

BLUE RIDGE

The Service Magazine
Volume 88, Number 349

Summer - 2006
Issue 2



Official Publication of the
80th Division Veterans Association, Inc.

A. E. F.

Artois-Picardy
St. Mihiel
Meuse-Argonne

E. T. O.

Northern France
Ardennes
Rhineland
Central Europe



Deadline for the next issue is September 1, 2006


Eightieth **Division**
Veterans Association

BLUE RIDGE

The Service Magazine

The official quarterly publication by the 80th Division Veterans Association.
(Incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the State of Pennsylvania).

SECRETARY/EDITOR Robert T. Murrell

630 Pennsylvania Ave., Oakmont, PA 15139-1574
412-828-7651 Fax: 412-828-7651 e-mail: divinf801@verizon.net

All communications, including articles, photos, news items for publication, changes of address, dues remittances and death notices should be addressed to the Secretary/Editor.

NATIONAL OFFICERS 2005-2006

NATIONAL COMMANDER

Walton W. Spangler (A-319th)

8275 Hagerty Road Asheville, OH 43103-9715 Phone 740-474-5734

SR. VICE COMMANDER

PNC Robert H. Burrows (Hq-317)

P.O. Box 453, Broomfield, CO 80083-0453

2ND VICE COMMANDER

Elmer G. Dorsten (A-318th)

208 N. Elm Street, Coldwater, OH 45828-1164

3RD VICE COMMANDER

Eugene O'Neil (C-319th)

4718 Col Darnell Place Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-2801

Secretary/Editor

630 Pennsylvania Ave., Oakmont, PA 15139-1574, (412) 828-7651

Chaplain

Judge Advocate

Historian

Service Officer

Flag Sergeant

Color Sergeant

Sergeant-at-Arms

Public Affairs Officer

Division Photographer

Robert T. Murrell (M-318)

PNC Angelo J. Barone (L-317)

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Albert J. Cresson (C-315 FA)

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Tom Pappas (F-318)

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2 Year; Robert W. Smith (K-317)

3 Year; Felix Cistolo (G-317)

2 Years

George V. West (G-318)

Andy Ferens (M-317)

Robert J. McDonald (C-319)

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1 Year

Gerald V. Myers (G-317)

Laverne J. Schock (F-317)

Tom Pappas (F-318)

3 Years

Emil Magolin (B-305 MD)

Burt R. Marsh (M-319)

PNC Russell P. Sick (305 Eng)

** Deceased*

COMMANDER'S REPORT



Remembering those who have gone before us.

Greetings to Veterans and friends of the 80th Division:

It's hard to believe that we are nearing the end of May.

We enjoyed our Florida visit in March. The Post 47 Meeting gave us an opportunity to visit with our friends of the 80th.

It's amazing how the ladies prepare the food and make all feel welcome. I noticed that the men assisted with bringing food to the 4th floor meeting room. The Florida weather was a welcome change from our Ohio weather.

One of the ways we honor Veterans of all wars is the celebration of Memorial Day on May 30 of each year. Even though that day of celebration has been changed to coincide with the weekend, it still has been set aside to remember Veterans. Those that are able will still attend a memorial service at the local cemetery. I remember as a small boy we assembled at our cemetery office where each child was given an American flag. Then we walked through the cemetery and placed our flag on a Veteran's grave.

I never expected to one day be called on to defend our country. Nor could I visualize that there were 16 million others that answered the same call during World War II. We pay special tribute to those fallen comrades that lost their lives on the battlefield. Those of us that remain should be proud to have a day still set aside to remember our Veterans. It has been my privilege to give the Memorial Day address about six times at different locations in our county. Each time has been a humbling experience as I remember that, but for the grace of God, I too could have been a statistic.

The Holocaust Center in Boston, MA has invited me, as Commander of the 80th Division Veterans Association, to attend their annual tribute dinner on June 15, 2006. They will present awards to the Holocaust Liberation Army Divisions and Veterans Associations. This is the first time Liberating Army Divisions have been invited to attend any Holocaust Center event. The 80th Division flag flies in the U.S. Holocaust Museum in honor of that military humanitarian feat.

