to its development. When the division arrived at Camp Livingston they found a camp that offered the soldiers many recreational facilities such as a huge swimming pool, bowling alleys, roller skating rinks, and athletic fields which sounded like pipe dreams as compared to the Howze area. For a pass town the Black Hawks had Alexander, which although forever crowded with soldiers and airmen from four other nearby bases, was always enjoyed by Black Hawks on pass. Evidence of this was a jeep seen racing along the front after the Division reached Germany with the name, "Texas Bar" painted on its dash.

The Division commenced a new phase of training at Livingston in February, 1944, and most everyone thought at last the unit would be sent overseas when a division wide requisition for replacements came through. All privates and PFC's together with some noncoms and officers were transferred to an overseas replacement depot. This mass depletion of the Division was disheartening until the shock of the blow began to wear off. Then in April, 1944, the fillers began to arrive, and they poured in by the hundreds. Many of

them were from the curtailed ASTP program, which had recently been discontinued, and these young men were jerked from the college campus and placed in the Black Hawk Division. Still others were former Air Cadets who had been released by the Air Force with the cut down in air strength. These fillers gave the Division an unusually high type soldier, and provided the backbone for the Division that was to enter combat less than a year later.

On May 8, 1944, the division entered a new phase of training, and within a short time the "fly-boys" and "college boys" were full fledged doughboys. The Louisiana heat and dust caused all (except those who had frozen during the previous winter on maneuvers) to wish for an early fall. All through June and July the 86th Div. went through a period of basic and unit training and again the Division was being whipped into a well-groomed outfit.

On July 31, 1944, the Division returned to the Louisiana Manuver area again as each regiment underwent Combat Team Exercises and Battalion Firing Tests.

About this time the ax fell again, and another large number of men from the various units were ordered to POE. However the Division withstood this inroad in its strength much better.

The last days at Camp Livingston were busy ones, and as the Division prepared to move, the highlights of the 86th Division stay in the Pelican State flashed through the minds of the Black Hawkers. However before leaving Louisiana, the Division underwent several IG inspections, but the men were mostly anxious to move on to California and get away from the chigger-infested weeds and sweating heat.

September 1, 1944, saw a new influx of fillers start to arrive in the 86th Division. This group were mostly men who were just coming out of the various IRTC's, such as Camp Wheeler, Camp Croft, and Camp Walters, and they

had probably seen training at its worst during their 17 weeks of horror. As they began to arrive in the 86th Division area, the older members of the unit were completing the usual packing and crating in preparation for the move.

On September 8, 1944, the Division was on the move to California. A typical troop train consisting of grimy troop sleepers and tourist cars would pull out of Livingston on the Missouri Pacific and follow a route through Shreveport, Austin, San Antonio, El Paso, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and about four or five days later pull into the new home, Camp Cooke, California, then being vacated by the 11th Armored Division. The entire 86th Division pulled into Camp Cooke on September 14.

Camp Cooke was a very desolate looking place, very sandy, dry, and the sand burrs were everywhere, and once you sat down on a cactus, you are not apt to sit down again for awhile, thus many of the lectures were given standing up, by officers and EM alike. There was always a wind blowing in off the ocean, which seemed salt soaked indeed. Although the Divisions stay at Cooke was rather brief, training was carried out by all units.

The purpose of the 86th Division on the west coast was to undergo extensive amphibious training. Along with the 97th Infantry Division, which was then stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo, 60 miles up the coast, the Black Hawks were to undergo a period of three months of the most advanced warfare training of any outfit in the army.

The initial stages of the amphibious training was taken at Camp San Luis Obispo. Then each regiment would be taken afloat for 6 to 8 days, making three assaults in the meantime on San Clement Island, off San Diego, and a grand RCT landing near the Camp Pendleton Marine Base north of La Jolla. Then the regiments were scheduled to return to Camp Cooke (this was later changed to Obispo) for com-

pletion of the training phase. The 343rd Infantry took the first phase of assault landings at Callan, 342nd was next and the 341st last.\*

Amphibious training was a new experience to most men of the Black Hawk Division, but a welcome one. This opportunity to learn a new phase of fighting was approached with sincere interest because it represented a departure from the routine training carried on since the Divisions activation. Schools were conducted by the Marine Corps on Naval Terminology (still it was hard to call a latrine a head), amphibious tactics, transport quartermaster functions and other subjects necessary for the ground work of this training. Some of the men were picked for instruction as bulldozer and caterpillar operators or flame throwers. The men figured anything was worth while to get rid of that heavy BAR.

The town of San Luis Obispo became a second home for the GI's of the 86th Division. Although it was not a large city, it had many recreational facilities and the Black Hawks received excellent treatment from its citizens, second only to the treatment later rendered by Muskogee. Los Angeles and San Francisco were about equal distance from camp, each about 250 miles away, but the Southern Pacific's streamliners seemed to cut this distance in half and every weekend hundreds of the Black Hawks visited these cities, where every GI was treated like a king, in an expensive sort of way. Excellent service club facilities were located at Obispo, and a fleet of limousine-like taxis ferried the men back and forth from town in a few minutes. The best thing about Camp San Louis Obispo, as far as the men were concerned, was that all of the training areas were located within only

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\*Several practice landings were made by each of the regiments near Morro Bay. A small naval amphibious unit was stationed near Morro Rock and the Black Hawks made assault landings from LCVP's and LCI's.

a few hundred yards of camp, and it was not necessary to take long hikes to get to the various ranges and areas.

As the amphibious training program got underway, a small commando outfit was selected, which engaged in rubber boat training near Morro Bay Naval Training grounds, at nearby Morro Rack, just north of San Luis Obispo. All officers and men took rope ladder training, schooled in attacking beach fortifications, and underwent general firing problems.

The three RCT'S of the 86th Division spent the months of October and early November at Camp San Luis Obispo undergoing this Marine Corps instructed amphibious training. Then in November the RCT's were ready one by one for the final phase of training, which was to take place at Camp Callen.

The move to Camp Callan was affected by motor and rail, half and half. The camp was probably the most attractive of any ever occupied by the 86th Division with easy access to nearby San Diego.

The plans for this phase of training called for the Division to use four ships, the USS Drew, the USS Neville, USS Hunter Liggett, and the USS American Legion. The RCT's were to make three landings on San Clemente Island, on a beach used previously only by goats, and then a grand assault on Pendleton Island, or International Beach, near the Border.

The ships left from the naval pier in downtown San Diego. The first days at sea, many men succumbed to old man "SEA-sickness," but a surprising number were not in the least affected. The naval chow was even a novelty to the Black Hawk troops, even though one infantryman claimed for months after he found a chicken in his softboiled egg.

The week on board the ships went in a hurry, and the final assault was made on the mainland, and after crossing

the railroad which paralleled the beach, the problem was over and the men camped overnight in a rain drenched field.

In early December, 1944, the entire 86th Division was back at Camp San Luis Obispo, with the amphibious phase of training over and a lucky few of the men were granted furloughs.

The closing weeks of 1944 and early January saw the men of the 86th Division completing POM requirements and everyone felt that at last the unit as a whole would be sent overseas. After training the equivalent of two divisions, the 86th Division as a whole would get to strut its stuff. From all indications the 86th Division was headed for the Pacific Theatre.

About this time, Christmas, 1944, thousands of miles away in a German Command Post, Wehrmach General Von Rundstead, was giving the order that set a large offensive in operation against the American forces in Belgium and Luxembourg. Little did Von Rundstead know it, but that move greatly affected the lives of every man in the Black Hawk Division. As casualties mounted in Europe, it was evident that every available man in the US Army would be finally needed before Hitler could be crushed, and an urgent requisition was rushed to the Pentagon, and both the 86th Division and the 97th Division, which had just completed Pacific type training, were ordered to combat pack and be ready to ship without delay. Frenzied packing and crating, IG inspections, and the usual shots kept the men busy night and day. Late January saw every man bearing down in what training was done, for everyone knew this was it.

At last the orders arrived, calling for the last elements of the 86th Division to clear Camp San Luis Obispo by February 6, 1945, destination unknown. Everyone knew however that the Black Hawks time in the states had come.

With the 86th Division band playing its favorite marches,



the various units of the division started to load on troop trains at Camp San Luis Obispo on February 2, 1945. The long Pullman trains then started the long trek across the nation to arrive in Massachusetts some eight days later.

A typical troop train carrying the Black Hawks to POE would go north to San Francisco, then across country thru Salt Lake City, Denver, the Royal Gorge, Omaha, Chicago, Albany, and arrive at Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts, some eight days later. The trip across this great nation of ours was tremendously enjoyed by everyone. As the troop trains rolled across the country, the Texans in our midst found out that it was true that the other 47 states combined was actually larger than Texas, and it seemed everyone else passed just a mile from home, and went to school in "that red brick building, there."

As the Division left California, the Golden State was warm and sunny. As the troop trains put ground behind them, however, the weather gradually grew colder. The 86th Division moved into Boston on the heels of one of the worst winter blizzards to strike the New England states in 25 years, and the ill-heated barracks at Camp Myles Standish were anything except warm. Fortunately, the Black Hawks stay in Massachusetts was brief.

On February 19, the Division was taken down to Boston town in long coach trains, which raced among the cranberry bogs a mile a minute. There they were loaded on several large army transports, and by late afternoon the Division was completely aboard ship.

The stay of the Division at Boston had been under the strictest of censorship. Patches were not worn, and no one was permitted to divulge the location of the outfit. Only those that lived within 50 miles of camp were permitted to visit home. But now, even this was left behind.

Among the ships carrying the Black Hawk Division to

Europe, was the transport John Erickson, so as for an example, this ship will be referred to, to describe the Black Hawks crossing of the Atlantic.

The USS John Erickson, before the war was the Swedish luxury liner, the Koingsholm, and a sister ship of the diplomatic ship, Grisholm. It was one of the ten largest passenger liners in the world at that time. On board the USS John Erickson was some 8000 members of the 86th Division and also a WAC detachment, believe it or not. This ship sailed out of Boston in a convoy of 20 ships, which was escorted by several destroyers with land based planes patrolling the sky. It was a cold, dreary day as the convoy left Boston. By nightfall of the first day, land was completely out of sight. Two days out of Boston, the convoy rendezvoused with another larger convoy of 40 ships in mid-ocean and continued the journey to Europe. The convoy now numbered over 60 vessels, and a general zig-zag course was followed across the ocean. In the convoy was over 35 tankers. Little did Adolph know that there were also three complete combat divisions in the convoy, the 86th, 97th Infantry Division, and the 20th Armored Division.

As the convoy approached the English channel, tenseness on board the ship increased. Several times in nearing port submarine wolfpacks would come near the convoy, but depth charges from the destroyers would drive them away.

The trip abroad for the GI's was anything but pleasant. Long chow lines was a familiar thing, and the sleeping quarters were either unbearably hot, or freezing cold, it all depended where the bunks were located. Some men took cold on board the John Erickson, and carried the cold with them until they returned from the ETO.

The convoy pulled into La Harve de Grace, France, on the early morning of March 2, 1945, and after two days of waiting on board the ship, the division was unloaded and trucked out to an assembly area known as Camp Old Gold.

Camp Old Gold was located in a beautiful Norman setting near the town of Yvetot, France. The camp itself was simply a previously unused tent city, with the tents laid out in Battalion areas. Life in these assembly areas was unusually depressing, due to the crude living conditions the troops were forced to exist under. However the Black Hawks as soon as they arrived began to police up the area, and improve conditions.

While in Normandy, the Black Hawks quickly brushed up on their French and made many friends among the citizens. The long loaves of French bread, which appeared to be as long as baseball bats, was a popular food to the GI's. The days were spent in rigid squad tactic training, but came retreat, and the doughboys could be seen taking off to the four winds, to visit the little French villages, they had heard their Fathers talk about from a generation and one war before.

While at Camp Old Gold, the Black Hawks were completely combat equipped and a few replacements joined the outfit to bring it up to full strength. The officers painted over their insignia and the bars were removed from their shoulders, for everyone knew that it wouldn't be long until the 86th Division was in combat.\*

Spring was in the air while in Normandy, but at night a damp cold crept in over the Norman plains, and it became unbearably cold. Some GI's slept in their overcoats, inside a sleeping bag, with their duffle bag and B bag pulled over their feet, and still couldn't keep warm. In the daytime

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\*Black Hawk veterans interested in locating their old buddies may now do so thru the Veterans Administration. The proper procedure to follow is to write a letter to your buddy and place it in a plain unsealed envelope with sufficient postage on it. Then send it to the Veterans Administration Central Office, Washington 25, D.C. with a detailed letter explaining why you desire to locate him, with all known information such as name, serial number, Vets claim number, former unit, last known address, etc. The supplement to the Pictorial Guide to the 86th Division, published in 1944, also contains the addresses of many former Black Hawks.

everything was pleasant enough until a native farmer would pass by with a honey-cart on his way to the fields.

On March 22, the division was alerted and ordered to proceed at once to join the new Fifteenth Army, which had not yet been committed to combat, in the northern sector of the front.

The Division boarded 40 and 8 cars at Yvetot. The 40 and 8 cars were made famous by the AEF in World War I, and were supposed to carry 40 men and eight horses. But after seeing 32 men placed in a car one would wonder where anyone else was to go. Anyhow the move did proceed and the Black Hawks were taken north from Yvetot through Ameins, France, and into Belgium. The trains went up the beautiful Meuse Valley through Charleroi, Leige, Namur, Hoy, and into Holland at Maastricht.

At Maastricht the Division was switched eastward and proceeded to Aachen, Germany, where the troops were unloaded in the bombed out Aachen depot. From here the troops were taken toward the front on huge personnel trucks through Duren, to the outskirts of Cologne.

Outside Cologne the 86th Division was assigned to billets to the rear of the 8th Infantry Division, which was then on line facing the Rhine River. The billets occupied by the Black Hawks was within artillery range of the Germans, so the Black Hawks were subjected to some enemy activity even though they had not been committed to action as yet.

The men of the 86th Division for the next few days unpacked their combat equipment and stored their personal equipment. The days in the billets outside Cologne, except for infrequent artillery fire, were rather quiet days, however this was not to last for long. Those NCOs back at Obispo who said the 86th would always be a training Division were poor prophets, the 86th was now ready to enter combat.

## THE WATCH ON THE RHINE

The general situation on the western front upon arrival of the 86th Infantry Division saw all of the allied armies poised for the great strike against the enemy that everyone knew was coming. The British and Canadian armies to the north were slowly fighting their way up to the Rhine River. The American Ninth and First Armies each had a small bridgehead across the Rhine, with the Remagen Bridgehead being only 12 miles upstream from the 86th Division area. General Patton's Third Army meanwhile was attacking across the Mainz plains and the 7th Army was in a touch and go affair in fighting their way out of the Vosges Mountains.

With such huge commitments in the various bridgeheads and the tremendous offensive now being staged by three American Armies, General Eisenhower found it necessary to stretch his line rather thin, especially in places where only holding action was necessary.

On March 24, the US 15th Army, under Lt. General Gerow, was committed to action on the western front, being sandwiched in between the U.S. 1st Army and the 9th Army. The 15th Army was given the task of conducting holding action along the front on the west bank of the Rhine. The Black Hawk Division was assigned to the new 15th Army and immediately upon its arrival at the front, the Division went into reserve, in support of the 8th Infantry Division which was on line near Koln (Cologne).

The Black Hawk units were arriving from Camp Old Gold near La Harve constantly from March 24 until 0300 on the morning of March 27, when the last element of the 341st Infantry closed into the Division area near Cologne.

At 0300, March 27, the Black Hawk Division began to relieve the 8th Infantry Division which had been on line

continuously for about 28 days. The relief of the 8th Division took place under the cover of darkness and by daylight the entire 86th Division was committed to combat.

The division was assigned to the XXII Corps of the 15th Army, and occupied a 26-mile sector of the western front, from Worringen on the north along the Rhine River including the huge German industrial city of Koln south to Bonn. The 95th Division (to be relieved the next day by the 97th Infantry Division) was on the left flank and the 6th Belgfus (Belgian Forces US) was on the right flank. The division mission was holding action with extensive reconnaissance patrolling.

As the 86th Division went into action, Major General Melasky set up his Division Command Post (CP) at Weiden, a suburb of Cologne situated a few miles to the rear on the Cologne plain, from this site he directed the 86th Division during its entire stay on the Rhine sector of the front.

Due to the unusually long sector of the front assigned to the 86th Division, General Melasky was forced to stretch his units out much more thinly than is ordinarily the case. The 341st Regiment was assigned the sector from the southern suburbs of Cologne south along the Rhine to the Remagon Bridgehead at Bonn. The 343rd Regiment took over the front thru the city of Cologne to its northern suburbs. The 342nd Regiment went on line in relief of the 121st Infantry of the 8th Division from Cologne's northern suburbs, near the Ford plant north to the 97th Division area near Worringen, with CP at Longerich. Due to the extensive length assigned the 342nd Regiment, General Melasky also assigned the 86th Division Cavalry Recon. Troop a sector of the front in the extreme left flank of the Division front.

As the Infantry units went into action, the Artillery Battalions relieved the 8th Division Artillery, and went into



direct support of the Infantry. From then on until the end of the war, the Black Hawk Artillery never failed its infantry regiments, and the doughboys never failed to praise their fire support.

The first shot fired across the Rhine at the enemy by the Black Hawk Division was credited to the Cannon Co., 343rd Infantry who had an extensive firing duel with the Germans at 1030 on March 27. They received artillery support from Lt. Col. William M. Albergotti's 331st Field Art. Bn., which was in direct support of the 341st at Bruhl. The 911th FA was in general support of the entire division, with Lt. Col. Jean H. Boling having his CP at Weiden. The 332nd FA was in support of the 342nd Infantry north of Cologne and the 404th FA, commanded by Lt. Col. Edw. A. Grove, was in support of the 343rd Infantry in the center of the line at Koln.

The Watch on the Rhine, as it was appropriately named by the Black Hawk doughboys, was a trying period for the GI's of the 86th Division. After two years of training in the states, they were at last receiving their indoctrination of fire. Although this phase of the war was far different that it had ever been pictured in the minds of the Black Hawks, it was anything but pleasant.

By the end of the month of March, the Ninth and the First Armies had closed the gap behind the entire German Army Group, "B" trapping some 350,000 German soldiers, including some of the best outfits in Hitler's Wehrmach. This pincher movement resulted in the Ruhr Pocket, sometimes called the Rose Pocket (in memory of General Maurice Rose, who was brutally murdered by German SS troops in the pocket), being formed. The Ruhr Pocket, besides trapping a large portion of the Wehrmach, also contained a major portion of the German war industry. Such cities as Hagen, Essen, Ludenscheid, Dortmund, Dusseldorf, and the

eastern half of Koln, was the very center of the German industrial zone, and its steel mills, aircraft factories, coal mines, tank and truck factories, chemical works, and precision machine plants, did a major portion of the work in keeping the German armies supplied at the fronts. Inside this pocket also was vast anti-aircraft defenses, which the Black Hawks were later to learn was almost impregnable not only for aircraft, but to ground troops also when fired at point blank range. The Germans naturally were ready to defend the Ruhr Pocket to the last inch, to keep such an important prize from falling into the hands of the Allied Armies.

On March 27, when the 86th Division relieved the 8th Infantry Division along the west bank of the Rhine, there were three German Divisions opposing them. These were identified by Black Hawk G-2 as the 59th Infantry Division, the 353rd Infantry Division, which opposed the Americans invading Cherbourg the previous June, and the 338th Wehrmach Infantry Division. These three outfits were well dug in along the east bank, and well supplied with ammunition, the Krauts expected the main allied offensive to be in this area. The German artillery units had every cross road and important intersection in the 86th Division area pin-pointed.

During the day of March 27, the untested Black Hawks gently felt their way, as the entire Division had its first taste of battle. The German 88 batteries made the day rough too, with frequent shellings of Black Hawk positions. The numerous OP's established near the banks of the Rhine and along railroad fills overlooking the river came in for heavy shellings from mortars. The 343rd Regiment, which occupied the center section of the line in Cologne suffered the Divisions first casualty during the morning of March 27, when a mortar shell dropped into an OP occupied by T/Sgt. Gossett L. Johnson, Simpsonville, S.C., and a member of

Co. F, 343rd Infantry. Casualties during the day were light, mostly resulting from 88 and mortar fire, with Jerry heavy machine guns coming into play more during the late afternoon.

The Black Hawk 311th Medical Battalion set up the Division Clearing station at the St. Elizabeth Catholic Hospital, in Cologne, and all casualties during the period were treated and evacuated thru the 311th.