Bob Burrows, our Senior Vice Commander and 2006 Reunion Chairman, is working diligently to see that we will have a great Reunion at Columbus, GA on September 20 - 23, 2006. The dedication of the 80th Division Memorial at Fort Benning will be one of the important events. Let's make it one to be remembered by attending, if health permits.

Annabel and I are looking forward to seeing you in Columbus, GA in September.

Best Regards,
Walt Spangler

MEMORIAL FUND

If you have sent in money and I have omitted your name please let me know so I may give you credit. Last date I have entered a name 1 June 2006.

Bray, Michael L. Esq. Friend
Dowdy, Melvin H. Hq-318

LIFE PLUS CLUB 2005-2006

If you have sent in money and I omitted your name, let me know so I may give you credit. Last date I have entered a name 1 June 2006.

Annon I-318
Hovey, Richard B. E-318
Muller, Victor S. Associate A-319
Stuart, D. D. Dr. B-305 Med

DUES

I want to thank each of you who have checked your dues date and brought them up to date. It is much appreciated. However, there are some of you who still need to catch up. PLEASE look at the front cover and see when you are paid to. Also some have passed away, please send me his name so I may enter it under "Taps".

McBRIDE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

If you have sent in money and I have omitted your name please let me know so I may give you credit. Last date I have entered a name 1 June 2006.

REUNION NEWS

80th Division Veterans Association 87th Annual Reunion 20-23 September 2006

Assemble at the Hilton Garden Inn Columbus GA 31904. Phone Number 1-877-782-9494. Make reservation early. The centerpiece for this year's reunion is the Dedication of the monument to our Fallen Comrades of WWI and WW II.

The dedication of the monument will take place at Sacrifice Field, The United States Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia. The Memorial Service will be held in the Post Chapel Friday September 22 at 10:00 A.M. Lunch will be at the Officers Club 12:00 noon with the Dedication of the Monument 1:30 P.M. Transportation will be provided. Also there is a trip to Warm Springs, GA where President Roosevelt had his little White House and Museum with Lunch at Bulloch House Restaurant.

It may be far to come as some wish to drive, but it is the erecting of the Monument to our Departed Comrades, that is long past due, so come and help us with the Dedication. Make this the best reunion ever. If you have never made a reunion, this is the one you should make.

DRESS CODE: Dress uniforms or business attire. Wear authorized Badges and Medals.

Bob Burrows Reunion Chairman

LETTERS

Dear Mr Murrell,

I am involved in a community heritage project to gather information about the 122nd and 107th US General Hospitals that were sited just outside my home town of Kington, Herefordshire in the UK. We are recording local oral history about these hospitals in wartime and would also like to contact any veterans who were treated here in 1944 and 1945. Preliminary research shows that the hospitals treated over 8,000 wounded, many of whom were from the Battle of the Bulge. Is there any way of spreading this request to 80th infantry division veterans through you? We would be very grateful to hear from anyone who has memories or information about these hospitals. There is some preliminary information about the project on our website (www.kingtoncamp.co.uk) and we will be adding to this as the project progresses.

With many thanks for any assistance you can provide

Best wishes, Cressida Fforde

Kington Camp Project

Email: cressidaff@compuserve.com

www.kingtoncamp.co.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

First of all, I want to give you my compliments for your very nice site. I found a lot of information on your website.

I am a 17 years old Dutch boy and contributor of the Dutch and English website www.ww2awards.com, the ever growing online resource of World War Two awards and their recipients. I should be very much obliged if you could send my request to veterans of the 80th Infantry Division. I hope the veterans want contact with me, and then I can add them to our database.

If they want contact by email, they can send their email to egbert@ww2awards.com. If they want contact by mail, they can send their letter to:

Egbert van de Schootbrugge

Stationsweg 51

8096 PH Oldebroek, Holland

NOTICE

Anyone interested in seeking an office in the next election, any office, to contact Francis Rajnicek PNC, Chairman of the Nomination Committee or any member of the Executive Council.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Solarczck, Melvin J. 319th Assoc
4820 Jeffery Drive
Nashville, TN 32711-4041

Sprouse, Curtis T. E-318
2108 Granada Drive
Dothan, AL 36303

MAIL BAG

I'm writing today regarding my Grandfather Arthur Dodson who was a Second Lieutenant in either E or D Company 318th. Unfortunately he passed away last week (3/10). My question is, if anyone remembers him. Please reply to Paul Lomax 410-751-9352. E-mail fishertech@adelphia.net

I am trying to trace my cousin Tech Sgt Robert Macdonald (or McDonald) who served in the 80th Division in WW2. I am sorry I don't have any further information about him, other than that he was born in Philadelphia. I believe he has probably passed on, but he may well have some descendants living in the US. I met him only once, in 1945 when I was only 6 yrs old, and unfortunately our families lost touch after that. If you can give me any information on his military career, or even the whereabouts of any descendants... or an indication of where to pursue my inquiries, I would be very grateful.

Sincerely, Duncan Macdonald
Montrose, Scotland

- I have has several requests for the 80th History Book put out by Turner. If any one wants to sell their copy, please let me know and I will sell it for you.
 - Also I now have 80th Ball Caps (15.00 Plus Postage) This is the last I will be able to get. I also have Bolo's. \$10.00 Postage included.
-

QUESTION???? This came to me in an E-mail and I am putting to you to see if any of you have heard of it:

Bob, are you aware of any unit of the 80th that was "wiped out" on the beaches of Normandy? A fellow found our web site and says his mother told him that his father, who served in the 80th in WWII, and his entire unit was lost on Normandy(?) The man did not furnish me with any data. So we are kind of sitting here, maybe fat and dumb, but Happy! Let's hear what you have to say!



AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

Article VI of the By-laws-Amendments provides that the By-laws of the 80th Division Veterans Association may be amended at the Annual Meeting by a majority vote of those Active or Life Members present provided the proposed amendment is first reduced to writing. Article III of the By-laws State At least thirty days notice shall be given members of the amendment to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. The following amendment is proposed.

This proposal is to Amend Article III of the Constitution to read as follows: Add to Item 1, the following amendment to be consisted of Descendants of the 80th Division Veterans.

Item 10 add to read, add Descendants of the 80th Division Veterans shall be permitted to the extent necessary to qualify and maintain the Associations status as a Veterans Association under Section 501 (c) (19) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. Membership in the Association shall be through application to the election by all the exiting membership, as initially constituted by vote of the Board of Directors. Application shall be open to any individual Eighteen (18) years or older interested in the purposes of the Association, as set forth in Article III, Membership of the Articles of Organization of the Descendants of the 80th Veterans Summited this 16th May 2006. By Eugene O Neil 3rd Vice Commander. Chairman of the Memorial Committee.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

The Descendants of 80th Division Veterans wish to thank Reunion Chairman Bob Burows and all of the Veterans for the kind invitation to participate in the 87th Annual Reunion of the Veterans in Columbus, GA on September 20-24, 2006. We are looking forward to another opportunity to interact with Veterans, Spouses and Family Members and will once again establish a display of 80th Division artifacts that have been shared with us. We welcome any and all military memorabilia that folks would like to display.

A special invitation is extended to registered attendees to attend a dinner meeting on Friday evening, Sept. 22nd, following the dedication services at Ft. Benning. Anyone who is not committed to a pre-arranged function is welcome to join us in the Hilton Garden Inn at 6:30 pm. **Guest speaker will be BG John McLaren, recently Commander of 80th Division troops deployed to Iraq.** The cost of the buffet supper will be \$18.50 per person and reservations should be made no later than Sept. 1, 2006. Send check, along with name and number of persons to:



Descendants of 80th Division Veterans
PO Box 206
Fayetteville, PA 17222
e-mail: bcsmith@80thdescendants.com