The first night on line for the Black Hawks was hectic. It was a cold rainy, windy night, as dark as pitch, and surely the Krauts must have known they had a green Division opposing them, for they gave the 86th a sample of every weapon they had. The 88's and mortars which had been used during the day were put to double use, but what threw more terror into the GI's than anything was the "Screaming Minnie", a wheezing, screaming, moaning rocket which sounded like the Graf Zeppelin. All night long the Jerries kept sending these over, and as they landed amidst the 86th positions, the Black Hawk infantrymen dug their noses just a little deeper into their fox holes and OP's.\*

The pass word the first night on line was Fox and the countersign was School, but trigger happy GI's were often accused by the buddies of shooting first and asking for the pass word last. It was good thing that the night was dark and marksmanship was not too good, for everyone who went out on patrol, to lay wire, or carry a message came back to the CP complaining that they were shot at three or four times and then asked for the pass word.

The rain and cold wind, which gripped the entire western front on the night of March 27, was ideal for patrols, and at

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\*The German 88 (multi-purpose) artillery piece was highly regarded as a weapon of war. The gun was 24 feet long and weighed 5.2 tons. The shell weighed 20.68 lbs. and the 88 could fire 15 rounds per minute. Usually the gun was transported on a four wheel mount towed by an 8 ton half track.

2330, three doughboys from Co. D, 342nd Infantry sighted a German patrol moving inland parallel to the river. Steadily these GI's crept up to within a few feet of the Germans, rushed them and took all three members of the patrol prisoner. The same night several other Germans were taken prisoner by the other two regiments.

Black Hawk units did not let the opportunity pass to send out patrols either, as several patrols crossed the river during the night, took scattered prisoners for interrogation, located enemy positions, and destroyed scattered objectives. However, patrolling across the wide and extremely swift Rhine was a dangerous task, for the swift current would often carry an assault boat several thousand yards downstream in crossing. By the time the return trip was made, the patrol would have been carried several miles downstream.

On March 30, Colonel Christian Hildebrand, regimental commander of the 342nd Infantry was transferred to SHAPE, and Col. Pete T. Heffner, who had formerly commanded the regiment at Camp Howze and Livingston, returned and assumed command of the 342nd Infantry.

Activity along the Cologne sector picked up considerably during the last two days of March, and casualties increased. The shelling from the 88 batteries across the river never ceased. At night patrolling was extensive by both sides. On the night of April 1, thirty-seven German prisoners were taken at scattered points along the Division front, besides several others being killed.

At 0115, March 30, the Ruhr Pocket was closed when the 2nd Armored Division and the 3rd Armored Division established contact at Lippstadt. The entire German Army Group B was now enclosed in a trap directly opposite the Black Hawk Division. The numerous Panzers, SS, Wehrmach and Flak units thus trapped were now determined to fight a

courageous battle for their fatherland, with many of them defending their own homes and families.

The night of April 1 was the most active night of the watch on the Rhine, as far as the Black Hawks were concerned. Every battalion on the line sent at least one patrol across the river, to make reconnaissance for possible river crossing sites to our front. Pfc. Cornelius Rippons, Jr., volunteered for one of these patrols and distinguished himself by aggressively clearing the area in front of his patrol. Time and again he would advance in front of his patrol, attack German outposts singlehanded and then return to lead the patrol further in enemy territory. He failed to return from one of these thrusts into an enemy position and was presumed Missing in Action and was posthumously decorated for his valor.

The same night Pfc. Elmer W. Sullivan was watching from a forward OP at the edge of the Rhine and noticed a patrol bringing a wounded Black Hawk back with them. When he noticed the small patrol having difficulty bringing the wounded man across an exposed position, he ran back to a parked weapons carrier, bravely drove it through enemy machine gun fire and assisted in bringing the wounded GI back to safety.

The 343rd Infantry from November, 1944 to March 21, 1945, was commanded by Col. Leo F. Kengla, Jr. Prior to the regiment being committed to action, Col. Bloomquist, an old favorite with 343rd doughboys, was returned to the unit as its commanding officer. Col. Bloomquist led the 343rd Infantry through its entire combat phase in Europe, and four days after the war's end he was evacuated by 112th Evac. Hosp. unit and returned to the states for medical treatment. He was succeeded as 343rd commander by Col. Joe A. Hinton, who was transferred from SHAEF to assume command of the regiment.

The 342nd Infantry was commanded by Col. Christian Hildebrand, as it went into combat, but when he was transferred to Eisenhower's headquarters Col. Pete T. Heffner, Jr., a former CO of the 342nd Inf., was returned to the regiment and assumed command.

The 341st Infantry was commanded through its entire combat phase by Col. Henry J. Hunt, Jr.

At 0300 on April 1, the 311 Combat Engineers assisted in taking a patrol of 2 officers and 37 enlisted men from the 343rd Infantry across the Rhine. The patrol returned three hours later without suffering a casualty.\*

The 86th Division continued to hold this sector of the front until 0829, on the morning of April 4, when the entire Division was relieved by the 82nd Airborne Division. The 341st Infantry was replaced by the 505 Airborne Infantry, the 342nd by the 504th Airborne Infantry, and the 343rd was relieved by the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment. The entire sector of the 86th Division thus passed to 82nd Division control at 2330 on April 4. The Black Hawks then went into Army Reserve, with the Division CP remaining at Weiden, and only the 404th FA remaining in action, they being temporarily attached to the 82nd Airborne Division.

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\*All Combat Infantrymen in the 86th Division were awarded the Bronze Star Medal in a blanket order by President Truman shortly after the war's end. Veterans that did not receive their Bronze Star at that time may write the Adjutant General, Washington, D.C., to secure their medal now.



## THE RUHR POCKET

At 1600 on April 5, General Melasky was notified by 15th Army, that the 86th Division had been assigned to the XVIII Airborne Corps, of the US 1st Army, and that the Division was to leave immediately to an assembly area in the First Army sector. All of the regiments were alerted and within a few hours were actually on the move into the Remagan Bridgehead.

By putting every available truck into use, the Black Hawks were rushed southward through Bonn, pass the Bonn Repple Depple, across the Rhine River on pontoons and up and over treacherous mountain trails to the new Division concentration area near Eibelshousen, where the Division CP was set up. The 86th Division passed to XVIII (A/B) Corps control at 2400 April 5. The 341st Regiment CP was set up at Kerscheid, and then later in the day at Mehren. The 342nd Infantry CP was at Obr. Dieten and the 343rd Infantry was at Dillenburg.

In early April, as the Allied armies poised for the last big offensive, Gen. Eisenhower listed the following order of battle for the First Army in the field.

### FIRST ARMY

#### *VII Corps*

1st Inf. Div.

3rd Armd. Div.

104th Inf. Div.

#### *XVIII Airb. Corps*

86th Inf. Div.

8th Inf. Div.

78th Inf. Div.

97th Inf. Div.

13th Armd. Div.

#### *Army Reserve*

20th Armd. Div.

#### *III Corps*

99th Inf. Div.

7th Armd. Div.

9th Inf. Div.

28th Inf. Div.

5th Inf. Div.

#### *V Corps*

9th Armd. Div.

2nd Inf. Div.

69th Inf. Div.

As soon as the 86th Division passed to XVIII A/B Corps control, General Melasky received orders to send the 341st Infantry and an attached artillery battalion to reinforce the 97th Division then engaged in repelling a counter attack on the extreme left flank of the corps area, northeast of Seigen. The 341st Infantry joined the 97th "Trident" Division and fought with them for several days, assisting in the capture and mopping up of Seigen, a communications hub on the Autobahn leading toward Cologne. At the same time the 1st Battalion of the 343rd Infantry was detached from division control and attached to the 8th Infantry Division to the east of Seigen, where they assisted in the mop up of scattered Wehrmach units on high ground overlooking Seigen.

On joining the XVIII Corps, the Black Hawks found the corps holding a stable line on the First Army front along the south of the Ruhr Pocket. The corps line toed itself to the Seig River at Bonn and ran toward Marburg. The III Corps was on the right flank. The concentration area assigned to the 86th Division indicated an early employment of the Division on the right flank of the XVIII A/B Corps area, northeast of Seigen.

At 2200, April 5, the Division was ordered to attack in a general offensive to be commenced the next day with co-ordination between the XVIII A/B Corps and the III Corps. The mission of the attack was to close the Ruhr Pocket by driving from the south north toward the Ruhr River. The 86th Division was to pass thru the 8th Infantry Division lines on April 6, and attack with the 8th Division on the left and the 99th Division of the III Corps on the right.

Due to the fact that the entire 341st Regiment was attached to the 97th Division and one battalion of the 343rd Inf. was attached to the 8th Division, the decision was made for the 342nd Infantry to attack on the Black Hawk front with three battalions abreast, and the remaining two battalions of the 343rd Inf. in reserve.

The 342nd Infantry relieved elements of the 8th Division at 2200 on April 6 and immediately went on the attack, but the offensive was rather limited due to the extreme ruggedness of the terrain.

The sector where the 342nd Inf. was slowly advancing is the northern edge of the Black Forest. The regimental CP was located at Ober Dieten, northeast of Seigen. The mountains were steep and crowded, with the only pass ways being dirt or rock roads which wended their way thru the canyons between the high hills. An occasional fire break offered additional room for movement. Throughout the entire Ruhr Pocket, except in the flat plains to the very north, the firs were thick and stood dismal and dripping. The bodies of the firs begin close to the ground so that each fir interlocks its body with another. At the height of a man standing, there was a solid mass of dark, impenetrable green. But at the height of a man crawling, there is room, and it is like a green cave, low-roofed and forbidding. And thru this cave, moved the infantry thru the Black Forest to emerge cold, wet and exhausted as they went into battle. Throughout the Ruhr there was agony, and there was no glory in it except the glory of courageous men—men of the Black Hawk Division.

The night of April 6 was a dismal one for the Black Hawks, with a steady drizzle falling thru the night, and a thick fog penetrating the forest. The 342nd Inf. was forced to remain on the defense the entire day, as a severe counter attack by the Jerries struck a telling blow on the 8th Inf. Division to the Black Hawk left flank. Early in the day the 342nd Inf. captured their first prize of the war, when Maj. General Koschner, Commander of the 326th Wehrmach Infantry Division, was taken prisoner.

In the same area, Capt. Grant, Lt. Tryba and 16 enlisted men from the 404 FA were ambushed and captured by the Krauts, however they managed to escape from an unwary guard later in the day and returned to our lines.



The 86th Division in the Ruhr.

The 341st Infantry spent the sixth of April in the vicinity of Kescheld assisting the 97th Division to mop up isolated German pockets of resistance. The 1st Battalion of the 343rd Inf. was motorized for a mission with the 8th Inf. Division in the vicinity of Haiger.

The Anti-Tank Company of the 343rd Inf. was attached to the First Battalion for this mission. This task force returned to 86th Division control the next day.

Day and night on April 7 and 8 the 342nd Infantry slowly continued to advance and began to meet very stiff resistance as they neared more populated areas. The 28th "Keystone" Infantry Division was relieved by the First Army during the day and the Black Hawk front widened considerably.

At dusk, on April 8, the 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry, launched a general offensive which resulted in the capture of the railroad center of Hilchenbach, the first town of any size to be captured by Black Hawk troops. Led by the Battalion CO, Lt. Col. Kunzig, the three rifle companies swept down out of the hills and forest surrounding the town and each reached its objective and cleared its portion of the town by midnight. Co. I set up its CP on Adolph Hitler Strasse, thus bringing the war close to home for the Fuhrer.

Immediately upon taking the town the Battalion went into the defense. At 0200, March 9, the Germans counter-attacked with infantry led by 3 tanks. The counter-attack hit the front held by Co. K, 342nd Inf., and resulted in several casualties. However the attack was broken up and the Black Hawks continued to hold the city. During the night, while leading his troops, Col. Kunzig had an enemy machine gun bullet pass through his helmet and helmet liner but did not touch him. This pierced helmet was a mark of distinction worn by the colonel the rest of the war.

The other two battalions attacked the next morning and

captured several Ruhr towns, including Zinse, Hinesburg, Brachthausen, Silburg, Hofalpe, Heidschatt and Altenhunden. At the latter the 2nd Bn., 342nd, fought off a determined counter-attack before securing the town.

The 342nd Inf. continued to be the only Black Hawk unit on the line through April 9, with the 343rd in reserve and the Division still short one Regimental Combat Team (RCT), the 341st, which was attached to the 97th Division, but returned to Division control on this date. The 342nd attacked with all three Battalions abreast throughout the day and netted a total of over 200 PW's. At a railroad crossing outside of Altenhunden, S/Sgt. Ernest A. Bright, Jr., Prarie du Chien, Wis., of Co. M., 342nd Inf., was pinned down for a considerable length of time by enemy MF fire directed at a vital railroad crossing. When several members of his section were wounded, Sgt. Bright raced out into the crossing and rescued his wounded comrades.

At 1300 on April 9, the 341st was returned to 86th Division control by the 97th Division and moved from Kescheld to Hilchenbach, with the troops being billeted at Eschenbach. The 343rd Inf. was in reserve near Feudingen. During the night the 332nd FA moved their howitzers into new positions at Hofolpe and Bilstein in order to be in support of the 342nd Inf. which was attacking along the Bigge River.

The First Army attached five more Artillery Battalions to the 86th Division at this time, to give them additional fire power which was needed in the general offensive against the strong points of the Ruhr. These units attached to the 86th Division throughout the rest of the Ruhr phase were the 18th FA Bn., 172nd FA Bn., the 205th FA Group, 190th FA Bn., and 670th FA Bn. In addition the 648th TD Bn. and 644th TD Bn. (SD) were attached for use in the Ruhr.

At 1200 on March 9, General Melasky moved the Di-



vision CP to Erndtebruck and on the 10th to Heinsburg, which town was captured the previous day by the 342nd Infantry.

Units opposing the 86th Infantry Division at this stage of the battle were identified as the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, the 12th Volks Grenadier Division, the 9th Panzer Division, 272nd Infantry Division, 353rd Infantry Division, 340th Infantry Division, 226th Infantry Division, 12th Infantry Division, and the 150th Panzer Lehr Division of the Wehrmach.

The entire 342nd Infantry was on the attack on Tuesday, April 10, and ran up against stiff resistance in all sectors. However it was on the extreme right flank, adjacent to the 99th Infantry Division area, that one of the most brutal battles of the war, as far as the Black Hawks were concerned took place.

The Third Battalion, 342nd Infantry, kicked off in an attack toward the Bigge River at 0800. The battle order handed to the Battalion Commander called for the battalion to advance with all three companies abreast through dense forest for about 8 miles, to take the communications centers of Bonzel and Altenhunden, by surprise from the flank. The fir forest in this area was almost impassible and a heavy fog limited visability to practically zero. All during the morning the infantrymen slowly worked their way through the forest, and over several ranges of steep hills, meeting only scattered opposition from isolated MG nests.

About noon, as the companies approached the Bonzel road junction, Co. I, 342nd Infantry captured a man and woman observation team dressed in civilian clothes but carrying a field radio in a suit case. Two Russian slave laborers were also found wandering in the woods. Several hundred yards further, as Co. I was coming down the forward slope of a hill approaching Bonzel, all Hell broke loose. Hidden

in the dense undergrowth at the road junction was a regular fortress, consisting of large numbers of Anti-Aircraft guns and AA Artillery. These weapons were turned down and were fired at point blank range at the unwary Black Hawks advancing over the brow of the hill.

A platoon, led by Lt. Forrest Myers, was in the vanguard of the I Co. advance and the first to feel the blow when the Kraut installation opened up. With practically no cover on the hillside, the doughboys were at the mercy of God alone, as their position was raked by fire from the Ack Ack guns below. Out of contact with Regiment and even the rest of their battalion nearby, Co. I suffered extremely heavy casualties within the next hour and was pinned down for three hours. When the ack ack batteries first opened up, Pfc. Robert Secon, Fairfield, Conn., was the nearest to the enemy. He immediately opened up fire with his BAR and kept up continuous fire in covering his platoon which was attempting to reorganize. Pfc. Secon was killed in action as was Pfc. George Sczomak, Detroit, Michigan, who continued to advance on the enemy position armed only with a rifle until he fell mortally wounded. With only ten members of his platoon left after the initial attack, T/Sgt. Leslie Hicks, Cut Bank, Montana, reorganized the remaining members of the unit and counterattacked the Jerry. In the meantime, Pfc. Charles Murphy, Atlanta, Ga., Lt. Myers, and Pfc. Junior Robinson, of Quinton, Okla., managed to reach a building at the edge of Bonzel from where they held on bravely through several concentrated attacks by German panzer units. They were later joined by 10 other members of their platoon.

Casualties in Co. I reached the amazing total of almost 50 per cent including the wounded and missing by three o'clock. Nearby Co. K. and Co. L were catching more of the same from the flak batteries. K Company, advancing on Bon-

zel from the opposite direction, ran right into a King Tiger tank deployed along the road at the outskirts of town. A direct hit by a bazooka team destroyed this obstacle.

Numerous MG nests were deployed by the Germans surrounding the Flak batteries. Pfc. Lindy M. Shambaugh of Magnolia, W. Va., singlehandedly attacked one MG nest and destroyed it with a hand grenade. Pfc. Richard Mapes also distinguished himself by advancing in front of his company and setting up a MG to protect his units flank.

Co. L, 342nd Infantry was advancing on Bonzell from the left flank, when the batteries in the valley below opened fire on Item Company. As the flak guns switched their field of fire toward L Co., T/Sgt. Earl L. Roat, Cincinnati, Ohio, deployed his platoon and steadily crept to within 30 yards of the enemy, fixed bayonet and commenced to fire as he advanced ahead of his platoon. Sgt. Roat was killed by an enemy grenade as he jumped into a Jerry trench, but his gallantry inspired his platoon into over running the position. The lead scout for Co. L in the advance was Pfc. Robert C. Hurley, Lutherville, Maryland, who sustained a head wound in the initial encounter. Pfc. Hurley refused to be evacuated or even submit to medical treatment and continued to advance as lead scout until the objective was reached.

Meanwhile Co. I, on the east hill facing the town, was split in half by a German counter attack. One half of the company joined Lt. Myers in a small group of buildings at the edge of town, where they held out behind the enemy lines until counter attacking Co. K reached them late in the day. The other half of Co. I withdrew over the crest of the hill where it was reorganized by Lt. Rodney Burgin, 1st Sgt. Bill Stafford, Oxford, Nebr., and Sgt. R. L. Applegate, while Pfc. Everette Berry, company radio operator, tried vainly to establish radio contact.

Many of the casualties suffered by the 3rd Battalion,

342nd Infantry were lying out in no-man's land. Caplain Gerald T. Krohn, upon learning this at Regimental Headquarters, volunteer as a litter bearer and made several trips into unfriendly territory to evacuate the wounded. While treating some of the casualties, four medical aid men were captured by a Kraut patrol, but they were released the following day by the 99th Division after 24 hours held as prisoners.

The German positions finally were eliminated at 1700 when air support arrived and a severe pounding by all four of the artillery batteries eliminated this barrier, once and for all. The 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry came out of the engagement on April 10 badly mauled, and was withdrawn from the line at 2000 and relieved by the 1st Battalion, 343rd. The battered outfit was then pulled back to Altenhunden where it regrouped and was brought back to combat strength by a large number of replacements just arrived from various IRTC's back in the states.

Meanwhile on April 10, the 1st Battalion, 342nd Infantry was running into stiff opposition in its sector also. Co. A, advancing on the town of Mecklinghausen, encountered two 20 mm. AA guns in a heavily wooded area. Pfc. Loren T. Johns, Falls Creek, Penna., wound his way behind the enemy lines without being detected and then crept along a ridge to within a few feet of the emplacement. After a prolonged fire fight Pfc. Johns captured the entire crew and held the position until the arrival of the rest of his company. Another patrol, sent out to reconnoiter the enemy positions, was led back to safety by Pfc. William E. Gibbons, who volunteered to go out into a constant artillery barrage to rescue his buddies.

As April 10 came to a close, the Black Hawk Division CP reported to higher echelon an advance of 8,000 meters, spearheaded by the 342nd Infantry. That regiment had cap-

tured Bonzel, Mecklinghausen, Ober Veischeide, and Altenhunden during the day. The heaviest opposition was met by the elements on the right flank with all three battalions blunting determined German counter attacks. The entire 343rd Infantry moved to Hofalpe during the day and at 1545 the 1st Battalion, 343rd Infantry was attached to the 342nd Infantry and at 2000 physical relieve of the 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry took place on the line at Bonzel. The 341st Infantry was in reserve at Helnerhausen.