Visit our website:
www.80thdescendants.com

TAPS

Robert Alsup 3633 Nebraska Ave Saint Louis, MO 63118-3707 8/2001 Rptd by Wife	L-318	Faille, Augstine F. C/o 69 Honeyflower Drive Yardville, NJ 08620 10/5/2005 Rptd by Daughter Sandra	HQs 313 FA Bn
Arrington, Earl 514 Dixie Drive Thomson, GA 30324-2831 3/10/2006 Rptd by Wife	B-905 FA Bn	Joe Lockwood Unit unknown 76574 Taylor, Williamson, TX 8/31/2005 Rptd by News Clipping	
Banks, Julian A. SV-317 450 Thole Street Norfolk, VA 23505-4235 8/23/2006 Rptd by son Marc		Lyman, Henry R. 214 Ellyridge Court San Jose, CA 95123 4/27/2006 Rptd by Robert E. Parks	L-317
Capps, Ernest P. 1385 J T Heath Road Williamston, NC 27892 2/2/2006 Rptd by Wife Lola	I-319	Mayer, W. Mayer 4224 Valley Hills Drive St. Louis, MO 63128-1831 4/24/2006 Rptd by N. Brockman	305th Eng
Cardarelli, John J. Hampton, MA 6/6/2003 Rptd by News Clipping	B-318	Melcom, Albert E. 8429 Salando Ave. Jacksonville, FL 32211-5168 Unknown Postal Return Marked Deceased	H-317
Crimi, John J. 440 Lake Carol Drive West Palm, FL 33411 5/6/2006 Rptd by Granddaughter, Stacey	C-318	Mitzel, Raymond L. 358 Victory Road Saxonburg, PA 16056-9602 8/1998 Rptd by Peggie	B-905 FA Bn
DeLucas, Donald 808 Spar Drive Forked River, NJ 08731-3028	Hq-317	Owensby, Roy Polk County, NC Rptd by Bryan Basden News Paper Obit	B-318 11/30/2005
Dodson, Arthur Westminster, MD Rptd by Grandson Paul	C/D 318th 3//2006	Rufino, Gustave W. Box 413 Piersin, FL 32180 3/6/2006 Rptd By wife Ester	D-305 Med
Ferguson, Angus S. 3090 Kensington Road Cleveland, OH 44118-3559 9/13/2005 Rptd by Daughter Cheryl	Hq 2d Bn 319	Slemdenda, Norman J. 11815 Highland Avenue Conneaut Lake, PA 16316-3617 3/20/2006 Rptd by Wife Elizabeth	Hq 3d Bn 319
Frazier, William Mechanicsville, VA 23116 Unknown Return marked Deceased	B-314 FA Bn	Winger, Woodrow C/o 7776 Sherfick Lane Shoals, IN 47581 3/10/2005 Rptd by Sister Eldean	K-317
Hilton, Ben 502 Willow Bend Lufkin, TX 75901-4806 1/1/2002 Rptd by Wife	C-313 FA Bn	Wuthnow, Arvid V. 115 Robert Street Hutchenson, KS 67502 1/25/2006 Rptd by Mrs. Wuthnow	B-317

Veitch, James C. 80th Rcn
W167S7228 Briarggte Lane
Muskego, WI 53150-9403
5/3/2005 Rptd by daughter

NOTICE TO ALL POSTS
Still a Couple of Post Ads Due

POST NEWS

CO H 319th Infantry Post 33

Time again to scribble out a note to say hello to all Co. H or Post 33 members and friends. Heard from Nick and Ginny Grossi, the big happy news is they are going to have an addition to the Grossi's. It is not what you all are thinking, but a son is taking a bride, " which the Grossi's are very happy about.

John and Kate Beebe are still about the same. John is starting to think about his mango crop. John visits Joe Rickle, and picks up a few tips about gardening. Also heard from the Robinson's. Irv is still the custodian for tools and equipment for the woodworking materials. Hilda has given up golfing.

Heard from Lois Kudrna says she enjoyed the winter in Florida, but didn't do any gator hunting. Karol and Reggie enjoyed golfing in Texas but have now returned to Iowa. Bill and Wilma are enjoying life, but have given up traveling, as Wilma does not trust Bill's driving.

My eyes are still a problem. I have one more retina treatment and then I hope the bleeding stops behind my eyes! Have not heard from Orin Ledbetter for some time. I've attempted to call but have no success. Hope he is okay so I'll keep on trying. Also absent for news is Barbara and Ken.

That's all for now. Take care and God Bless

Ohly, 16 Spencer Path Dr. St. Peters, MO 63376, 1-636-447-7703

3rd Battalion 317th Post #36

Congratulations to Chad Marinelli, grandson of Angelo and Kay Barone. Chad graduated from college with honors. The week after graduation Chad started working in his professional career. We wish Chad every success and a wonderful future! As a youngster Chad attend many 80th reunions with his parents Kathy and Bruce Marinelli.

Angelo and Kay Barone just returned from the New York Post meeting. Bob Smith plans to attend the Legion of Valor Reunion in July and the 80th reunion in September at Columbus, Georgia. Bob Parks is fair except for a few pains and aches. Bob and Pauline hope they will be able to attend the 80th reunion in September.

We are saddened by the death of Henry R. Loran (L). Henry's daughter, Cindy Quisenberry, 214 Ellyridge Court, San Jose, CA 95123, phone 408-227-9403, notified Bob Parks of her father's death in April. We extend our deepest sympathy to his daughter and family.

Your secretary's health is about the same and I want to thank all that called and sent cards. Our prayers and good wishes are with those who are ill and have physical problems. Please send any news so I can include it in the column. My address is 1739 Faunce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19111.

Have a great reunion in Columbus, Georgia!

Bob Nathason, Sect.

New York Post 43

The Post 43 Spring Meeting of 2006 was held at the Ramada Inn of Geneva, NY on 15 May through 21 2006 with 21 in attendance. During the week the group went to Ventosa Winery for lunch, Weaver Farms (Amish Crafts), Fox Run Winery again for lunch and Finger Lakes Race track. There was no report of anyone getting lost.

A group also stopped at Belhurst Castle to see about the possibility of having a lunch there next year. The castle was built in 1885.

The formal meeting was called to order on 18 May by Commander Burt Marsh. Don Wilkerson resigned as Vice Commander. The resignation was accepted with regret. We all thank Don for all his hard work during his term of office. A vote was brought forth that Burt Marsh assume all the duties to keep Post 43 running as usual. The next meeting will be held 21 May through 24, 2007. It will be held at the Ramada Lakefront Hotel in Geneva, NY.

Burt Marsh

Florida Post # 47

Our March meeting was another success. The weather again cooperated with warm sunny days during the entire affair. Rebuilding the hotel was extensive, taking well over a year. All rooms have been up graded with comfortable beds, refrigerator and microwave. They have also provided computer Internet access with ample work area.

Sufficient beach sand has been brought in to return most of the beach and the work is continuing until it has been completely replaced. The sun deck has been enlarged and the swimming pool redesigned with additional space. Amazingly during this involved renovation the staff was able to reassign a significant number of key employees at different company properties. It was like old home week seeing so many of the friendly faces again.

Part of my responsibilities is to report the loss of our members. Peter Mayer was at the engineers meeting in Tampa in 1988 when I proposed the formation of a Florida Post. With the support I received I pursued a Charter with the help of Wally Ponder whose address I needed to receive the Charter. Peter passed away in April. His wife Bona and children survive him. We will miss him and Bona and hope she will be able to make our meetings as we all miss her sunny disposition and her delicious SOS.

After our successful March meeting George Bell our newly elected Commander and I met with the hotel representatives about next years meeting. Due to the extensive remodeling the room rates were dramatically increased to \$229 per room night, a figure our membership could not bare. After some discussion George Bells diplomatic responses they produced a more reasonable rate of \$109 which we have accepted.

Our next meeting will be October 26th thru 30th 2006 at The Hampton Inn, Ocala, Fl. The room rate is \$76 per night.

Looking forward to seeing you in Columbus, GA at the National Reunion, I am sure Bob Burrows has a great one planned for all of us.

Francis Rajnicek, Sect.

Post 44 Company M 318th Inf.