During the late evening and at night, April 10, elements of the 342nd Infantry captured the towns of Bilstein and Grevenbruck. Co. A, 342nd Infantry launched an attack toward evening and became the first Black Hawk unit to make a successful river crossing, when they secured a bridgehead on the north bank of the Bigge River.

The night of April 10 was an unsasy one for all Black Hawk units on line as the Krouts kept up a constant artillery barrage all night with several tank and infantry led counter attacks striking in the area occupied by the 2nd Battalion, 342nd Infantry.

The all night vigil kept by Co. A-342 on the north bank of the Bigge faced numerous probes by the enemy. S/Sgt. George H. Evans, Baltimore, Maryland, volunteered to man the most dangerous outpost in the bridgehead with his MG section. He was killed at his post by enemy fire.

However despite the numerous counter attacks, the Black Hawk lines held tight and the doughboys were on the attack again at sun-up. The 342nd Infantry (with 1st Battalion, 343rd Infantry attached) continued their offensive at 0600 by pushing three battalions across the Bigge River. At this point Gen. Melasky moved the Division CP to Heinsburg and personally directed a concentrated attack upon the large Ruhr industrial city at Attendorn, which was the immediate 86th Division objective. The Black Hawks, in a sweeping



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Russian slave laborers cheer as Black Hawks remove Camp Commandant from barricade.**



flank attack took the city by surprise and after a long artillery preparation, Captain John Mitchell led Co. A, 342nd Infantry into the city at 1625 and after an hour of house to house fighting the city capitulated. A large number of POW's, armed youth party members, Volkstorm members and other armed elements of the Nazi party were taken prisoner.

As the Black Hawks drove further and further into the Ruhr Pocket, and neared some of the larger industrial centers, more and more of the Nazi atrocities began to come to light.

When the 86th Division captured the town of Attendorn, on April 12, a large slave labor camp was liberated. Enclosed behind the barb wire were several thousand Pole, Russian, and Czech political prisoners who were being exploited by their Nazi masters. Forced to work up to 16 hours a day in the nearby factories, these slave laborers greeted with wild enthusiasm the arrival of the American forces. The commandant of this particular slave labor camp was captured alive by Pfc. Arthur Fields and Major Anthony J. Malankowski, of the 86th Division, and was taken from his barricaded building in the compound amid wild cheers of the liberated laborers.

All through the Ruhr campaign, these liberated slave laborers gave Black Hawk doughboys assistance in locating enemy positions, as well as immeasurable help in digging in gun positions, etc.

At nearby Heggon, small suburb of Attendorn, Lt. Kruk, forward observer for the 404th FA Battalion, discovered a column of horse drawn artillery leaving the town for Sange. Some 600 horses were pulling around 100 caissons and supply wagons, enroute to new positions. Immediately calling for every gun in the 404th FA to be turned on this column, Lt. Kruk directed the firing as over 200 rounds of 155 mm. shells were pumped into this mass of horses and men. Ex-

tremely heavy losses were suffered by the German unit and it was knocked out of the war by the heavy barrage. The next day, when Black Hawk infantrymen captured the town, they were amazed at the number of dead enemy.

During the night of April 11, the 342nd Infantry was relieved intact by the 343rd Infantry, which had been in reserve during the day at Hilchenbach. The 341st Infantry was returned to 86th Division control after mopping up operations near the Seig River under control of the 97th Division.

Thursday, April 12, 1945, was the day our beloved President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, died at his retreat near Warm Springs, Georgia, but to Black Hawk units on the First Army front it was just another day of misery. The 343rd Infantry Regiment, which relieved the 342nd Infantry the previous night went on the attack north of Attendorn with the 86th Cavalry Recon. Troop, 740th Tank Battalion, and 644 TD Battalion attached and advanced 8000 meters. At 0600 the 343rd's 1st Battalion attacked northward and captured several small towns north of the Bigge River.

Again MG nests were strategically located by the Germans near all important road junctions and casualties were moderate. Sgt. Fred C. Nagle was leading his platoon around the base of a steep slope when it was pinned down by MG fire. Sgt. Nagle led a 10 man patrol around the hill, and then as the patrol covered him by taking up a firing line, Sgt. Nagle dashed forward and captured two machine gunners in an ammunition shed.

Pfc. James N. Curtis likewise was pinned down with his platoon by MG and sniper fire, when he volunteered to move to the rear of the enemy to attract fire while his platoon attacked the installation from the front. Pfc. Curtis led to the success of his platoons mission but he fell mortally wounded when struck by a mortar shell. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

Approaching the town of Windhausen, S/Sgt. Richard D. May, Huntington Park, Calif., of Co. M, 343rd Infantry, was in a column which was halted by MG fire. Sgt. May rallied a few men and directed heavy 81mm mortar fire into the enemy emplacement. After 5 minutes 1 crew from an 88, two MG crews, and around 200 infantrymen surrendered to Sgt. May and his mortar section. The 343rd Infantry reported the capture of over 400 prisoners during the day.

At 2200, April 12, General Melasky ordered a Task Force formed from the 342nd Regiment to take the city of Ludenscheid the next day. Col. Pete Heffner, upon receiving the orders from Division Headquarters, designated the Third Battalion, 342nd Infantry and that unit at once was detached from the regiment and came under the personal command of Brig. Gen. George V. W. Pope, who was in charge of the Ludenscheid Task Force. "Task Force Pope," as it was designated by higher echelon, consisted of the 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry, 86th Division Recon. Troop, one platoon of 4.2 mortars from the 172nd F.A. (Chem. Battalion, the 332nd FA Battalion, and elements of the 311th Engineer Battalion and Anti-Tank Co., 342nd Infantry.

Task Force Pope assembled during the night for its secret mission on April 13, which was to carry it eight miles behind the enemy lines to attack and capture the city of Ludenscheid, population over 40,000, which was the nerve center for Wehrmach units along this section of the front. The various units forming Task Force Pope assembled for early chow at Attendorn, where the Division CP was now located at 0200 on April 13. General Pope briefed the Company commanders while the men were eating what proved to be their last hot chow for five days.

At 0530 General Pope radioed to General Melasky that the Task Force had just passed through the first of a series of road blocks known to be set up on the road to Ludenscheid.



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**A Black Hawk bivouac area in the Ruhr Pocket.**

A hand full of Germans defended the road block but our attached TD's quickly knocked them out of the war. As the Task Force advanced, the 332nd FA and 911th FA, which were given direct support, kept a barrage falling in front of the troops which was controlled by forward observers. Black Hawk infantrymen passed continuously dead and wounded Germans lining the road, who had felt the effect of our artillery.

At 1100 the infantrymen reached the outskirts of Ludenscheid, which lay around a high hill from the present position of the Task Force. General Pope halted the column and deployed the three rifle companies in a direct attack toward the city. Co. K and Co. L were to attack along the main road into town while Co. I was to go over the wooded hill and give the companies approaching up the road direct fire support.

A large factory was situated at the near end of town and soon as the Task Force started around the end of the hill the enemy turned every thing he had loose on the dough-boys. Co. K suffered heavy casualties but managed to continue to advance into the face of the enemy. After a half hour advance units of Cos. K and L were cleaning up the pockets of resistance within the factory site. It developed that numerous Russian slave laborers were working in this factory, and one of them braved the German MG bullets to pass out dry and warm socks, which were stored in the warehouse, to the Black Hawk troops. Co. K still met heavy resistance but Co. L, which was now entering the buildings along the north side of the town, found themselves behind the enemy, and succeeded in knocking out several 88 crews.

Meanwhile Co. I, advancing over the wooded hill on the left flank of the Task Force, ran into a hotbed of MG nests on the hill overlooking the town. Pfc. Cleo Parsons, Quanah, Texas, with utter disregard for his own safety, left protective

cover and single-handedly attacked a MG nest which had his company pinned down and neutralized the position. Although wounded in the fray, he remained with his company and continued to spark its advance. Meantime a few yards away, Lt. John F. Seaton, in attacking another enemy position, fell mortally wounded when struck by an enemy shell.

During the height of the battle, General Pope received the admiration of all of his men by personally leading the rifle companies through the various phases of the engagement. At 1645, after an extended negotiation, the city finally subdued to the superior Black Hawk forces and several hundred PW's were captured, including a detachment of SS troops, which provided plenty of souvenirs for those inclined toward them. The 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf. then mopped up several points of resistance within the city and set up a defense line for the night.

Meanwhile the 343rd Infantry, which was on the offensive east of Ludenscheid, formed a Task Force whose mission it was to swing north and take the high ground south of Osterich. This Task Force was composed of the 3rd Bn., 343rd Inf., and elements of the 740th Tank Bn., and 644 TD Bn. Upon reaching the town of Huinghausen, forward elements of the Task Force were pinned down by artillery and 20 mm flak. Upon reconnaissance it was discovered that the enemy held all of the dominating ground and movement was impossible. For three hours the 3rd Bn., 343rd Inf. was pinned down with any sort of defense impossible due to the intensity of the fire from the flak guns. After another two hours of pounding the German positions with heavy artillery from the 911th FA Bn., the rifle companies were able to advance and late in the afternoon Huinghausen fell to the Battalion and over 1,000 prisoners were taken by the force.

During a night attack that evening, Pfc. Richard M. Mapes went into an artillery barrage and advanced 75 yards in front



of his company to set up his weapon and open devastating fire upon the enemy. Pfc. Laureen A. Willison, undaunted by the heavy barrage he had been through, stayed with his MG and continued the attack although he had been wounded twice.

Also in the 343rd Inf. sector the enemy offered probably his strongest thrust of the day against the 2nd Bn. near Herscheid. Heavy SA and AW weapons were unleashed against the troops and at 1100 the 2nd Bn. fought off a well organized counter attack, which was well supported. The 2nd Bn., 343rd Inf. took 1600 prisoners during the day, in repulsing two attacks, one led by 6 Tiger Tanks and a company of grenadiers.

Plattensburg fell to the 1st Bn., 343rd Inf. during the day. S/Sgt. Benj. Alexander, Brooklyn, N. Y., Co. A platoon leader, distinguished himself in this engagement by rushing across an open field to assist two wounded men when no aid men were available.

At dark, the 343rd Inf. reported to General Melasky an advance of 3000 meters during the day, and the capture of Plattensburg, Herscheid, and Huinghausen.

The 341st Infantry, which was committed to action under the 86th Division control in the Ruhr for the first time on April 13, also was on the attack, and things were just as hot in its area as it was for the 343rd and 342nd.

The 341st mission was to advance along the main road net in the division zone of advance to the "Stop Line" near Hagen. After being held in tactical reserve at Helberhausen, the 341st was motorized and moved out at 0600. The 2nd Bn., 341st Infantry were placed in the point of the attack with the Cannon Co., 341st Inf. attached. At 1200 the general attack started with a road block near Brugge being the first objective to fall. At 1600 the force was brought to a halt by small arms and panzerfaust fire, with several vehicles being

knocked out with severe casualties. The 2nd Bn. was able to regain the offense after a slight delay and continued to gain until the battalion reached Priorie.

At Priorie, the 341st ran into one of the well-established flak emplacements which were scattered throughout the Ruhr, such as at Bonzel and Seigen. The entire 2nd Bn. was pinned down for a lengthy period and Cannon Co., 341st attempted to come to their assistance. A panzerfaust hit one personnel carrier killing four men and wounding ten others. Pfc. Rudolph A. Kovic, of Pittsburg, was a crewman on a Cannon Co. gun and his crew was subject to intense fire from a nearby house. On his own initiative he secured a bazooka and advanced to within 50 yards of the house and destroyed it, capturing 18 Germans.

When Co. F, 341st Inf. was halted by the heavy opposition near Priorie, Pfc. Lynwood B. King, Jr., of Savannah, Ga., received severe flesh wounds. Nevertheless he refused medical assistance and continued to fight with the platoon until the enemy strong point was reduced.

By 1800 the enemy forces were in rout at Priorie and the 2nd Bn., 341st continued the attack and at 2400 on April 13, the Black Hawk units were drawing up on the outskirts of the huge industrial city of Hagen, where the 341st set up a perimeter defense.

During the day, Generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Hodges visited the 341st Regiment CP at Attendorn.

After the ordeal the 2nd Bn., 341st had been through the previous day in advancing to the outskirts of Hagen, it was relieved at 0600 by the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 341st Inf. and the 2nd Bn. went into regimental reserve. Col. Henry Hunt then brought his 341st Inf. CP forward and set up in the outskirts of Hagen, actually forward of the Battalions CP in order to better direct the battle for Hagen. With the 341st given the mission to take the entire city of Hagen, Col. Hunt's regiment attacked with the 1st Bn. on the left and

the 3rd Bn. on the right, with the 2nd Bn. in close support. At 1130 the attacking forces reported as having advanced to within sight of the center of town. At 1400 leading elements of the 1st Bn. reported reaching the objective and about an hour later the 3rd Bn. drew abreast after having met heavy opposition. In the center of town, one 341st Inf. jeep driver found a bucket of paint and a brush and immediately inscribed on his jeep, "The Hagen Hearst." As the 3rd Bn., 341st combed high ground to the south of Hagen, Col. Hunt finally had to move his CP about 500 yards after it having been harassed by sniper fire all day.

The Black Hawk Division was advancing so rapidly at this stage of the Ruhr engagement, that it was hard to tell where the front lines were. On April 14, General Gjelsteen, 86th Division artillery commander, his aide and four enlisted men were captured by a German unit near Ludenscheid, as Division Headquarters moved up from Attendorn. The group was taken to the enemy's rear and held through the night, but an attacking force from the 99th Division liberated them the following morning. From this time on Division Headquarters was more careful with their flanks and rear security.

Pvt. Charles E. Blankenship also found himself behind the German lines on this date, and much to his surprise right in the center of a German bivouac area. Alone he fast talked 89 Krauts into surrendering, had them strip their weapons of vital parts, and marched them back to our lines and turned them over to his Battalion PW cage.

North of Ludenscheid, Lt. Warren W. Hanson was leading a volunteer patrol to seek enemy 88 positions. In doing his own reconnaissance, Lt. Hanson bumped into three SS troopers who called for his surrender. Instead Lt. Hanson opened fire killing two of them and wounding the other, quickly taking advantage of the situation, he rushed for-

ward into the artillery emplacement and captured the 88 crew and the gun intact.

Pfc. Wilmoth C. Qualls, of the 332nd FA Bn., was another who found himself behind enemy lines near Priorie and managed to eliminate two flak guns and one mortar position single handed.

While on a scouting patrol, armed only with a bazooka, Lt. Willie R. Jones, Co. D, 341st, stumbled into a German unit and using his bazooka as persuasion, captured 45 prisoners.

As the 341st Regiment captured Hagen, the 343rd Inf. advanced 7,000 yards and took 1,600 prisoners in an advance over high ground protecting Hagens flank.

The 342nd Inf., was recommitted and went on the attack near Hohenlinburg, with the mission of securing that city and adjoining Latmathe.

The regiment attacked at 0530 north of Ludenscheid and captured a series of small towns such as Warbollen, Vorth Herde, Osmocke, Barenstein, Kleinhammer, Rutlenponi, Veise, Schonebecke, Vogelsing, Augustenthal, Rarin, and Surin, before pulling up at the outskirts of Hohenlinburg at 1600.

As the 1st Bn. and 2nd Bn. of the 342nd attacked Hohenlimburg, the 3rd Bn. objective was Latmathe on the Lenne River. At the small crossroads town of Lahmenhausen, Major Hankins and Sgt. Joe Umstetter, of the 342nd Inf. boldly walked into the woods and came across an entire German repple depple, and 5 replacement companies, which they talked into surrendering intact, including the Battalion Commander. Maj. Hankins and Sgt. Umstetter then marched the entire column back to our lines under a white flag, which made a weird sight indeed, one thousand more or less Germans coming across the front lines led by two Americans.

Hulscheid fell to the 1st Bn., 342nd Inf. at 1000 and Winkflm fell to the 2nd Bn. at 1800. The 3rd Bn. was pinned

down right on the hill above Latmathe at 1945, when ordered to pull back 500 yards and set up defense for the night.

The 343rd Infantry continued to advance on the right and captured over 1,600 PW's during the day and advanced 7,000 yards before going in defensive positions for the night overlooking the Ruhr valley.

When the 86th Division commenced its drive through the Ruhr Pocket from the south, XVIII A/B Corps had given it a stop line, at the Ruhr River on the north and the Lenne River on the east, and orders were not to advance or fire beyond these rivers in order to control the Black Hawk advance and prevent any chance of the First Army firing on Ninth Army units which held a defense line somewhere north of the Ruhr River. As Black Hawk units approached the river, Corps Headquarters ordered all artillery firing ceased to prevent any possibility of the two American armies failing to identify each other and thus firing on each other.

As the three Black Hawk regiments approached the Ruhr and Lenne Rivers the task of advancing increased as German units on the opposite bank of those rivers fired freely at the 86th Div. units, which were prevented by the Stop Line order from returning fire.

On the morning of April 15, the 341st Regiment continued its attack at 0630 with the 1st and 3rd Bns. abreast. The 1st Bn. was subjected to intense artillery fire but at 1055 reached its objective and set up OP's along the Ruhr River, facing the Ninth Army, known to be only a few miles away. Meanwhile elements of the 3rd Bn., 341st Inf.,\* continued a slow advance northwestward and reached the banks of the Lenne River, just upstream from its confluence

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\*The 3rd Battalion, 341st Infantry, holds an annual reunion on Labor Day weekend. All Black Hawks interested in holding reunions may contact officials of the 86th Division Association thru the author of this book.

with the Ruhr at 1730. The 3rd Bn. was pinned down near Halden for a lengthy period by artillery fire directed from the opposite bank of the Lenne. The 2nd Bn., 341st Inf. set up its base of operations at Hurdiedieck and began a search for enemy artillery positions which were hindering the advance of the other two regiments of the 86th Div.

At 1130, April 15, the 1st Bn., 341st Infantry, sent a patrol across the Ruhr River and made contact with Co. C, 314th Infantry, of the 79th Infantry Division of our Ninth Army, which was in defensive position north of the Ruhr River. Once liaison had been made with the Ninth Army, the 86th Div. stop line was lifted and the Black Hawks ordered to press the attack until the final capitulation of all German resistance in the Ruhr had been accomplished.

The 342nd Infantry also continued its advance on April 15, with its First and Second Battalions pressing on Hohenlimburg, industrial city near the Lenne River. The 2nd Bn., 342 Inf. entered Hohenlimburg at 1300 and after an afternoon of house to house fighting, secured the city at 1730. The 1st Bn. then drew up to the banks of the Lenne River and set up defense for the night. The 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf. was assigned the mission of taking Lathmathe, another smaller industrial city near Hohenlimburg. This battalion was subjected to heavy artillery fire on the hill above the town, and then in a flanking movement instigated during the course of the attack, captured the city in late afternoon. The taking of Latmathe was featured by house to house fighting, and the final objective was reached when Pfc. Ralph Madison, Co. L-342nd Inf. surprised a MG nest with a hand grenade and then led a bayonet attack on its stunned occupants.

At the edge of Latmathe Black Hawk doughboys found part evidence of what made life so miserable for them the past few days. The Jerry had in operation a battery of 16-inch naval guns, evidently made for some battleship, set up and in operation against our ground troops. Also cap-



tured at Latmathe was a Battalion of Railway Artillery guns. The 342nd Inf. took over 10,000 prisoners besides large quantities of war loot this day.

The 343rd Infantry continued its advance during the day, with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions abreast on line and the 1st Bn. in reserve following 600 yards behind. Although no cities such as Hagen or Hohenlimburg was in the path of the 343 Inf. advance, several smaller towns were captured including Albroggen, Rosmort, Mulen, and Bahmede. The 343rd Inf. reported a gain of 3,000 meters during the day and captured 1,500 prisoners in clearing the high ground south of Ostrich, which was completed at 1830.

The 86th Division CP was still at Ludenscheid and even the so-called rear echelon was subjected to several attacks and shellings during the day. In fact a Division Artillery wire truck struck a mine east of Ludenscheid and one man was killed and 4 injured by the blast. Capt. Joe L. Farrow was awarded the soldiers medal for his part in saving the injured men's lives and three enlisted men, M/Sgt. Carl B. Young, S/Sgt. Elmer O. McDonald, and Cpl. Donald P. Fortin were awarded the Silver Star for their part in the affair.

Activity on the 86th Division front decreased considerably on April 16. The First Battalion of the 341st Infantry moved out to the left flank at 0800 and made contact with the 8th Division of our Corps, moving up from the south. At 1300 the 3rd Bn., of the 341st Inf., secured a bridgehead across the Lenne River and closed the Ruhr Pocket from the south when the Black Hawks and 79th Division linked forces. By 1800 all organized resistance had collapsed in the 341st sector.

Upstream on the Lenne River, the 342nd Inf. was in holding action all day at Latmathe and Hohenlimburg until the 99th Infantry Div. and 7th Armored Division moved in on the opposite bank of the Lenne at 1430.

The 2nd Bn. of the 341st Infantry was engaged during the day in mopping up scattered points of resistance in the Division area. At one point near Hagen, Pfc. Daniel D. Minutolo, Co. E, 341st Inf. noticed a companion being fired upon by enemy riflemen. Pfc. Minutolo, of Philadelphia, rushed forward to attract the enemy's fire while his comrade grenaded the enemy position.

All resistance was declared to be at an end in the Ruhr Pocket at 0630 on April 17. The Black Hawks who were now deployed in the center of Germany's most industrial area, the Ruhr, had not time for sightseeing. Completely fatigued from the 10 days of eliminating the Ruhr Pocket, the doughboys spent the remainder of the day resting and cleaning their equipment, for they knew that there was still a big job ahead.



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Black Hawks prepare to join Gen. George Patton's Third Army.**

## THE BAVARIAN REDOUBT

On April 17 General Melasky received verbal orders that the 86th Division was being assigned to the III Corps, which was being transferred to General Patton's Third Army. The 86th Division was ordered to join the 3rd Army the next day south of Wurzburg.

Using every available vehicle that could be spared by the III Corps, the 86th Division was loaded on trucks during the late afternoon of April 18, and each man given a 24-hour supply of K rations. At last the 86th Division was off to join "Old Blood and Guts" himself.

At 1400 on April 14, the first elements of the 86th Division passed through Ludenscheid enroute on the 230-mile trip to Wurzburg. The convoys traveled south during the night throughout frequent cold winter rains. From their open trucks the Black Hawks could see as they passed the ruins of Seigen, where the Black Hawks had started their drive through the Ruhr two weeks before. Hitting the Autobahn at Limburg, the Black Hawks were carried south to Frankfurt am Main, where the convoys ripped along over the brick streets and street car tracks in full blackout. At 2125, just outside Frankfurt, a lone German plane strafed the entire column and rim-wrecked everyone's nerves for the rest of the night. "Bed Check Charley" made only the one trip however and otherwise the trip was very uneventful.

Morning of April 19 found the Black Hawk convoys heading up the beautiful Main River valley through Hanau, Aschaffenburg, and Wurzburg, the beautiful German university city. At 1300 the Division began to close into its new assembly area southeast of Wurzburg.

In the evening of April 19 the 86th Division passed to the command of the III Corps of the 3rd Army. General Melasky set up the 86th Division CP at Windsheim. The

341st Infantry was located at Ipsheim, the 342 Inf. at Uffenheim with its battalions located in Gosseldorf, Sachsen and Alberndorf, and the 343rd Inf. at Suganheim. The division immediately set up a perimeter defense line around its entire concentration area, and only light raids by small German units which penetrated the 3rd Army lines 10 miles south disturbed the Black Hawk units.

The area in which the Black Hawk Division was now located is one of the most picturesque in all of Europe. In a section of the Reich known as Franconia, the countryside is rolling to slightly hilly, and although the forest is not as dense as in the Ruhr, there is heavy vegetation. The towns were mostly just small villages, each surrounded by a wall with a town clock from feudal days located in the center of the town square.

The residents of this section of Germany wore colorful clothing, and even in the fields, where the women were busy at work preparing for the spring planting, the famous painting of the Bohemian Girl would flash to one's mind.

During the few days while the Black Hawks rested from battle, regrouped, and received more replacements from the states to replace the casualties of the Ruhr Campaign, the men of the 86th Div. as individuals found time to write home, try their hand at trout fishing in the swift, cold streams, and just rest and relax, as most did. When the company kitchens caught up with the infantry companies for the first time in several weeks, many of the mess sergeants added a little spice to their menu, something the Pentagon probably didn't know about, fresh venison. Yes, the cooks would get a machine gun section and go out in the woods and kill two or three deers for their company, which would be served as the main course, with plenty of seconds. Let us hope all former Black Hawks are honorably discharged before the IG reads this.

The ration problem at the front line became acute during the latter stages of the war. The tremendous rate of speed which the Black Hawks were advancing made it almost impossible for the supply services to bring forward the rations. When this happened, it became necessary for the front line troops to do a certain amount of foraging off the countryside. In this foraging, it was eggs which was most in demand. The infantrymen often would leave their OP's to raid a hen house for fresh eggs, and sometimes for the hen itself. These were then taken back to the OP and cooked over a fire in the top of a mess gear. One rifle company captured a butcher shop in taking the town of Haag, near the Austrian frontier, and the doughboys helped themselves to juicy steaks. If the services of supply had managed to bring the rations forward, such foraging probably would never have occurred.

When rations did reach the front lines, it was always those horrible C rations. These rations consisted of three units, dried eggs for breakfast, cheese for dinner, and boiled beef for supper. Usually there would be three hard crackers and a small piece of stale candy in each can. These were the rations for the front lines. Eating such food day in and day out resulted in many gripes. Even the PW's gripped over such food, as according to International Law, they were supposed to receive the same rations as their captors, and they found it hard to believe that the American ate the same food.

However, the problem was not on a division level, it was somewhere far to the rear. Many of the Black Hawk mess personnel went to extreme difficulty to bring up an occasional hot meal to the front.

The general situation along the Third Army front as of Apr. 22, 1945, saw the American line stretching generally from north of Stuttgart eastwardly through Ansbach, Nurn-

berg, Bayreuth, toward the junction with the First Army at Leipzig. Most of the Third Army had raced northeastwardly across the central German plains in the mad race toward Berlin, only to be stopped short of the coveted city by a secret agreement long before signed by higher authorities. When General Patton found that his forces would not be permitted to cross beyond the Elbe, he swung his army around and commenced a two pronged attack. One was to advance into Czechoslovakia to link up with the Russians and the other was to advance southward through the heart of Bavaria, to liquidate any dreams Hitler may have of holding out in what was planned as a National Redoubt in the Alp Mountains of southern Germany, and to link up with the American Fifth Army coming up from Italy and the Russians advancing westward through Austria. It was to this second named attack that the 86th Division was assigned.

General Melasky received the battle orders for the Black Hawks on the morning of April 21, in a meeting at Corps Headquarters. The 86th Division was to attack as a part of the III Corps of the Third Army. The battle plan called for the XV Corps to swing due south in the path of the III Corps on April 21, and as soon as these units (14 Armored Div., 42nd Infantry Div., 103rd Inf. Div. and 45th Inf. Div.) completed crossing in front of the 86th Division, the Black Hawks were to go on a general offensive with the immediate objectives of securing a bridgehead across the Danube River.\*

Upon returning to 86th Division Headquarters, General Melasky ordered the Division CP moved to Ansbach from where he was to direct the offensive that was due to get

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\*Many of General Patton's war trophies are now displayed in the Patton Museum, at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Various German weapons from the 88 down to the potato masher are on display. The museum is open to the public daily. Also at Fort Knox one of the streets at the Armored Center is named Black Hawk Avenue.



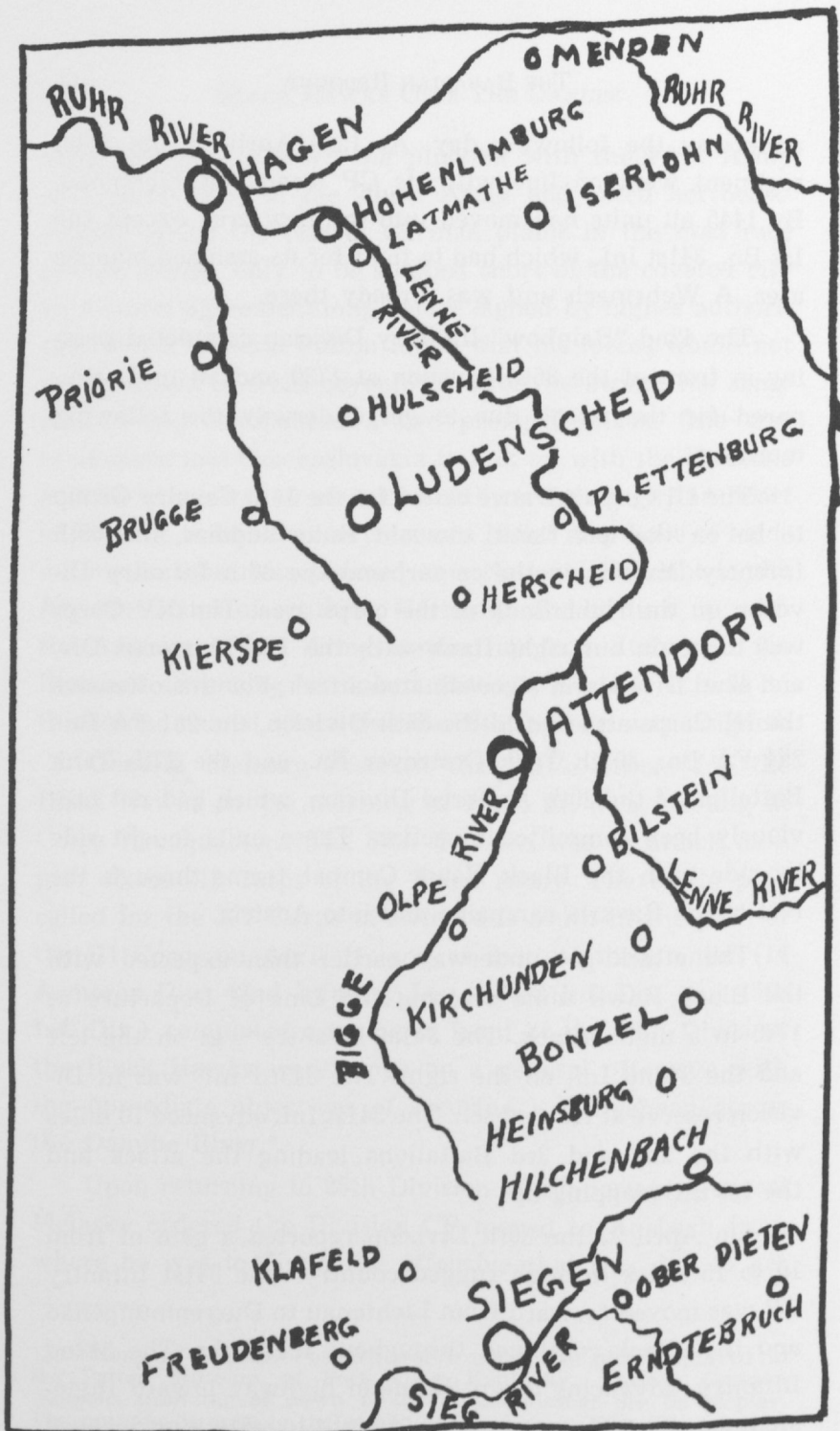
underway the following day. At 1230 April 21 the 341st regiment went on line with its CP located at Lichtenau. By 1445 all units had moved into the new area except the 1st Bn., 341st Inf., which had to fight for its assigned bivouac area. A Wehrmach unit was already there.

The 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Division completed passing in front of the 86th Division at 1730 and all units prepared for the attack due to get underway the following morning.

The III Corps advance called for the 14th Cavalry Group to be on the left flank, our old Ruhr buddies, the 99th Infantry Division in the center, and the 86th Infantry Division on the right flank of the corps area. The XV Corps was to be on our right flank with the 14th Armored Div. and 42nd Division in a coordinated attack. For this offensive the III Corps attached to the 86th Division, the 281 FA Bn., 254 FA Bn., 807th Tank Destroyer Bn., and the 27th Tank Battalion of the 20th Armored Division, which had not previously been committed to action. These units fought side by side with the Black Hawk Combat teams through the rest of the Bavaria campaign and into Austria.

The attack got underway earlier than expected with the Black Hawk units crossing the Line of Departure at 1745 in a night attack. The 341st Infantry was on the left and the 342nd Inf. on the right. The 343rd Inf. was in Division reserve at Katterbach. The 341st Inf. advanced 10 miles with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions leading the attack and the 1st Bn. mopping up.

On April 23 the 86th Division reported a gain of from 10 to 15 miles through rugged country. The 341st Infantry CP was moved forward from Lichtenau to Durrenmungenau and the attack continued throughout the night. The 342nd Infantry, advancing down the main highway toward Inglostadt continued pressing day and night to seize a bridgehead



The 86th Inf. Div. area of advance in Bavaria and Austria.

across the narrow but swift Altmuhl River. The 342nd Infantry advanced with the 1st and 2nd Battalions abreast and encountered numerous roadblocks, some defended, some mined and others booby trapped. At Rupertsbuch the 1st Bn., 342nd Inf. met stiff resistance from dug in infantry, automatic weapons and mortar fire. The 3rd Bn., 342 Inf. followed in close support and set up a perimeter defense for the night in reserve behind the 2nd Bn.

As soon as the Black Hawk doughboys seized a bridgehead across the Altmuhl River, the 311th Combat Engineers started construction of a bridge across the stream. No sooner was the first bridge erected than enemy artillery destroyed it. Several members of the Engineers were casualties from the heavy bombardment, Cpl. Kenneth E. Wolf, Co. A, 311th Eng., saw two of his buddies wounded on the destroyed bridge. With no regard for his own safety, he climbed on the twisted girders and assisted both of them. Within a few hours, however, the 311th Engr. had another bridge across the stream and the Black Hawk infantry units were crossing in full force.

On April 24 the Black Hawks were busy enlarging the Altmuhl River crossing. During the afternoon both the 341st Inf. and 342nd Inf. broke out of the bridgehead and advanced several miles. The 341st Inf. CP was moved south to Schutzensdorf.

The 342nd Inf. captured several towns including Wulzburg, Ellingen, Weisenberg, Neiderhofen, Lohrmannshof, and Rothenstein. The largest town captured during the day was the picturesque little city of Eichstadt, with its medieval castles, where an SS man was found hanging in the square with a sign tacked to his uniform, "If you fight, you may die. If you attempt to surrender you will die." Outside of Eichstadt Co. A, 342nd Inf. liberated an allied PW camp after a hard fight. When at last the Kraut guards were routed, the infantrymen were warmly greeted by several hundred

PW's, including many who had been prisoners since Hill 169 and Bizerte in North Africa. To see these men free again was worth fighting for, the liberators agreed almost 100 per cent.

S/Sgt. Johnnie L. Jernigan, Waycross, Georgia, squad leader of Co. E, 342nd Inf., distinguished himself during the attack on Eichstadt, when he organized his squad after a panzerfaust attack and cleared over 600 yards of wooded area, capturing a number of prisoners.

On April 25 the Division CP was moved forward from Ellington to a rural location five miles north of Eichstadt, while the Black Hawk infantry units pressed the attack on the enemy toward the Danube River. The 343rd Infantry, which had been in reserve, was rushed forward by every



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**A Black Hawk GI guards captured German war loot in a church near Ellingen.**

available means of transportation in order to be ready for instant relief as the other two regiments neared the water barrier. The 342nd Infantry advanced further out of the Altmuhl bridgehead and liberated 7,000 allied PW's during the day. Opposition was extremely heavy throughout the day and the 341st Infantry was in a touch and go affair all day in clearing high ground on the east bank of the Altmuhl near Ourgolding. Numerous German OP's directing fire on the bridgehead was destroyed by the 341st Inf. The 1st Bn., 341st Inf. on the left flank, established a second bridgehead during the day which was used as a crossing for the 14th Cavalry. The 341st Inf. CP was moved to Erlinghausen at 1830.

Hitler's SS troops were encountered much more often as the Black Hawks neared the Danube. The 13th SS Corps was opposing the 86th Division advance on Inglostadt. Near the Altmuhl River on April 25, S/Sgts. James J. Gilmore and Robert E. Leeson attacked a large group of SS troops establishing a position in a wooded area, and although both were seriously wounded they continued on the offense and prevented the enemy from infiltrating our position.

On the night of April 25 enemy opposition increased, and so did Black Hawk activity. The 86th Div. troops continued the attack through the night and advanced several miles.

At 0330, April 26, the 341st Infantry effected a third crossing of the Altmuhl River, and within two hours the 311th Engineers had another bridge across the stream. By mid morning the entire regiment was across the stream and roads in the area were jammed with vehicles of both the 86th Division and the 14th Armored Division, which were now striking in full force for the Danube.

At 1200 a coordinated attack with the 342nd Inf. on the right, 341st Inf. on the left, and 343rd Inf. in reserve was underway. The 14th Armd. Division of the Seventh Army, to the Divisions right coordinated its attack with that of the

Black Hawk Division. A rapid advance brought both regiments to the outskirts of Inglostadt, an important rail and munitions center, and river port for a large area of central Germany.

On April 26, at Dosseln, Pfc. Carl J. Kistel, Chicago, a communications man with Co. A, 343rd Infantry, was advancing with his battalion when an artillery barrage centered on his company.

In order to re-establish contact with battalion headquarters, Kistel "fearlessly left cover and with utter disregard for his own safety set up his radio in the middle of a shell swept street."

A German shell exploded within five feet of Kistel's position, wounding him so seriously that he later lost both feet, but with unflinching heroism, he crawled back to his



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**The Black Hawks attack a road block near Eichstadt.**



radio, received orders from the battalion commander and relayed them to his company commander.

Pfc. Kistel was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by President Truman for this gallant act.

Doughboys of the 342nd Infantry, in their drive on Inglostadt, overran what was probably one of the largest secret powder and ammunition stores discovered in Germany.

Located underground beneath sodded hills and knolls, the location was perfectly camouflaged from air observation. Unless one chanced to stumble on one of the massive steel doors that opened into various inter-connected passageways in the hills, the place would pass unnoticed from the ground. Named by the Wehrmach as Fort Van Der Tag, the arsenal consisted of hundreds of yards of stone and concrete passageways on several levels with many chambers crammed with black powder in each passageway. Other sections contained large quantities of artillery shells. No evidence of slave labor was found except the usual generous supply of the cat of nine tails whips were present, which indicated the use of foreign labor.

At the outskirts of Inglostadt the Black Hawks were halted by heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire. As the 86th Division doughboys inched their way forward, German sound trucks could be heard in the distance playing Strauss waltzes, in order to stir patriotism in the defenders of the Danube River line. Close air support aided the infantry as they fought their way into the city. One of the main enemy strong points was a huge army ordnance plant located in an area of the city heavily pock-marked by bombs. Inglostadt had been a frequent target of RAF heavy bombers since the early stages of the war. At 1430 Iglostadt fell to the Black Hawk Division and the two regiments on line moved up to the bank of the Danube River. In the advance during the day the towns of Pfunz, Inching, and Preterfeld, fell to the Black Hawks.

At 1730 the Division CP was located at Eitensheim and the 341st and 342nd Regiments were on the bank of the river awaiting orders to cross, orders which were not long in coming. At 1800 III Corps notified General Melasky of the Division's new objective, and extended the 86th Div. boundaries toward Munich. The 343rd Infantry, which had been mopping up at Eichstadt, which proved to be a Nazi hotbed, moved its CP up from Bitensheim to Inglostadt, and prepared to relieve the 342nd Inf., once a bridgehead had been established.

The 341st Regimental CP was located at Westerhausen and 342nd Inf. CP was at Inglostadt.

German units, opposing the 86th Division as it prepared for its first amphibious assault over a major stream, were the following: 17th SS Panzer Division, 38th SS Inf. Div., 95th Inf. Regt., the Regiment Holzinger, 13th SS Corps, 352nd Inf. Div., 212th Inf. Div., and 37th SS Panzer Division.

After the hours of darkness, on April 26, the Black Hawk rifle companies made final preparations for the amphibious assault across the wide and treacherous Danube. The Engineers brought hundreds of 6 and 10 men plywood and rubber assault boats to the front, and these were inched along the streets of Inglostadt through heavy artillery and mortar fire until they were located only a few yards from the river bank, ready for instant use once the doughboys were ready to cross. The 86th Division artillery kept a constant barrage falling on the opposite bank of the river, but still the Krauts managed to keep the Black Hawk positions peppered with fire. Heavy casualties were suffered by the 86th Div. units even before the river crossing was attempted.