Well Guys and Gals, the Old Sect turned 90 years young on 19 May 2006. Don't expect me to me your Sect for the next 90 years. Rather, maybe a year or two more and that will be just about it. Went to Warren, MI for the birthday where a celebration was held for me. Made a tour of the AMOS and had a ride in a Humvee. Sunday a reception of roughly 30 people was in attendance.

Company L 319th Inf.

"Sunny days are here again and the skies above are clear again, let us sing a song of cheer again , sunny days are here again".(My apologies to the original writer and the change in wording) Isn't it great to see the multiple shades of green in the grass, on the trees and in the shrubbery and the reds, yellows, lilacs, purples and pinks of the many flowers that are welcoming Spring and the coming Summer season. We can now enjoy a respite from the gloom of winter with its snow, sleet bones at least for five or six months and icy cold winds. It puts a spring back in our old bones. Rudy and Carol Berman spent a week in Europe visiting cousins who they haven't seen in thirty years and spent some time in Rudy's birthplace where he was able to lay some stones on the side walk honoring his family. Rudy and Carol were greatly pleased by the way the Organizers of the trip went out of their way to please the group. Rudy and Carol said that although it was an emotional trip, they have no regrets and they will remember it as a wonderful experience.

I had a snail mail from Bill Siebert and he is in a dilemma. He said he thinks he might be slowing down because he doesn't get things done like he should and wonders why all of his buddies are having the same problem. Join the crowd Bill--Yes you are slowing down and so are all of the rest of the men of Company L.

Gayle and Gloria Baker have added a 20 x 20 foot addition to their home in Loysburg, Pa. The addition includes a full bath and a new family room complete with a sofa bed and a central air conditioning system. If you are ever in the Loysburg area drop in on Gayle and Gloria for an escorted tour. They both would be glad to see you. John Balas e-mailed that he too appears to be slowing down and should stay off ladders. He was however able to clean his rain gutters before his legs told him to get back on the ground.

Bill and Billie Krehbeil are doing the graduation-reunion circuit. They went to Kansas City for grandson Duane's graduation, then to Chicago for grand daughter Angela's graduation, then to San Antonio for grandson Moses graduation from Basic Training with the Air Force. After two days at home they proceeded to Pittsburg, KS for a reunion of students Bill taught in the 50's. When this was over, Bill had his left wrist operated on for Carpel Tunnel Syndrome. His right wrist was done in early May and seems to be healing well. This pair doesn't seem to be slowing down.

Jim Young is back from his fabulous cruise to Turkey, the Dardanelles, the Balkans, Athens, Greece, Albania, Croatia, Venice, Sicily, the Balearic Islands, Spain and Portugal. He and his traveling companion, Doctor Vera, had a great time and my words will not do justice to the trip. Better we wait until the Columbus Reunion and hear it directly from the "Horses Mouth" Jim was most impressed by the ship, the Sea Bourne Pride, which carries a passenger group of only 200 as compared to regular cruise ship which carry as many as 2000 passengers. During the trip, Jim kept his hand on his wallet and it arrived home safely with him. Remember what happened

on another trip?

Betts Flynn told me that John is having a great deal of trouble with his right hip. He has seen a new Orthopedic Doctor for a consultation. We pray he doesn't need another replacement. John recently celebrated his 85th Birthday. Happy belated Birthday John from all of us.

Some of our regulars at the Reunions are a little bashful and won't give me any news for this article. We'll just have to wait until September and find out what is happening in their life.

On the home front, Maria is healing slowly from her wrist-breaking fall in February and I am recovering from an abdominal Hernia operation that was done on the 28th of March. My legs are giving me fits and like Bill Siebert and John Balas, I believe I'm slowing down. Not stopped but slowing down but aren't we all.

Hey, get those registration blanks in to the Reunion Chairman before you forget it and think about what you will be putting in your suitcase to bring to Columbus, Georgia. Looking forward to seeing all of you in September.

Hank Einolf

Lane Hall Post # 42

Was this not a crazy winter we had. So bad for so many people in our country, floods, tsunami, hurricanes, and whatever. The weather differences, warm cold etc. But thank goodness we have gotten through it. Another year to add to our ages and I guess we have to be thankful for what we get.