The heavy weapon companies of the two regiments moved their mortars and heavy MG's right to the top of the dike overlooking the Danube in order to give the rifle



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Black Hawk Infantrymen move through the streets of Ingolstadt as re-inforcements for Danube beachhead.**

companies better support once the crossing was underway. Lt. William E. Seiders, Jr., Co. D, 342nd Inf. was killed in action as he set up his section near the waters edge. Killed in action with Lt. Seiders was Cpl. John T. DuBose, who was manning the position with him. In the 341st Inf. sector, Pfc. Edsell G. Brown, Co. G, noted a by-passed German unit firing on a Recon. car of the 86th Recon. Group. Pfc. Brown, after locating the position, attacked it single-handed and captured 8 enemy riflemen after a lengthy fire fight.

H-Hour for the Danube assault was set for 2300, with the 342nd Inf. leading the attack. The 342nd was to assault the river just downstream from the demolished Inglostadt bridge. By 2230 the first wave of the assault battalions reached the waters edge and awaited the zero hour.

At 2300 the Black Hawks shoved off in the small assault boats. Leading the 342nd Inf. attack was Co. K, and just as this outfit reached the middle of the stream, enemy mortar fire made direct hits on several of the assault boats, resulting in heavy casualties. Capt. Bruce McAllister, company commander, reorganized his company upon reaching the south bank of the river, and held on to a narrow beach-head bravely until the second and third waves brought reinforcements. The Germans had a heavy cable submerged under the water and many of the assault boats hit this cable in approaching the bank, and the infantrymen were forced to wade through swift, cold water up to their shoulders for the last 150 feet. The initial beachhead was established beside an old abandoned Danube River barge, which provided some cover for the embattled Black Hawks. Some 200 feet up from the bank of the river the Germans had established well dug-in positions, with trenches and tunnels leading from one gun position to another. From these fortifications the Krauts were able to control fire along the beachhead held by the infantry-

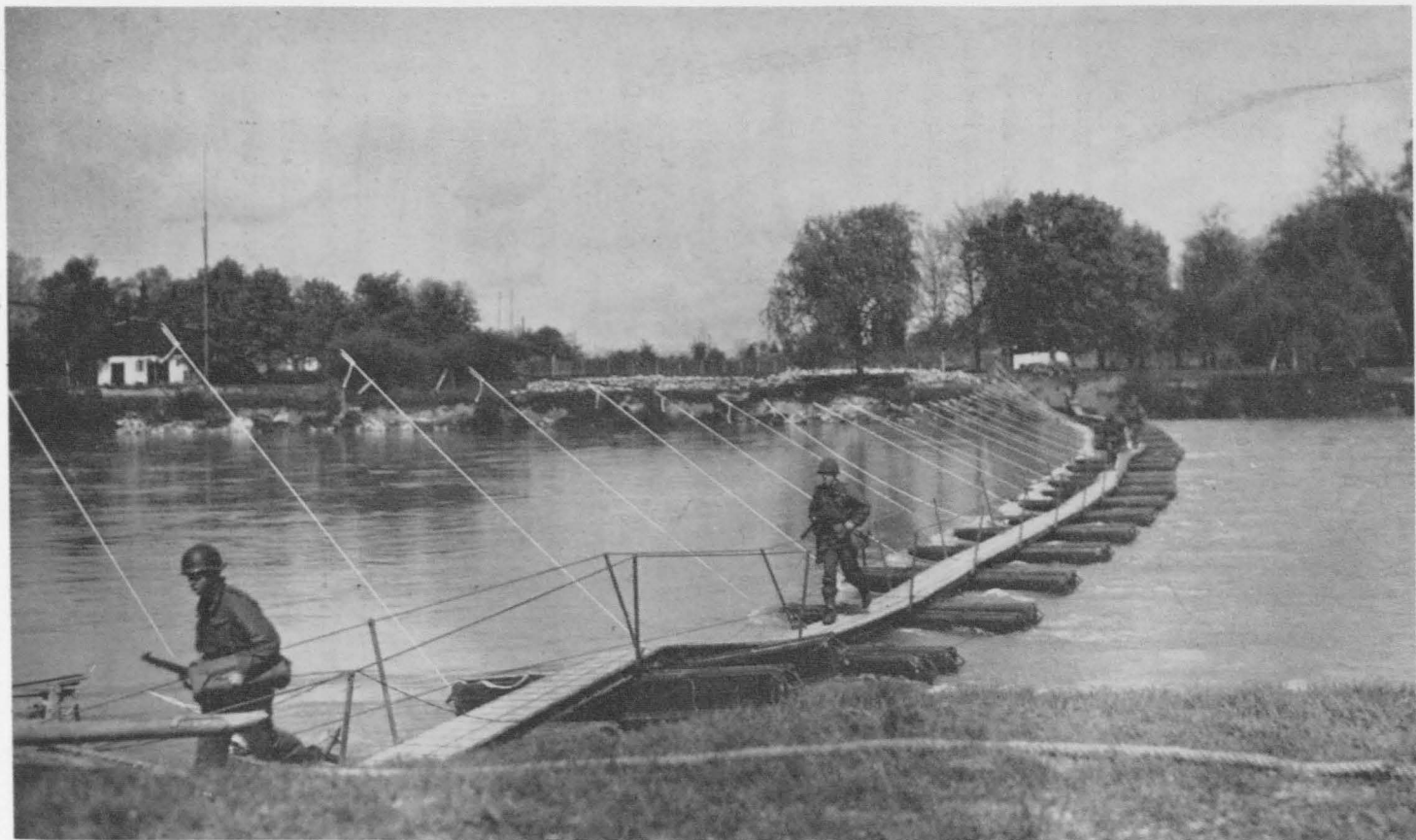
man at the waters edge. The first task of the Black Hawks was to clear these trenches of the enemy, which was readily done.

Within 30 minutes from the first crossing, six rifle companies and 2 heavy weapons companies were across the river and lending a hand in establishing a bridgehead. The early contact with Battalion and Regimental headquarters was through use of the walky-talky radio, which was not too satisfactory. However at 0230, Lt. John E. Berg and several volunteers managed to get a telephone wire across the river and establish wire contact between the beachhead and the two regiments.

The early hours on the beachhead was a period of confusion for the Black Hawk infantrymen. Companies became split in half and platoons of one company would join another company and fight with them until able to locate their own unit. But excellent reorganization and a relentless drive resulted in the bridgehead being firmly established by 0400. At that time Capt. Bruce McAllisters' Co. K, 342nd Inf. had reached a point some 2 miles inland from the river.

Scattered German units, dazed by the rapid advance of the Black Hawks and nerves shattered by the heavy artillery barrage that preceded the attack, were encountered everywhere. S/Sgt. Anthony S. Neskey, Pelham, N. H., and a section leader of Co. D, 342nd Inf., was taking his 81 mm mortar section through a wooded area when encountering a lone German soldier. Although Sgt. Neskey's weapon would not fire, he persuaded the German to surrender and then sent the Kraut back into the woods to bring 26 more of the enemy out to surrender.

The 341st Inf. beachhead, downstream, was established shortly after daylight on April 27. There the doughboys on reaching the hostile shore found a high ridge to their front which was well defended by the enemy. A large fortress



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Replacements cross the Danube on treadway bridge to join the Black Hawk Division.**



was situated atop the bluff, and the 341st Inf. gallantly wiped out this obstacle within two hours. Pfc. Homer E. West, member of an I&R Platoon, entered the fortress on his own to remove PW's and was fired upon and wounded by the enemy.

The 341st Inf. bridgehead was established and linked up with the 342nd Inf. area by 0900 on April 27. The 341st Inf. crossed the river in assault boats brought upstream from the 342nd Inf. crossing the previous night. 30 assault teams from the 311th Engineers assisted the regiment in crossing the river. A German ferry boat, seized at the waters edge, was also used in effecting the crossing. The 1st Bn., 341st Inf. led the regimental assault, and the 2nd Bn. and 3rd Bn. crossed at Vohburg.

During the early morning hours, the 342nd Inf. beachhead, opposite Inglostadt, was widened, and by 0900 the Engineers had a treadway bridge across the river. Co. L, 342nd Inf. was set up in defensive position at the bridge to protect it from the Germans, who made several attempts at infiltrating our lines to destroy the bridge. Two miles inland from the river, the first and second battalions of the 342nd Inf. ran into stubborn resistance as they approached a fortress located near a railroad yard. Pinned down for several hours, the fortification was finally taken by Co. G and Co. F attacking abreast. Meanwhile the Third Battalion of 342nd Inf. reached the regimental objective and set up a defense line after capturing the towns of Neider, Pickel, Ringsee, and Manching.

At 1130 the Division CP was moved up from Eitemsheim to Inglostadt, and at 1300 the 343rd Infantry relieved the 342nd Infantry and continued the attack southward out of the Danube beachhead. The 343rd during the afternoon captured Ernsgraden, Eleenhausen and Reichertshaufen. Upon approaching Landshut, the Anti-Tank Co., 343rd Inf., was

ambushed and a weapons carrier was struck by a panzerfaust and set afire. Pfc. L. Gill, Hinton, W. Va., dismounted and despite the exploding A-T ammunition and small arms fire from the enemy, managed to set up a firing line and maintain a withering and deadly fire which inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy in well prepared positions. Meanwhile S/Sgt. David E. Kelly, Co. A, 343rd Inf., while on a reconnaissance patrol with two others encountered three enemy vehicles carrying ammunition and gas. Opening fire with a 50-cal. MG, they killed the driver of one vehicle. The half track then exploded, drawing intense enemy artillery and MG fire, forcing their withdrawal. Upon returning to a covered position, Sgt. Kelly discovered one of his comrades missing. He then returned to the fire-raked field and discovered his



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Elements of Co. G, 343rd Inf. move into a wooded area  
near Ingolstadt.**

buddy wounded. He carried him back to safety and was decorated for his valor.

Meanwhile to the rear area, heavy artillery fire was directed on the Danube treadway bridge by the enemy, in a vain attempt to destroy it. At one time the bridge cables were badly damaged by a direct hit but the bridge held. The telephone wires were cut, and Pfc. Eldon C. Sherman volunteered to go to midstream on the dangling bridge to repair the wire and re-establish communications.

April 28 saw the 86th Division advancing out of the Danube bridgehead on a wide front. The 343rd Infantry was on the right and the 341st Inf. was on the left, with the 342nd Inf. in reserve behind the 343rd Infantry. The Division received new operational boundaries from III Corps Headquarters at 1800, and began a lateral movement into the new zone. The move was accomplished by 0500 on April 29. The 341st Infantry advance was hampered by a shortage of gas, which prevented many of the supporting vehicles from keeping up with the infantry units. Nevertheless the regiment advanced several miles during the day capturing the towns of Gaden, Bei Geisenfeld, and Osterwaal.

Colonel Donald H. Baumer, Hq., 3rd Bn., was leading his Battalion's advance on a fortified town in the approach to the Berlin-Munich Autobahn. Col. Baumer personally made a reconnaissance trip in front of his troops, and discovered that the town was surrounded by a wall, as were many of the Bavarian towns. Returning to his Battalion, he ordered a platoon to scale the walls and storm the SS defenders in the village. As the platoon approached the wall under heavy fire, Col. Baumer noticed a tunnel leading under the wall. He instantly changed the plan of attack, and raced with the platoon through the tunnel and surprised the SS garrison inside the walled village.

The 343rd Infantry in the meantime was advancing rapidly toward the Autobahn and captured a series of small

villages during the day. Falling to the 343rd Regiment during the day was Konnigsfeld, Fahlebach, Burgstoll, Wolzach, Winden, Langenbruck, Staffel, Gembach, Ronz, and Eschelbock.

On April 28 the Black Hawk advanced all day straddling the wide Berlin-Munchen super highway (Autobahn). The 343rd Inf. was the first outfit to cut this main north south artery, and during the night of April 28, advanced eight miles down the highway toward Munchen.

It was on this date that the press corps was first permitted to announce the 86th Division as in action on the western front. A headline in The New York Times on April 29 read, "86th Division advances 8 miles down Munich Autobahn." At last the folks back home knew where the 86th was fighting, and the Black Hawks felt a little better than they did after capturing Ludenscheid, only to read in the Stars and Stripes the next day where the city had fallen to the 8th Division, when in fact they had been over 20 miles west of our sector.

April 29 dawned with Black Hawk units advancing rapidly southeastwardly away from the Autobahan, across level plains, with two major river obstacles in front of them. The first was the Amper Kanal, a river that rises in the Alps south of Munich, flowing by Dachau, and which was right in front of the 86th Division. Some three or four miles further was the Isar River, a major stream of southern Germany, which rises as a cold, swift flowing stream in the Alp Mountains and winds its way through Munich toward a confluence with the Danube, near Passau. Beyond the Isar was the Mittle Isar Canal, a man made waterway behind high dikes which transverse the Erdinger Moos, a swampy meadowland some 10 miles north of Munich.

The 86th Division CP on April 29 was moved forward to Wolnzach, a small, dusty Bavarian town, captured the

previous day by the 343rd Infantry. The 343rd continued to advance during the day on the right flank with the 341st on the left, until 1730 when the 342nd Inf. relieved the 341st Regiment.

At 0630 the 341st attack commenced and the regiment advanced rapidly through the morning hours and at 1345 seized intact a bridge over the Amper Kanal, making the Divisions advance easier. When the forward elements reached the bridge a German demolitions crew was at work preparing to destroy the span. The 341st killed several members of the crew and captured the rest, seized the bridge and before the enemy units on the south bank knew what was happening, the Black Hawks were racing through their positions and on to the banks of the Isar River, which was reached before dark.

The 343rd Infantry wiped aside stubborn defenses all day long, as they advanced in the right sector, seizing several towns enroute to the Isar.

Geroldhausen was the first town to fall to the 343rd Inf. during the day and by nightfall Keetersdorf, Ampertshausen, Hursbach, Kirkdorf, Tunzhausen, Holzhausen, Zolling, Manzling, and Freising had been liberated from the Nazi yoke.

The 343rd Infantry found the bridge in their sector had been destroyed upon arriving at the Amper Kanal, but an assault across the stream was prevented when the IV Corps secured a bridge adjacent to their area on the west. The 343rd instantly swung south into the 14th Armd. Div. area, crossed the river, and went back into the attack in their original area.

Ahead of the 343rd lay Freising, an important communications center and the Isar River. The 1st and 3rd Battalions launched a joint attack on Freising, and after a severe battle, the city fell to the Black Hawk units at 1900. The 2nd Bat-

talion was then pushed into the point of the attack and raced forward to the bank of the river, to establish contact with the 342nd Infantry, which had just relieved the 341st on line in the 86th Division sector. Over 700 American PW's were released from a PW camp on the banks of the Isar near Freising.

The 342nd Infantry, which had relieved the 341st at 1730, pressed out toward their left flank and elements advanced along the Isar River to the outskirts of Moosburg, where a large concentration camp was liberated. In clearing the area, several towns fell to the 342nd Inf., including Osseltshausen, Attenkirchen, and at 2200 the three battalions moved into position along the Isar at Wingham, Schmidthausen, and Haag preparing for the assault across the river.

At 2300 General Melasky received clearance to cross the Isar and he at once ordered the Engineer assault teams to the front with orders to assist the infantry in crossing the river.

The H-Hour for the amphibious assault across the Isar River was set for 0100, April 30. The 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf. which had proved so effective in the crossing of the Danube River was again given the task of spearheading the Black Hawk assault. As soon as the 342 Inf. had secured a beachhead, the 343rd Inf., led by its 3rd Battalion, was to cross the river upstream and establish a second bridgehead.

The 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf., shoved off from the friendly bank of the Isar and made an effective beachhead by 0145. The rifle companies at once went on the offense and by daylight had widened the beachhead to 1,000 yards, capturing several small villages.

The 343rd assault commenced just one hour later than the 342nd Inf. and it was led by Cos. I and K of the 343rd Inf. Both companies suffered casualties in making the crossing. S/Sgt. William J. Alworth, of Bruin, Pa., had his squad



serving as flank security when it was counter attacked by 50 infantrymen. He was painfully wounded but continued to fight until his squad was reinforced by a rifle platoon and 3 MG sections and managed to repulse the enemy attack. The 343rd after securing their beachhead, linked up with the 342nd Infantry and both regiments commenced a concentrated drive toward the Mittle Isar Kanal, which lay a few miles southeast across the Erdinger Moos. The 342nd Infantry advanced with the 3rd Battalion, which had made the initial river crossing in the point, with the 1st and 2nd Bns. on the flanks. The 343rd Infantry advanced with all three battalions abreast. The 341st remained in reserve as April 29 came to an end.

The wounded on the crossing of the Isar were carried back across the river in assault boats and then taken by ambulance back to the Division clearing station, set up by the 311th Medical Bn., near the Division CP at Freising. One of these ambulances, operated by T/5 Jacob F. Vogt and Pfc. Harold E. Freed, was ambushed to the rear of our lines by 20 armed Germans. Vogt jumped from the ambulance and knocked the weapon from the nearest of the enemy. While he wrestled with the Kraut, Pfc. Freed fired at the remaining members of the ambushing enemy until all of the ammunition was gone. Both of the medics were then taken prisoner by the Germans, but their heroic attempt saved the lives of the wounded in the ambulance.

On April 30 the Black Hawk infantry units advanced very slowly southeastward from the Isar River beachhead, toward the Mittle Isar Canal. The advance was hampered due to the fact that all of the vehicles and supporting weapons were held up on the north bank of the river until a bridge could be thrown across the swift Isar. By noon leading elements of the 343rd Infantry and 342nd Inf. were advancing to within a few hundred feet of the Canal. Air reconnaissance

reported all bridges across the Canal as demolished. Resistance to the Black Hawk doughboys was stiff all day, in fact the heaviest opposition seen since the Ruhr Pocket was encountered by both regiments.

The 343rd captured Schweg, Oberdeen and along with the 342nd Inf. made a coordinated attack on the town of Etting shortly before noon on April 30. Etting fell to elements of the two regiments at 1300 and 4,103 PW's were taken, many of them belonging to the 38th SS Division.

As the 343rd Infantry approached the Canal, a patrol led by Lt. Warren Parkins, Co. K, 343 Inf. discovered that a tunnel under the canal had not been demolished as yet. Lt. Parkins rushed his patrol to the tunnels entrance and cut the demolition wires before the nearby German unit could blow the tunnel. The German units nearby immediately opened up with heavy fire, but Lt. Parkins and his small patrol held on valiantly through the attack. Inching forward, the patrol of 19 men made their way through obstacles in the tunnel and entrenched on the enemy side of the canal where the group held on bravely until reinforcements could be brought up. After several counter-attacks, one of which resulted in hand to hand fighting, Co. K, 343rd Inf. secured the tunnel and permitted practically the entire 86th Division to pass through it, preventing another dangerous amphibious assault. Another group from Co. K, 343rd Inf. led by S/Sgt. Anthony Firavich, was routed from an exposed position by MG and burp gun fire. Sgt. Firavich, of Ada, Oklahoma, was later decorated for his valor when he covered his platoons withdrawal. After securing the tunnel under the canal, the third battalion of 343rd Inf. was placed in reserve to regroup after being badly battered. The 1st and 2nd Bns. continued the attack.

The tunnel, which was located just east of the town of Etting, was quickly cleared by Co. C, 311 Engineer Bn.,

and both the 343rd and 341st Regiments passed through it to press the Germans further into their National Redoubt.

Near Etting 30 PW's were captured from the famous Richofen Squarden of the Luftwaffe. They had recently been transferred from the air force to the Wehrmach and were now fighting as infantry. This was good evidence that Hitler's Air Force was licked.

As elements of the 86th Division was securing the tunnel under the canal, the Third Battalion of the 342nd Infantry, upon approaching the canal, found a small foot bridge which had likewise escaped demolition by the retreating Wehrmach. A small three-man patrol, led by Pfc. Billy P. Rudisill, Co. K, 342nd Inf., immediately took the initiative and secured the foot bridge, which was elevated high above the canal. Pfc. Rudisill and his two companions held out grimly on the south bank of the canal, with the bridge to their backs for over two hours, while column after column of German infantry attempted to regain the bridge. When the battle had lifted, over 60 Germans were killed and 10 had been taken prisoner.

At 1600 Co. K., 342nd Inf., crossed the bridge and swung to the left to capture the town of Berglern. Capt. Bruce McAllister, beloved Company Commander of Co. K, was killed in action in this engagement, as he led his troops into the town.

As Co. K occupied Berglern, Col. Pete T. Heffner, Regimental CO immediately ordered the 2nd and 3rd Bns. over the foot bridge and to fan out in securing a bridgehead on the south bank of the canal.

As Co. I, 342nd Inf. prepared to attack over the bridge, its Company Commander, Capt. William Richardson, and communications sergeant, Sgt. Edmond O'Neil, went over the bridge to make contact with Co. K. They were counter attacked by a large force of Germans and after a brief fire

fight, both were captured and taken prisoner. They were liberated at the end of the war by the 42nd Division.

As soon as the 2nd Battalion reached the bridge, they attempted to beat off all German resistance in the area. Numerous counter attacks were thrown at them, and on one occasion, S/Sgt. Willis R. Cates, Co. G, 342nd Infantry displayed outstanding valor when he with no regard for his own safety, attempted to deploy his men to withstand the attack. He fell mortally wounded in doing so, and was posthumously decorated, but his valiant act inspired his men to reach its objective.

As the Black Hawks advanced out of the Mittle Isar Canal bridgehead, they found that they had two water barriers between them and their supporting vehicles. Casualties had to be carried back by litter bearers and rations failed to reach the men. Upon learning that one battalion had several casualties and all of the medics were wounded, T/5 Marion J. Foglesong, Co. B, 311th Med. Bn. volunteered to take the necessary plasma across the swift river and go forward to the infantry unit to attend the wounded until aid could come forward. Another Battalion received plasma by air drop. However, during the night the Isar Bridge was erected and the organic vehicles rejoined the companies on line.

Pfc. Alexander Dennis and Pfc. Irvin N. Rosen were advancing with their unit during the day when they overheard a captured German remark that there was a German General and his staff with several hundred other Wehrmach soldiers in a nearby town. Boldly walking into the German bivouac area, the two Black Hawks asked to see the General, and when this ruse proved successful, they demanded that the general surrender, which he did, along with 200 other members of a nearby unit. For them the war was over.

During the day the 341st Infantry moved forward and prepared to relieve the 343rd Infantry, which had been on line and going through a rough ordeal since Ingolstadt. As the 341st moved up, Pfc. Franklin D. Purrington, Fairhaven, Mass., and a member of Co. F, 341st Inf., was a member of a scout patrol which was ambushed at Ob. Rottenegg. Leaving protective cover, he alone crawled from cover to cover until able to fire into the enemy position. He aggressively cleared two buildings, and then captured seven enemy riflemen armed with grenades, rifles, panzerfaust and pistols. S/Sgt. John L. Jernigan also distinguished himself by knocking out a panzerfaust team firing on a recon. car.

As April came to an end, the 86th Division was advancing at a rapid pace right through the center of the National Redoubt area. The Third and Seventh Armies had almost overrun all of southern Germany during the latter part of the month. Munich, which was only eight miles south of the Black Hawk positions, fell to the 42nd Div., 45th Div., and 20th Armd. Div. by the end of the month. North of Munich the 14th Armd. Div., was advancing on the 86th Div.'s right flank. The only question in the minds of the Black Hawks as they broke through defense line after defense line was one simple question, "How much longer can it last?"

May 1 was indeed a dismal day to the Black Hawks, who were now advancing within sight of the Alp Mountains. A cold rain fell all day, a rain which drenched the infantrymen on line and slowed the advance of all elements. As the day dawned, the 342nd Infantry continued its advance on the Divisions left, and the 343rd Inf. was on the right. The 341st Inf. had moved up from Attenkirchen to Etting on the Mittle Isar Canal and was prepared to relieve the 343rd Inf. The 86th Cav. Rcn. Sqd. was used to mop up bypassed units of the Wehrmach and the 23rd Cav. Rcn. Sqd., temporarily attached to the 86th Div., was used to maintain contact with friendly units to each flank.

The 343rd Infantry, after leaving behind one Battalion to protect the tunnel under the canal, launched a coordinated attack on the the military installations, including a large Luftwaffe base, at Erding. Erding was also the hub of eight highways, and was evidently highly prized by its Nazi defenders, for the SS put up determined opposition in front of the city.

In the artillery preparation for the attack on Erding, the 911 FA Bn., fired 300 rounds, the 404 FA Bn. fired 100 rounds, and the 264th FA Bn. in general support fired 100 rounds of 240 mm. After this terrific barrage, the 343rd attacked at 0800 and by 1100 Erding was in Black Hawk hands. During the afternoon the 343rd Inf. captured the air field, including seven undamaged planes, stores of air-force equipment, and scores of Italian PW's, who served as service units at this base.

It is ironic that the Erding Air Base, captured by Black Hawk doughboys, is now, 8 years later, one of the chief installations for our Army of Occupation. As elements of the 343rd reached out and secured the air base, numerous other towns fell to the regiment, among them was Langenegersburg, Ammersdorf, Neukirchen, Kirchasch, Lengdorf, Isen, Walpertskirchen, and Buch. At 2300 on May 1, the 343rd Infantry was relieved by the 341st Regiment.

On May 1 the 342nd Infantry attacked near Berglern and captured Lamgenpresing, Tittenhofen, Pesenlern, Riding, Grucking, Sturzuhn, and Buchhorn during the morning with only light opposition. However, during the afternoon Co. G ran into heavy opposition near Langenpresing and lost 18 men. Co. I, 342nd Inf., came under heavy artillery fire at Maierklopfen directed by liaison plane. Two planes were shot down by small arms fire at the outskirts of the small Bavarian town of St. Wolfgang.

During the afternoon on May 1, the rain began to turn to snow and within an hour the countryside was blanketed



in white. The infantrymen, cold and hungry, continued the advance however, and Oberdorfen, Rappalskirchen, Landersdorff and St. Wolfgang fell to the 342nd Inf. in short order.

The snow which began falling during the afternoon picked up in intensity during the night and by 1700 a raging blizzard was striking through the Danube Valley. The snow and howling winds continued through the next day, when the weather began to moderate.

At 2200, General Melasky received an Intelligence Report from Corps Headquarters, reporting the bridge across the Inn River at Wasserburg still standing. The Division Commander at once ordered General Pope to reassemble his "Task Force Pope", which had been so effective at Ludenscheid, and strike out for the bridge.



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Black Hawk mobile units pass under a bombed-out railway bridge.**

Task Force Pope, consisting of the 3rd Battalion, 342nd Inf., reinforced by the 23rd Cavalry Group and the 807th Tank Bn., began its attack at 1730, and by midnight had reached the city of Haag, within artillery range of Wasserburg. The Task Force then set up a defense surrounding the town, where it remained for the night.

Meanwhile as the 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf., leaped out in front of the 86th Div. lines in an effort to seize Wasserburg and its bridge across the Inn, other Black Hawk units pushed forward during the night through the snow and sleet in an effort to keep up the rapid advance. The 332nd FA Bn. spent all night moving the heavy guns forward and at one point the entire Battalion had to be winched and pulled over muddy roads through the snow for several hundred yards. The 332nd FA batteries were set up at Gieslbach. The Division CP was now located at Erding and the 311th Medical Bn. set up the Clearing Station in Luftwaffe Barracks at the Erding Air Base.

On May 2 at 0500 Task Force Pope unleashed an attack aimed at the city of Wasserburg, which lay some ten miles ahead, and was known to be well fortified. Wasserburg was the headquarters of the German Sixth Army Group, and defended by numerous SS troops. The 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf., advanced rapidly against strong opposition in approaching the town. At Gabersee, a suburb of Wasserburg, the entire 3rd Bn. lined up side by side, and with every man firing his weapon together the entire outfit advanced across a wide open field to take the town. Upon entering Gabersee the battalion was subjected to heavy artillery fire from point blank range. Numerous casualties in the battalion was the result. The German Sixth Army Group headquarters were occupied and at 1600 "Task Force Pope" was inching slowly forward against very heavy opposition.

At 1200 on May 2, 86th Division Headquarters received

orders to halt all troops in place and to prepare to withdraw from line. Orders were immediately sent out to all units, but somehow the orders for Task Force Pope failed to reach that group until 1700. In the meantime the 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf. and its attached units making up the Task Force was edging grimly forward toward the center of Wasserburg, suffering moderate casualties, in an engagement that should not have taken place, had the halt order reached the Bn. Commander. At 1700 the Task Force finally received the halt orders and at once began to withdraw from its forward position to Haag. At Haag the Bn. joined the rest of the 342nd Regiment and Task Force Pope was dissolved.

Meantime during the morning of May 2, the 341st Infantry continued its attack with the 1st Bn. having just taken Sinkemp, the 2nd Bn., Alching, and the 3rd Bn., Burgarin. The order to halt was passed down through the chain of command at 1200.

The night of May 2 saw the entire 86th Division in reserve for the first time since entering the Bavarian campaign. However, the Black Hawks were not given long to regroup.

At 0235, May 3, General Melasky was notified by III Corps of the 3rd Army that the 86th Division was being attached to the XV Corps of General Patch's Seventh Army for the drive into Austria. The 25th Tank Bn., 95th Chemical Bn., 23rd Recon. Sqd., and two artillery battalions were detached from the 86th Division by the same order.

At 1140 the 86th Division was ordered to resume the offensive as part of the 7th Army. The XV Corps was ordered to continue its advance toward the southeast, with three divisions abreast and one division in reserve. The 3rd "Rock of Marne" Infantry Division was on the XV Corps right flank, the 42nd Infantry Division was in the center of the Corps front and the 86th Division was on the left.

To the 86th Division's left flank, the 14th Armored Division, now in the III Corps, was to advance along with the 86th Div. In XV Corps reserve was the 20th Armored Division, which was ordered to follow in close support of the 86th Division. The initial corps objective was Salzburg, Austria, but the 86th Division units were ordered to attack and seize river crossings over the Alz and Salzach Rivers and protect the north flank of the XV Corps. The Black Hawks were ordered to continue their drive "until gas ran out or an impassable river was reached. To the GI's the battle cry was "On to Austria and Fraternizing".

The Black Hawk attack got underway at 1300 with the 341st Infantry leading the offensive over the Inn River bridgehead, followed by the 342nd Inf., who were to fan out to the right after crossing the Inn River. The 343rd Inf. was in Corps reserve, near Krailburg.

The 341st Infantry passed through the 14th Armored Division lines at 1500 and the Black Hawks were on their way again. The Division was motorized for this advance and met only token resistance from the remnants of the once powerful Wehrmach units. The 342nd Infantry seized the Tittmoning bridge over the Salzach River intact, when Major Frank Holt, Regimental S-2 and a patrol of 14 captured a demolition team preparing to blow the bridge. Nearby Sgt. Morris, Battery A, 332nd FA Bn. captured a plane and pilot which landed near his position.

All of the Black Hawk units were on the move during the night of May 3 as the 86th Division raced forward meeting only light resistance. The end of the war was in sight, but how soon, no one knew. There was still 30 German Divisions and a couple hundred miles between the Black Hawks and the Russian Army.

On May 4 Black Hawk units raced forward and enlarged the Tittmoning bridgehead and the 341st Inf. secured an-

other bridgehead at Burghausen when ordered by XV Corps to halt and await developments. This was at 0900. At 1700 the advance was ordered to continue and the Black Hawks were happy to know they were now in Austria and fraternizing was now legal.

While the infantry, artillery, and engineers were doing most of the mud sogging and fighting, the tremendous effort put forth by the Black Hawks supporting units during the combat phase cannot be overlooked, for the 86th Division doughboys were backed up by as efficient quartermaster, ordnance and transport units as could be found anywhere.

Take the 86th Quartermaster Company, commanded by Lt. Thomas H. Martinez, Trinidad, Colo., as an example. The 86th QM Co. traveled more than 275,000 miles, hauling 4,560,000 pounds of food, 4,800,000 pounds of gas and lubricants, besides transporting over 30,000 PW's back to PW cages.

In addition our QM Company often transported the front line troops in moving from one area to another as well as bring thousands of pounds of supplies for replacement forward.

After the war was over and the 86th Division was redeployed to the Pacific, a book was published entitled "Fighting Divisions", by The Infantry Journal Press, and prepared by Chief Warrant Officer E. J. Kahn, Jr., and T/Sgt. Henry McLemore. "Fighting Divisions" in its history of the 86th Division refers to the Black Hawks as the last division on line in World War II. This was a gross error on the part of the publishers of that book, as archives of the US Army's Adjutant General Department shows that no less than five other divisions entered combat after the 86th Division, and one other division, in the Pacific saw no combat at all.

The order of entry into combat of the last nine divisions to arrive on the western front was as follows:

|                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| March 9—65th Division  | April 10—13th Armd. Div.   |
| March 12—71st Division | April 24—20th Armd. Div.   |
| March 12—89th Division | May 5—16th Armd. Div.      |
| March 27—86th Division | No Combat—13th Airb. Div.  |
| March 28—97th Division | No Combat (Pac.) 98th Div. |

This official army record should disprove this error which was widely used by the press.

Early on May 5 Division headquarters were moved up from Purten (Aschou) to Neu Oberndorf. At the same time the 787th Tank Bn. was attached to the Division and the 311th Medical Bn. set up the clearing station in a monastery.

The 341st Infantry Regiment moved forward to Moosdorf. Major Everett E. Champlin was placed in charge of the Regimental PW cage, which contained over 15,000 PW's captured in the past three days.

The 342nd Inf. set up its CP at Seeham at 1150, where German Army General Von Grieffenberg surrendered to Col. Pete Heffner, regimental CO. The battalions then occupied the adjoining small towns.

The 343rd Infantry was located at Gundertshausen.

Except for limited patrolling and the endless task of guarding German PW's the war in Europe for the Black Hawks was at an end. The 86th Division went into billets in the beautiful Austrian countryside and licked its wounds. V-E Day came at 0001, May 9, 1945, and at last the Black Hawks could relax, although they one and all knew that there was another big job ahead, the War with Japan.

On the second day of its drive into Austria, the Black Hawk Division captured the town of Mattsee, and found that Jeno Szollosi, Nazi prime minister of Hungary, had been hiding out there for several months. He was immediately placed under guard by the 86th Division.



Prime Minister Szollosi, Nazi successor to Admiral Horthy, after Admiral Hortley had been interned in Germany following a "rug chewing" session with der fuhrer the previous year, was attended by a representative of the German legation and a staff of seven officers, 32 enlisted men, and nine civilians. In addition relatives of Szollosi and his staff, numbering 23 women, girls and children, were also with him.

The Prime Minister and his party had left Budapest when the Russians invaded Hungary. They were taken to Mattsee under Gestapo guard, and told that it was only a temporary stop. The Gestapo left on May 4, as the Black Hawks approached.

The Hungarian minister was captured, along with the Crown Jewels of his nation, by Anti-Tank Company, 342 Infantry, which was commanded by Capt. R. L. Green, Nashville, Tenn.

It was near the town of Tittmoning, Austria, that the Black Hawks found one German general who believed that if you must surrender, why not surrender in comfort?

Major General Joseph Kubler, former commanding general of the German First Mountain Division, was enroute from his home in Ulm to take over the command of the First German ski division in Czechoslovakia when he was captured by advancing 86th Division troops along the Austrian frontier. Not wishing to go through the inconveniences of the PW cage and the PW evacuation without some comforts, the general took with him two orderlies, his C and R car, and plenty of gas after surrendering to the Black Hawk infantrymen. He willingly agreed to drive in his own car to the division CP with the 86th Div. adjutant general, Lt. Col. Charles J. Perry, who happened by, and then still with orderlies and the C and R car, drove himself, with an 86th Div. escort, to be evacuated.

As the war in Europe came to an end, the Black Hawks could look back and make a resume of their activities on the western front.

Although in actual combat with the enemy for a period of only 42 days, the 86th Division had marked up a enviable record. The highlights of the 86th Division combat record follows:

1. The 86th Division was the very first allied division to make a crossing of the Danube River.
2. The 86th Division captured some 53,354 Germans, who were sent to various Prisoner of War cages.
3. The Black Hawks conquered over 220 miles of enemy territory in the Ruhr Pocket and in Bavaria and Austria.
4. The division liberated over 200,000 allied prisoners of war, including over 110,000 in one PW camp near Moosburg.
5. The Black Hawks made several important river crossings, with amphibious assaults of the Danube, Bigge, Altmuhl, Isar, Mittel-Isar, Inn, and Salzach.
6. Served in actual combat with four different American armies. (The only US Division to set this record on the western front). These were the First, Third, Seventh, and Fifteenth Armies.
7. Later the Black Hawks became the first division to serve in both theaters of operations and only one other division actually served in the Pacific after European duty.
8. The division had served in three distinct phases of the European War. These could be classified as follows:  
(a) The Watch on the Rhine, (b) The closing of the Ruhr Pocket, and (c) The defeat of the National Redoubt and Nazi Germany.

The combat phase will never be forgotten by the Black Hawks. During this period some rifle companies suffered as high as 50 per cent in casualties.

V-E Day was a day of sober celebration for the Black Hawk Infantrymen. Although they were one and all happy to see the war come to an end, the terrific pace and gruesome battles of the past six weeks left the men weary, so weary that instead of shouting and whooping-it-up as Hollywood always likes to depict the end of a battle, the Black Hawks simply took a deep sigh of relief, and rested in their billets. Some few journeyed over to Berchtesgaden, to view Hitler's favorite scene, but generally speaking the doughboys hung around their unit's concentration area, awaiting to see what was next on the agenda.

On the night of May 9, orders were received from higher echelon that all blackout restrictions had been lifted. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to once again turn a light on without wondering when a snipers shot would crash into your room. The song, "When The Lights Come On Again All Over The World" had added meaning to the Black Hawks.

The beautiful Austrian countryside was greatly appreciated by the battle wary Black Hawks. Crystal clear mountain lakes, in the very shadow of the Alps, was soon used for boating and fishing by the outdoor minded doughs. But as usual, the 86th Division was not long to stay in one place.

On April 14 the Black Hawks were relieved of their brief period of occupation duty in Austria by the 20th Armored Division, and bid the beautiful Austrian countryside goodbye. Boarding long truck convoys, the Black Hawks moved in a day long movement some 200 or more miles all the way across Bavaria, through Salzburg Munich, Augsburg, Donauworth, Heilbronn, and Heidelberg to Mannheim, Germany, located on the banks of the Rhine.



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Black Hawks line the deck of the transport bringing them home from Europe.**

The 86th Division arrived at Mannheim on April 15, and the first edition of the Stars and Stripes delivered carried a front page story on the redeployment program, and lo and behold, there it was—just what everyone thought—the 86th Division was to be redeployed to the Pacific theatre.

At first the great fear of the Black Hawks was that the Division would be sent direct from the ETO to the Pacific, but this fear was soon overcome when the announcement was made that the Black Hawks would be taken through the states and given 30-day furloughs at home. Excitement ran high among the men as they awaited orders to debark for the states. A lucky few received three-day passes to Paris, Lyon or Metz, but the great majority of the Black Hawks were content with nearby Heidelberg, the only pass town the division had during its entire stay in Europe. Conducted tours were well attended by the Black Hawks through the old university city.

On May 30, the Black Hawks were at last on their way, loading aboard our old friends the 40 and 8 cars at Mannheim. The Division was taken by rail through Strasbourg, Nancy, past the Chateau-Thierry battle field of World War I, and through Paris, the city of light, to Yvetot. At Yvetot the Division unloaded from the trains and was trucked out to Camp Old Gold, which was now a redeployment center. The various units re-occupied the same tents that they had used when processed here three months previously. The area now was a huge processing center operated by the 89th Division through which all Pacific-bound units were to pass.

On June 6, the entire Division was moved to Le Havre where the various units boarded ship for the trip back to the states. In the meantime all men of the Division with 85 or more points and 38 years of age or older were transferred to the 63rd Division. The 343rd Infantry Regiment

boarded the transport, General Parker; the 342nd Infantry boarded the General Brooke, and the 341st Infantry returned on General Bliss, and other units on the Marine Fox. The ships sailed out of Le Havre the same day, and another ocean trip for the Black Hawks was underway.

The return trip from the ETO was much more pleasant than the trip over, was to the GI's. The ships took a southern course and many of the men slept on the deck at night, to escape the stuffy heat in the holes of the ship. During the day the men gathered on deck and compared their souvenirs of the war.

Late in the evening of June 17, the four ships bringing the 86th Division home from war slipped past Long Island and anchored in the narrows off the Staten Island shore, opposite Coney Island. As Winston Churchill once said, we were so near but yet so far. Residents of Staten Island came down to the waters edge and shouted greetings out to the men on board. It was good to be back in America again.

Hardly anyone on board the ship slept that night. Everyone was waiting for the next morning, when the boat would pull into dock at New York and the Black Hawks could put foot on American soil once again. But with all the excitement, no one, with the possible exception of the commanders, had the least idea of the welcome they would receive.

A thick fog covered lower New York Bay at 7 a.m. when the three transports, the Bliss, Parker and Brooke, pulled up anchors after waiting for dawn to break, and started moving up the harbor. As the transports and the accompanying vessels picked up speed they came abreast of the boat containing the WAC band. The roar from the tightly packed deck could be heard, it was said, for miles inland. The haze that covered the bay lifted as the vessels passed the Statue of Liberty.



The old lady never looked grander. As the New York skyline came into view, huge signs could be picked out reading "Welcome Home". As the ships slowly moved upstream in the Hudson River to westside New York docks, the nations largest city gave the Black Hawks a typical welcome, such as they reserve for special occasions. Hundreds of boats kept a constant tooting of their horns, and factory whistles blasted while employees were dismissed to line the banks of the Hudson to welcome the first combat division to return from Europe.

The ships themselves were well decorated for the occasion. Atop the General Brooke was a huge banner, "ETO to Tokio". As the ships pulled into the dock, Secretary of the Army Patterson climbed aboard the Parker to extend a welcome to General Melasky, while the press service photographers flashed their cameras. After a brief ceremony in which the Division was hailed as the first combat division to return from the ETO, individual soldiers from the CG down to the lowest buck private came in for their share of attention, as thousands of newspaper men from all over the country interviewed the Black Hawks for their home town papers. Every newspaper in the country, and all of the magazines devoted pages during the next few issues to the 86th Division. The Black Hawks had indeed come into their own.

As the men unloaded from the ship, they boarded a ferry which took them to New Jersey, where coach trains rushed them to Camp Kilmer. There they were given a meal fit for a king, served to them by German PW's. At Kilmer our Division CG, General Melasky, was quoted by The New York Times as saying, "We're here now, but there is no getting away from it, we're the guinea pigs. They're taking wonderful care of these youngsters. When the boys get together for the Pacific battle, I only hope that I'll be with them once again". The feeling was mutual. An en-

listed man said: "We hope so, too. He's a good Joe". No better compliment could be paid to a Commanding general.\*

Within 24 hours after arriving at Camp Kilmer, the Black Hawks were being rushed to various camps throughout the United States, from which they would be furloughed for 30 days, with instructions to report back to the new division camp, Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, on July 22. The men left Camp Kilmer with the words of General Melasky echoing in their ears, the General bid them farewell with this message, "Go home to your loved ones, and have a good time".

The shortest 30 days in their lives . . . that is the way the Black Hawks described their furloughs as they began reporting back to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, (in the beautiful Cookson Hills) in late July, 1945. The furloughs were wonderful, and the entire division reported back with morale at its highest peak. Newspapers all over the country were praising the spirit of the 86th Division as they came back to army life to prepare for the tremendous task ahead.

A gigantic training program was planned, which called for eight weeks of preparation for Pacific type fighting. The chief reason the 86th Div. was selected as the first division to be redeployed, according to Secretary of War Patterson, was because of the extensive amphibious training the division had undergone off the California coast the previous winter. Now the Black Hawks were scheduled to learn new tricks with flame throwers and demolition charges which can blast the Japs out of caves. Maps of the Orient were

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\*Maj. Gen. Harris M. Melasky, popular former CG of the 86th Division, is now retired and residing in Atlanta, Georgia. He is still heart and soul with the Black Hawks. General Gjelsteen, former artillery commander of the 86th Divarty, is now Commanding General of Fort Devers Massachusetts. Colonel Jones, former Chief of Staff, now resides in Auburn, Ala., and Col. George Bloomquist, CO of the 343rd Inf., now resides in Carmel, Calif. Col. Joe Hinton, who succeeded Col. Bloomquist as CO of the 343rd Inf. now resides in Cardinal, Va.

tacked up with the slogan, ETO to Tokyo, and On to Tokyo! blazing everywhere.

General Alexander Patch, who was Commanding General of the Seventh Army in Europe at the time the Black Hawks fought with it, and at this time CG of the Fourth Army in the states, paid a visit to the Black Hawks on August 3, and praised the troops for their discipline and fine morale. He called the 86th Division a source of pride for every American and stated that no doubt the Black Hawks would be the first division to see combat action in the Pacific after being redeployed from Europe. A full division review was held for General Patch as he departed Camp Gruber.\*

The eight-week training program for the Black Hawks was scheduled to commence after a gigantic 86th Division Appreciation Day, planned by higher army authorities and the citizens of Muskogee, Oklahoma. Besides Secretary Patterson, General Patch, and other officials of the War Department, many governmental officials including Governor Robert Kerr, of Oklahoma, was scheduled to pay eulogy to the Black Hawk Division. A full day of activities was scheduled for August 9, but as events later turned out, the event was never held.

As brief as it was, the stay of the 86th Division at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, was an enjoyable occasion to the men of the 86th. The cities of Muskogee and Tulsa really put out the welcome mat for the Black Hawks, and handed them the key to their respective cities. When at last the division was ordered to move to the coast, General Melasky sent an open letter to the people of Oklahoma for the fine hospitality showered on the Black Hawks.

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\*Immediately after the Black Hawk Division was returned from Europe, Brig. Gen. Van Whyte Pope, assistant Division CO, was transferred to the Inspector Generals Office, and Brig. Gen. Ridgel Gaither, replaced him as assistant Division Commander.

On August 7, shortly after the first atomic bomb blast at Hiroshima, the 86th Division was ordered to proceed immediately for the west coast. The Division staff worked far into the night making rush preparation for the move of the division. For the individual riflemen who had been working two weeks to get the kosmoline out of his rifle barrel, it meant more kosmoline and halazone tablets.

Twenty-seven troop trains (13 pullmans, 2 kitchens, and one baggage car to each train) started to move the 86th Division out of Camp Gruber on August 7. Some units took the northern route through Colorado, while others went by the T & P and Southern Pacific through El Paso and Phoenix. Two and three days later the entire Division was assembled at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation at Camp Stoneman, near Pittsburg, Calif.

It was while at Camp Stoneman that the one blot on the record of the 86th Division took place. A number of GI's protested to their Congressman and through the press, the fact that the division was being sent overseas, when actually the war was practically at an end. The War Department answered that the unusual condition of affairs in Japan made it urgent that General MacArthur have sufficient combat troops available for any eventuality. At first the War Department announced that MacArthur was being sent at once, six divisions from the ETO, but this figure was finally reduced to only two divisions, the 86th Division and the 97th Division. Although the morale of the division had dropped immeasurably since the division left Camp Gruber, the men accepted their fate as good soldiers and answered the call of their "uncle".

The 86th Division was at Camp Stoneman only a few days, during which time the entire outfit was issued tropical clothing and received what inoculations that were necessary, and once again the division was on the move.

## GOLDEN GATE IN '48

San Francisco Bay had its usual appearance on the morning of August 19, 1945, when first elements of the Black Hawk Division began the painful task of boarding their troop transports to again going overseas.

The Division began moving out of Camp Stoneman by truck and rail at dawn on August 19. Coming down the beautiful golden Sacramento River Valley thru Pittsburg, Calif., to Oakland and across to San Francisco, the Golden Gate City appeared very little different than it had almost a year before when it was a popular furlough and weekend pass town for Black Hawk troops then stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo, 200 miles south. The heavy fog laid over the Golden Gate Bridge like a sheet, hiding the towers from view. The Coit Tower keeping its vigil over the bay area from atop Nob Hill, and many Black Hawks remembered the gay weekend passes spent in Frisco, and the hours Atop the Mark, and not to mention the splendid seafood dinners at Joe DiMaggio's on the Fisherman's Wharf.

Those days were far away, every Black Hawk knew it.

Immediately ahead was another hot, sweaty, dispicable troopship ride, this time to God only knew where. Although many Black Hawks were generally speaking "down in the mouth" from the thought of having to again go overseas after having served well and faithfully in the ETO, spirits were high, as the 86th Division was well trained and disciplined and knew that there was still a job ahead. The dark period in Black Hawk history, the days at Camp Stoneman, was over. The 86th Division was preparing to debark for whatever duty General MacArthur saw fit to assign it.

Many of the Black Hawk troops boarded the USS General Hugh Rodman, which was the largest of the army transport ships yet used to transport them on their various sea

trips. But conditions on the Rodman was little different from any of the others. It was the same crowded condition, with long chow lines, incessant KP duty for the underprivileged (namely the enlisted men), constant blaring by the ships PA system (Now hear this, now hear this, all ships personnel report to the fan tail and heave to), salt water showers, no soap, your buddy getting sea sick and different from the Navy's term, actually "heaving to" all over your bunk and only clean pair of khakies.

The USS Rodman, and the other transports taking the Black Hawks over to the Southwest Pacific, cleared Frisco on August 19 and 20, 1945. As the tugs pushed the transports slowly from their berth, the Black Hawks passed within a few yards of Alcatraz, the island penitentiary in the entrance to San Francisco Bay. Many wondered how many of the fellows behind those bleak walls would have been glad to have traded places with the infantrymen outward bound from Frisco. There was little to complain about after all.

Within a few minutes the transports were passing under the bulky towering Golden Gate Bridge, and as they sailed out into the fogbound Pacific echoed a familiar slogan, that men of the 86th Division would hear over and over during the next year.

"Golden Gate in '48".

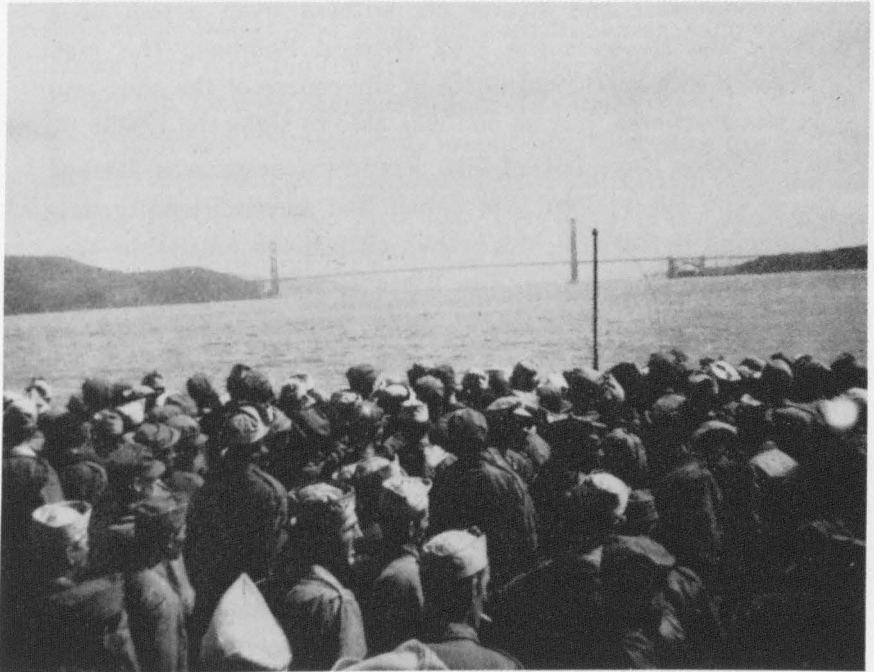
That was indeed, the thought of many.

The first few days out of San Francisco the Pacific Ocean was just a choppy mass of water, not much different from the Great Lakes, which was so familiar to Black Hawks from Michigan, Chicago, and northern Ohio, but about the fifth day out from Frisco, the water became so smooth that it was impossible to believe that the ship was a couple of thousand miles out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is not exaggerating one bit to say the water was



as smooth as a mirror. There was never a ripple on the surface, and never a breath of air moving, but the good ship Rodman true to its Navy tradition, sailed on and on and on.

The smoothness and calmness as the troopship continued on its journey toward the south seas, only added to the monotony of the Black Hawks in the holds and on the decks. About the eighth day out of port flying fish began to make their appearances, and occasionally a shark or a whale would be sighted by the soldiers on deck. Except for these interludes, life for the GI's was uninteresting. The ship's captain placed a large National Geographic map of the entire Pacific Ocean on the forward deck, and each morning he charted the route covered by the ship the previous



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**The Black Hawks watch Golden Gate fade into the mist.**

day on the map. It must be remembered that the Black Hawks did not know of their destination, and this map was a popular gathering spot and did the rumors fly. "Where are we going to?", was a popular question, the rumors took over from there. New Guinea, Pelilue, Guam, Indo-China, Formosa, Japan, Okinawa, and sometimes a place called the Philippines was mentioned. Outside of the map, flying fishes, and an occasional boxing exhibition on the aft-hold, all that the Black Hawks could do was anxiously count the long, dreary, monotonous days aboard ship. Only those who have put in several weeks aboard an army troopship can appreciate its dreariness. The days slowly went by, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and never a sign of another ship, airplane, or any other form of human life, only the sea. On the 12th day an empty tanker passes our ship on the starboard side and steams on, without even a toot of a horn, and on sails the USS General Rodman. The map shows a tiny speck just north of the course of the ship, and it was Eniwetok, but no one was able to sight the island.

Fifteen days out of San Francisco news was flashed over the PA system that Japan had unconditionally surrendered to General MacArthur aboard the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Harbor. The Black Hawks were happy that the war was at an end, but there was only mild rejoicing aboard the ship as it sailed on with the thousands of infantrymen who had fought in the European War. The dough-boys were being shipped on to MacArthur's command, much like the pawns in a chess game.

Three more days with full steam ahead, and "Land Ho", the Black Hawks crowded the rail of the ship for their first glimpse of land since leaving San Francisco 18 days before. The USS Rodman was slowly approaching the Ulithi Atoll, a coral reef situated far down in the Southwest Pacific, only 10 degrees from the Equator. In approach-

ing the atoll, which was circular in shape, it could be readily seen, that a huge Naval base was in operation. Over one hundred Naval vessels, from mine sweepers to aircraft carriers were being serviced at the base. The reef itself, was only a few feet above the level of the ocean, but it was almost impossible to believe that such a huge Naval establishment could be built on such a small atoll.

The first mail since Frisco was put off at Ulithi and started back on the long journey home. After a brief refueling of the ship, the USS Rodman joined eight other ships, including the transports carrying the remainder of the 86th Division, and formed a nine-ship convoy which would remain intact the remainder of the journey. Although the Japs had just signed a peace treaty, these were still dangerous waters and some die-hard Japanese submarine crews were infesting the area. Only a few days prior to this a Jap sub sank an American aircraft carrier, in this very same area with a tremendous loss of life. Therefore the old days of alert such as remembered from the earlier crossing of the North Atlantic returned. The Navy crew was on constant alert but the remainder of the journey passed without any of the tension such as gripped the convoy carrying the Black Hawk Division into the English Channel the previous winter.

On August 27, the Admiral Rodman crossed the International Date Line, and a day on the calendar was skipped. The Navy initiated all members of the Black Hawk Division who had not previously crossed the date line into the "Domain of the Golden Dragon".

This society is reserved only for those sailors, soldiers, and marines who cross the International Date Line. A beautifully engraved certificate was presented to each Black Hawk aboard, upon the payment of 50 cents (nice racket these gobs that worked on these troopships had) in which

the Golden Dragon commanded all money lenders, wine sellers, cabaret owners and all other subjects to show honor and respect to all his wishes whenever he may enter the realm of the Golden Dragon in the Far East." This was a lot of poppycock but it was something to break the monotony on the ship after days sailing the ocean blue. The USS Rodman crossed the International Date Line in latitude 16 degrees, longitude 180 degrees, for those with a nautical mind.

On September 9, as the morning mist and haze began to clear away, lo! and behold! there were islands all around the convoy, big islands, little islands, and some just small reefs with waves breaking over their surface. The map, still on the fore deck, showed the ship passing through the Suribao Strait, where a major Naval battle had been fought earlier in the war and the Japanese Fleet had been routed in defeat. The island of Leyte was on the left and Samar on the right. At this time it was announced that the Philippines was definitely the destination and future home of the 86th Division.

Quickly the holds of the ship emptied and Black Hawks lined the decks, as the ship sailed along the Leyte coast, a coast that was fringed with coconut trees and greatly resembled the tropical islands depicted in the Dorothy Lamour movies, which were so popular at the time. The ships in the convoy dropped anchor in mid-afternoon in the harbor of Tacabolan, Leyte, where a major battle had been fought during the invasion of the Philippines the previous fall. Many signs of the battle were still visible. The beach, south of town, lined with wrecked invasion craft. The tops of the palms and coconuts were missing, having been splintered by shell fire. The provincial capital in the town of Tacloban was badly pock marked by shell fire and the whole city showed the effects of war.

The convoy anchored several hundred yards out in Tacaloban harbor, but it wasn't long until the word must have spread into the town, for several scores of natives with outrigger canoes, the common mode of travel for the natives of the south sea islands, began to gather around the ships sides. The natives of these islands (Leyte and Samar) were quite a contrast to the Black Hawks who were now getting to be quite the world travelers. The 86th known as the "kid division" was indeed seeing the sights of the earth, and the old adage, "Join the Navy and see the world" could have been easily changed to "Join the Black Hawks and see ALL the world." The 86th Division in a period of nine months had been on three continents, located in seven countries with a few elements have served in nine countries, served actively in three theatres of operation and traveled through 17 of the earth's 24 time zones. About the only thing left, it seemed, was a trip home over the Trans-Siberian Railroad through Russia.

The Filipinas (native spelling of the Philippines) paddled out to the USS Admiral Rodman in their outriggers with cargos of souvenirs to barter to the newly arrived soldiers from the states. The souvenirs consisted chiefly of grass skirts, carved shoes, handmade pocket knives, and numerous knick-nacks which needless to say the natives asked a ridiculous price for. The Black Hawks were veterans at dealing with foreign natives bent on cashing in on the American dollar, so the trading was not as brisk as the Filipinos might have desired.

For two days the ships holding the Black Hawk Division laid at anchor in Tacaloban, Leyte, harbor. No plans had been made for the arrival of the redeployed Black Hawk Division from Europe, so the ships remained, while awaiting orders on what to do with the "pawns."

Finally on September 11, the ships sailed back out through the Suribao Straits, between Leyte and Samar

and along the shore of the large island of Luzon, the main island in the Philippine Archipelago. After a night and day cruise amidst the most beautiful islands in the world, the ship pulled into a little known port on the southwest coast of Luzon, some 60 miles south of Manila.

Batangas, a city of some 30,000 population and cobra shipping point of pre war days, was our final destination after the end of a 24-day journey across the broad, blue expanses of the Pacific Ocean.

At 0900 on the morning of September 11, 1945, the first Black Hawk troops began to unload on the sandy beaches near Batangas. It was a welcome event for the sea-weary Black Hawks to again plant foot on good old Mother Earth after those 24 hectic days aboard the Admiral Rodman and its sister ships. Of course, the natives were on hand again, not to greet the Americans or welcome them to their islands, but to sell them bananas, 4 for each peso (50 cents U S money).

Immediately the Black Hawks boarded trucks which took them to the area assigned for their occupancy. It turned out that again the Western Pacific Command had evidently not been aware of the coming of the 86th Division and no area was prepared for the troops. So each company, and in some cases a Battalion, was assigned an area about four acres in size. This was the dry season in the islands and it so happened that many of the companies were established in dried up rice paddies. About two weeks later the rainy season set in and it was not uncommon for GI's to awaken in the middle of the night and find water up on their cots where the rainwater had caught in the paddies when someone had overlooked locating a drain in the dike surrounding the particular rice paddy in which the tent city was located. It is indeed a strange feeling to live in a flooded rice paddy but many Black Hawks did.



The 86th Division was stationed at Batangas for one month, and it was a trying period, with the monsoons turning everything to mud. When it rains in the tropics, just like Morton's salt, it pours. Tents were floored, side walks were built and mess halls were slowly erected, but the incessant mud was always there. Often division soldiers would work two or three days during a dry period building a baseball diamond. The next morning the monsoons would blow back in off the South China Sea and by night fall the natives would be planting rice shoots all over the diamond. It was one of their best rice paddies.

Batangas served as the Division home for one month and a few days. On October 14 and 15, the Black Hawk Division Headquarters received orders to relieve the 38th



Photograph by Official U.S. Army Signal Corps

**Combat training continued in the Philippine Islands.**

"Cyclone" Infantry Division in their position near Manila. The 38th Division, known as the Avengers of Bataan, was one of the old respected fighting outfits of the Pacific War, and was occupying positions east and north of Manila, where they had been protecting the city and American property from infrequent raids by Japanese stragglers that were still fighting from the hills, not knowing the war was over.

## PEARL OF THE ORIENT

The 38th Division area was near Marikina, a small town ten miles east of Manila on the Pasig River, not far from Wawa Dam, where the 38th Division had fought one of the bitterest battles of the Pacific War. The 38th Division, an Indiana-Kentucky National Guard outfit, was being shipped back to the states, and the 86th Division received into their ranks all members of the 38th Division with less than 65 discharge points. At the same time all high point men of the 86th Division was transferred into the Cyclone Division for shipment home. The Black Hawks lost many of its non-coms who had been with the 86th since the days of Livingston and Howze. These men had been the back bone of the Division, but still there were many who were left that lived up to the Black Hawk tradition, and the hundreds of lower point men received from the 38th Division blended into the 86th in a splendid fashion and within a very few days these former 38th Division soldiers were Black Hawks in every manner.

The newly occupied area near Manila was much more adequate than the area left behind at Batangas. Ball fields, volleyball courts, and basketball courts were rushed to completion and a full athletic program was carried out during the spare time of the troops.

In late October the 86th Division was assigned the mission of training and equipping the newly organized Philippine Army, which was then being organized for the republic which was due to receive its Independence the following July. The Division was reorganized along battle lines and a period of retraining set in. High morale, which was absent from many outfits at this period, was noted in the 86th Division and the unit again reached the peak in morale, which was so much responsible for its success in the European Theatre.

Manila, often called the Pearl of the Orient, was only 10 miles from the Division Camp, and the many activities held in that city during the winter of 1945-46 attracted the interest of the Black Hawk soldier.

The center of activities was Rizal Stadium, a baseball park of almost major league proportions. A highlight of the winter was the arrival of the National League All-Star team under the direction of Red Barrett, a 20-game winner in the major leagues. An All-Star team was organized to play the visiting major leaguers, and several Black Hawk members made the team. Pfc. Kirby Higbe, Service Company, 342nd Infantry, native of Columbia, S. C., and a star pitcher with the Brooklyn Dodgers before the war, later with the Pittsburg Pirates, was named to the team. Another pitching mate was Jim Hearn, Atlanta, Ga., and now a member of the New York Giants.

Another center of activities in Manila was the modern Roosevelt Club, popular USO center, which was opened in November, 1945. In the Division area a huge outdoor theatre was erected and many visiting USO troupes staged shows before large crowds of GI's. Company Clubs were established where drinks were served for those desiring them which prevented the consumption of any of the civilian liquors, which were often poisonous.

A vast Educational program was commenced and many soldiers added to their schooling by attending Armed Forces Institutes classes which were held in the area.

Despite the many recreational and educational opportunities which were available, the Black Hawk soldiers never were permitted to forget their main purpose in the army, foot soldiers. Regular infantry training was carried out, and the artillery units continued to keep their accuracy, for very frequently Black Hawks were called out to protect outlying Philippine villages from attacks by Japanese units who were still fighting months after the surrender.

With the lights on all over the world, and peace being heralded everywhere, it was a hard and bitter chore for the Black Hawk troops to have to face these die-hard Japanese stragglers who were intent on raiding Filipino villages for food and weapons, and occasionally attacking American installations throughout the islands. The Black Hawk Division was maintained as the only combat outfit in the entire islands for over a year and a half after the war ended and regularly they were called to isolated areas to quite disturbances caused by Japs or sometimes Huks, the Philippine communist groups which were then on the rise in the islands.

While all was not peace and quiet for the so called "occupation of the islands, there was some bright spots. One of these was the Division Rest Camp, which was established on the beach, opposite the South China Sea near Lake Taal. Taal was a volcanic lake, with an active volcano in its center. However it only erupted once during the stay of the Black Hawk Division in the islands. The Taal Rest Camp was operated as a seashore resort for the Division, and the troops were given opportunities to visit it at regular intervals. The Taal resort had a wonderful beach in a most pictorial setting, with the palm trees lining the beach, the nipa huts in the background, mountains and a volcano in the distance. The army also had a deep sea fishing boat available and many Black Hawks from the prairie states had their only adventure as deep sea fishermen here—and they liked it.

During the winter of 1945-46, many changes took place in the 86th Division. Monthly, the point system, which was so important to the veteran soldiers, was lowered, and each month more of the old timers were sent back to the states for discharge. First the 80 point men, then the 70, 65 point men, etc., were sent home and gradually the 86th lost the men whom had worked, trained, fought and lived together through the entire war. To fill the gaps in the division

and maintain it as an efficient combat unit, the division was constantly receiving replacements fresh from the states, and in December, all of the low point men of the 96th ("Dead-eye") Division were transferred into the ranks of the Black Hawk Division. These men had served with the 96th Division on Okinawa and Mindoro.

The rapid rate of turnover in the Black Hawk Division reached from the lowest private to the very top.

On Thursday, December 13, 1945, the Black Hawk Division in impressive farewell ceremonies paid tribute to its beloved Division Commander, Major General Harris M. Melasky, on his departure to the United States for medical treatment on direct orders from the War Department. The Black Hawk chief for three years was leaving the command of which he had always been most proud.

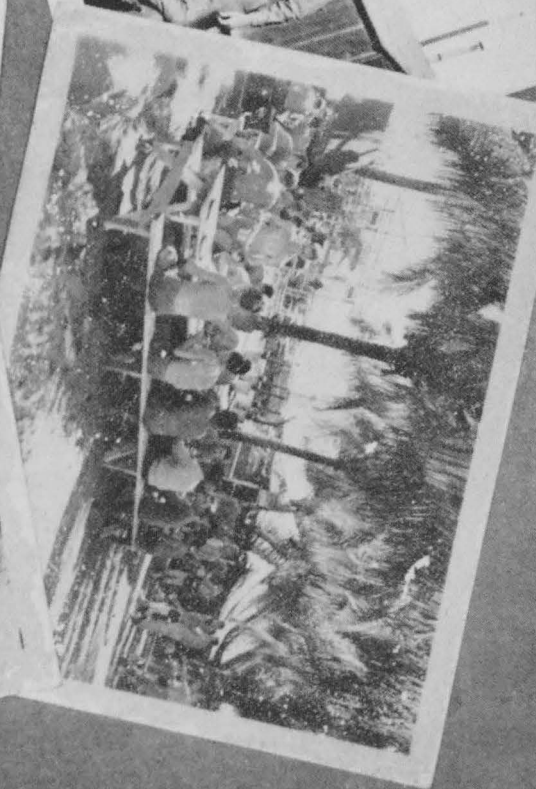
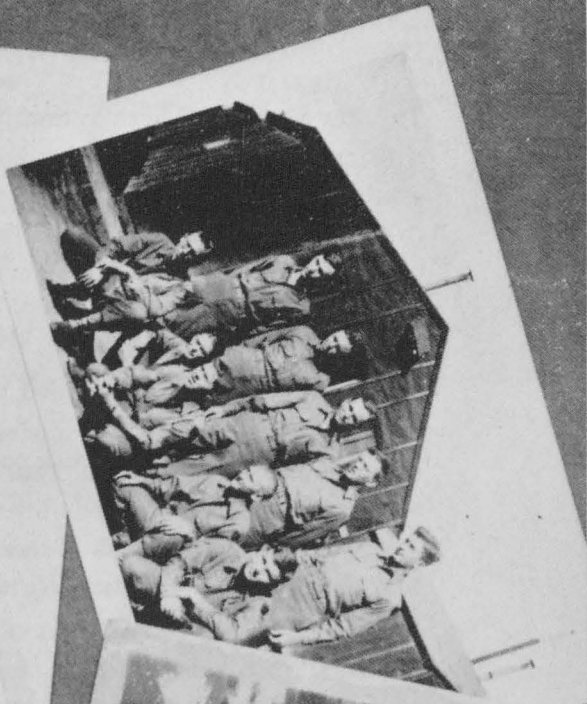
On his last tour of inspection, the Division paid its respects to the General when mass formations of all units greeted him in their respective areas. The event was climaxed by formal ceremonies at the Marikina camp entrance when with a 13-gun salute and the Division Band playing of "Auld Lang Syne," General Melasky was given a bon voyage.

The General had assumed command of the 86th Division shortly after its reactivation at Camp Howze and had directed the destiny of its men in training and combat operations. Under his leadership the components of more than two divisions were trained and sent overseas by the 86th.

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**PHOTOS ON OPPOSITE PAGE**—Lower left, a company street in the Marikina camp, December, 1945; Lower right, Black Hawks at a coke bar at the Taal Rest Camp; Upper left, an infantry squad is shown at Camp San Luis Obispo. Pictured in bottom row, left to right, Pfc. Joe Banasiak, Pfc. James Posey, Sgt. Arthur Resse, Pvt. William Wallace, Pfc. William Macey. Upper row, left to right, Pfc. Richard A. Briggs, Pfc. Robert Secon, Pfc. Junior Robinson, Pfc. William Hamilton, and Pfc. John Krasko; Upper right photo is the mess area in the Taal Rest Camp, erected by the 311th Engineers. Photos by the author.





The Division itself was committed to combat and served well and faithfully under his command, and then had re-established itself as a division with a fighting reputation in the Pacific. The 86th had a line of successful CG's after General Melasky left, but as one Pfc. stated upon his departure, "The Black Hawks will never be the same without Melasky."

General Gjelsteen assumed temporary command of the 86th Division upon the transfer of General Melasky. In early January Maj. General Paul Mueller assumed command of the Black Hawk Division, and he served as CG until April, 1946, when he was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Kramer. Maj. Gen. Hazlett commanded the division from July until its deactivation.

As the older army outfits moved on to Japan for occupation duty, and others returned to the states, it fell upon these shoulders of the 86th Division to clean up the small pockets of resistance of Jap stragglers still holding out in the Philippines. The story of the Black Hawks in the Philippines is as long, if not as romantic as the story of the division in Germany.

During the period the 86th Division was at Batangas, with the Division CP located in the Batangas Provincial capital, there was no assigned mission. However on September 16, 1945, AF-WESTPAC assigned the Black Hawks their first mission. A rifle company was to be sent to Corregidor island for the purpose of guarding Jap PW's who were clearing Malinta Tunnel of debris and dead Japs. The company was also to conduct guided tours of the island for army visitors. Designated for this task was Co. G, 342nd Infantry, and that unit stayed on Corregidor for many months.

In the meantime Division Artillery dispatched two battalions to Manila for guard duty.

On October 5, 1945, the 86th Division relieved the 38th

"Cyclone" Division and was assigned its mission in the Philippines, which was:

1. To continue surrender arrangements already initiated with enemy groups in the islands.
2. To control all guerilla and Filipino forces in zone, to supply and render assistance to Filipino units as needed.
3. Guard San Marcellino tunnels.
4. To guard Ipo Dam, Bigt Reservoir, and Novaliches Reservoir.
5. To provide MP guards for Manila port.
6. Protect the air corps pipeline in Subic Bay-Clark Field area.
7. To organize and train units of the Philippine army and the Philippine Scouts.

As the division moved into the Marikina area, the guerilla troops were assembled in 25 areas and troops were stationed at each locality. Eleven Jap straggler collection points were established. On October 3 the 341st Infantry was assigned the mission of operating the Legaspi Supply Point and the 342nd provided security for logging operations at Tagcawayen.

In early October 1945, the entire Division was at Marikina except the following units; 2nd Bn., 343 Inf. at Angeles; 3rd Bn., 341st Inf. at Lipa; Cb. A, 311th Engr. at Lemary-Taal Rest Camp; Co. G, 342nd Inf. at Corregidor; and elements of the 341st Inf. at Legaspi.

On November 14, 1945, the Luzon Area of Command was dissolved and the Eighty Sixth Division assumed command of the Luzon area. Many units formerly assigned to LUZACOM were assigned to the new ESDIVAC.

The Black Hawk units operating the PW straggler collection points were kept busy during November and De-

cember 1945 as Japs continued to slowly come out of the hills and surrender, often with extra persuasion, the use of an M-1 rifle. In November the Black Hawks captured 243 Jap PW's and three enemy aliens. On November 24, however there was one mass surrender of 700 Japs, Formosans, and Koreans. During December the take of PW's declined considerably, according to G-2, with only 31 Japs being taken prisoner. The Anti-Tank Company of 341st Inf. captured four armed Japs in the vicinity of Naga on Christmas Day.

The 342nd Inf. formed a Composite Company from the First Battalion and the Regimental I & R Platoon, under the command of Maj. Herman Hankins, on November 7, and combed the hills near Tagcawayan. Thirty-one Jap PW's were taken during this operation. Meanwhile Capt. William Richardson set up another collection point near Labo and found a hostile Jap unit in the hills. This unit was later annihilated.

In February 1946, the 86th Division led First Tarlac Regiment of the Philippine Army and had a pitched battle with 4000 Jap die-hards on Lubang Island, near the mouth of Manila Bay. Black Hawk officers accompanying this task force were quoted in an Associated Press dispatch for February 24 as requiring 20,000 rounds of ammunition on Lubang alone.

Also late in February, 1946, a full six months since the Jap surrender, the 86th Division was forced to erect a road block ten miles east of Manila near Wawa Dam, and a huge sign warned military vehicles, "Halt!—There's Japs in them thar' hills."

A task force of Black Hawks under the command of Lt. Tyler Holland of the 341st Infantry Regiment was assigned to Lubang Island during the disturbance there. The renegade Jap troops had been terrorizing the inhabitants

of that small island, 70 miles southeast of Manila, for months before the date in February, 1946, when the Philippine government and the AF-WESTPAC (Armed Forces, Western Pacific Headquarters) Headquarters decided to do something about the menace. When the 86th Division Task Force, from the 341st Infantry, left the Manila camp for Lubang, they took with them four Japanese POW's, from the Division stockade, who attempted to persuade the outlaw band to surrender. Liaison officer between the Task Force and Division Headquarters was Capt. James Ross. The initial landing on Lubang was at Tilic. The Black Hawk led force then worked up the island to Taboinan and Looc, and with little opposition, besides the one "pitched battle," successfully cleaned up the island.

Another Black Hawk task force was ordered to Legaspi, at the southern tip of Luzon, late in December, 1945, to mop up Jap stragglers in that area. This force also completed its task successfully.

In January, 1946, an entire Battalion, (3rd Bn., 342nd Infantry) formed another Task Force which was sent to Mindanao Island, in the extreme southern part of the Philippines. Near Cagayan, on the northern coast of Mindanao, formerly was located the Del Monte Pineapple Plantation, where in pre-war days your green labelled Del Monte pineapple originated. The plantation deteriorated badly during the years of the occupation, and upon its liberation by the 31st "Dixie Division" in the summer of 1945, there was nothing left but burned out buildings and broom sage. However the Del Monte firm was attempting to rebuild its facilities, and the Black Hawk troops were sent to Mindanao to protect the American owned property. The 3rd Battalion, 342nd Regiment, remained on Mindanao for many months while the rest of division was stationed more in "civilization" near Manila. These Black Hawks on Mindanao appreciated what old time Pacific veterans often complained of being,

"rock happy," as the only outside communication was a once a week mail plane which brought mail, the Black Hawk Bugle, and latest orders on the "point discharge system from Division Headquarters at Manila. These Black Hawks were so news hungry, that two infantrymen, Pfc. Roger Thompson, of Cleveland, Ohio, and William Farrier, of Williamston, N. C., organized and printed their own Battalion newspaper, which they appropriately name the OUT POST, and distributed it daily to the Battalion troops, until the group ran out of paper, then publication ceased.

The Black Hawk force on Mindanao sent several patrols into the Mindanao hinterland, patrols which were days returning, and the men making these patrols underwent experiences in jungle life that will never be forgotten, as they jourined deep into the Moro country.

During the early part of 1946, the 86th Division was completely reorganized along battle lines and most of the units underwent maneuvers at Ft. Stotsenburg. The point system continued to take a heavy toll of the Division's manpower and by late March practically all of the men who were with the Division when it first went overseas were gone. Filling the ranks of the Black Hawk Division, and living up to the Black Hawk tradition, were replacements bound straight from the states, low point men from the 38th and 96th Divisions, and a few men who had joined the regular army. Later in the year a number of Philippine Scouts were placed in the ranks.

The men who had served with the Black Hawks from Howze and Livingston through the European campaign would have had a hard time finding their way around in the Division by mid summer 1946. Elements of the division were scattered on Mindanao, Mindoro, Luzon, Palawan, and even some still at the southern tip of Luzon, Legaspi.

All forces on Mindoro were withdrawn in March, 1946



and the A-T Co. and Cannon Company of the 341st Inf. were withdrawn from Legaspi the same month. In April the Antipolo outpost, maintained by the 342nd Inf. since October of the previous year, was closed.

May, 1946 saw the garrisons on Mindanao and Palawan returned to Division control at Marikina. The day before General Eisenhower visited the Black Hawk Division on May 4, 1946, a patrol led by Capt. Richardson, 342nd Inf., captured 8 armed Japs near Infanta.

In June, 1946, the 86th Division was commanded by Maj. General Harry F. Hazlett. Assistant Division Commander was Brig. Gen Albert C. Smith. By mid-June the entire Division was back at Marikina Base except the following units; 2nd Bn., 343rd Inf., Co. F., 342nd Inf. at the Guerilla Deprocession camp and Co. 9, 342nd Inf., still on Corregidor.

However, during the last week in June the Division began to break up again to perform its last mission in World War II. The organization and training of the Philippine Army. The entire 342nd Infantry, less two companies, was transferred to the 5th Replacement Depot at Alabing to form the 1st Philippine Replacement Depot (PS). At the same time the 342nd Inf. commenced to form the 12th Philippine Infantry Division (PS). During the next few months all units of the 86th Division except those on special assignment were used as the nucleus of the new Philippine Scout Division then being formed. Each of the three regiments trained and equipped one PS unit. However the Jap straggler menace was still there and as late as October 77 Jap PW's were captured. AT 2330 on October 17, 1946, Lt. Col. A. L. Hugins was fired on while in convoy near Angeles. About the same time the first Huk activities were reported by the 44th Infantry Div. (PS).

The manpower in the 86th Division continued to decline during the last months of 1946, and in December the

Division was down to 274 officers, 4,014 enlisted men and 2,524 Philippine Scouts. On December 29, 1946, the 342nd Inf. was redesignated the 44th Infantry Regiment and the 343rd Inf. was redesignated the 91st Inf. Regiment. The 341st became a unit on paper only in October, 1946.

On December 30, 1946, the War Department officially deactivated the 86th "Black Hawk" Infantry Division and ordered its colors returned to Chicago, where the Division became an organized reserve unit, the same status it held between World Wars I and II.

By the time the 86th Infantry Division was deactivated at Manila on December 30, 1946, practically all of the original officers and EM who had trained and gone overseas to fight in Europe as Black Hawks, were gone. Many of them had returned to the states to resume their old jobs, go into business, or continue their education which had been interrupted by the call to service. However some decided to remain in the army and make it a career, and even today, in 1954, some eight years later, a good number of former Black Hawks are serving their country as part of our regular army.

One of these is Lt. John Krasko, Yonkers, N.Y., who left the 86th Division in France in 1945 to enter the Military Academy. Lt. Krasko graduated from the academy four years later and during the early stages of the Korean War he was taken prisoner by the North Koreans and held captive for over two years, before being returned to the UN side in the PW exchange of 1953.

Another former Black Hawk, Pfc. Dave Braaton, of Norwich, Conn., entered the diplomatic service after his discharge and while on duty at the embassy at Paris, secured an automobile and revisited every town and village captured by the Black Hawks in World War II.

Today, in civilian life, all across this great nation of ours, former Black Hawks hold down positions of import-

ance in their communities. There are lawyers, doctors, clerks, laborers, miners, and every other job that it takes to make this nation of our great, filled by former Black Hawks. No matter what their present walk in life is, at one time they were comrades in arms, and proud to say, "I am a Black Hawk."

As time rolls along, and these young men who were 18 and 19 when in the service of their country begin to gray, it will be a pleasure to look back to the days they spent together. It would be a great thing if sometime in the near future an 86th Division wide "Black Hawk Reunion" could be held at some central location in the USA each year, so these young men who are slowly but surely giving way to Father Time might get together with their buddies of several years ago and renew old acquaintance.

As the Black Hawk Division, a fighting outfit with a fighting reputation, slowly fades away into oblivion, there will long be someone left to proudly boast, "I was a Black Hawk."