I have heard from a few of our mends, but I wish more of you would contact me, and let me know how you are doing, and about any of our group you may be in touch with. I did receive an E-mail from our friend Mary Brinker, telling me she is preparing to get her home ready to sell. I know that is a big job and I dread ever having to do that, but we all have to do what is best for ourselves. She has not sold her place as of the last time I spoke to her.

She also mentioned her grandchild Melissa, on a spring Break went to Haiti and worked with the Catholic School there, and told of the help they need because of the poverty there.

Spoke to Warren Burkhart in February who mentioned he was preparing to go to lunch with Lou Shirey. It is good that old buddies stay in touch. He also mentioned that Lou might be selling his home and going into a retirement apartment. Wish them both the best and good health.

Spoke to Paul Burgio, Mary, and his wife, had to be taken to the Emergency Room during March. She is doing better and I was able to speak to Mary on the phone, Paul said .she was so. Happy to have me speak to her.

Dom Abbruzzese called on Palm Sunday and was in good spirits. He will be moving in soon with one of his family and it will be nice for him to have company. Dom visits his wife's resting place every Saturday.

Heard from Alice Noxon on April 11, she had a very successful cataract operation on her eye the week before and can now see 20/30 in that eye. We are so happy for Alice that everything went well. Not sure whether they may make "the reunion, and was disappointed that the Mini had been cancelled.

Received a note from Ed Hargraves, he has a new Grandchild and so happy for that. Ed said he has mixed feeling about attending the reunion, so many of his mends are gone, mentioning, Fraley, Hanson and Hatcher. He is the last of "A" battery's for-

ward observer crew and it is something he will have to think about.

I sent our quite a few cards to various members of the 313th one of the cards came back and a stamp stating "Not deliverable as addressed unable to forward" was returned to me that I had sent to Harry and Charlotte Zeman. Does anyone know whether they have moved, or why the card may have been returned to me? Please let me know. We may have to have a new address for them, before I type a new address listing.

I know it has been difficult for many of us to attend the reunions. Our group mostly compiled of Men from the states of Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania has had some difficulty attending since many of the last few reunions have been held in states that are quite a distance from their homes. Since we are all getting to the age where we have to consider distance etc. and many have health problems which prevent them from going great distances, I do hope that the next reunion will be one that will consider this and make it easier for more of the members to attend.

Well I guess I will sign off, please do not hesitate to call me if you have any information about anyone in our group. I may try to get to the National, but like I said in the last report, nothing definite as yet.

Frances Poletti 28 Arnold Lane, Rowayton, CT. 06853. 203-855-1928.

MORE ON THE RHINE CROSSING

First I want to congratulate you for continuing to publish outstanding accounts, facts and stories of a fast dwindling WWII generation. When reading the story on page 20 (Last Issue #1, crossing the Rhine River), I felt compelled to write and correct some errors and possibly add to the story since I was there serving in the capacity of Executive Officer of Co. B-317th. It was probably the most frustrating night I experienced throughout the 93-consecutive day "on the line" so to speak in which I participated.

To begin with, our company had walked all day prior to entering the city and arriving at the launch site where Gen. Patton had a number of naval landing craft already in the water and set to ferry us across. But, the Germans on the opposite bank were firing 20mm & 40mm anti-aircraft guns directly into our staging area; the Navy refused to go. No kidding!

We were told we would cross as soon as darkness fell (around 8:00 PM) but we were still stalled there at 10:00 PM. evidently the Regimental. Commander didn't believe that the Navy would take us and ordered us to walk about 2 miles downstream where we found more 2-man wooden rowboats than I could count. Boats in which we were to transport our company across that swollen flood staged river with a raging current. Now can't you just imagine how many of our unit would have made it to the other side and if we did how scattered we would have been and how difficult it would have been to re-assemble on foreign soil without the aid of any light?

Looking back I'm not real sure that we would obeyed those orders to cross in this manner, but we were relieved of this responsibility when word arrived that the Navy had changed their minds and would take us across, so it was another late night walk for an already weary infantrymen.

We got back around midnight. The Germans had let up on their fire, but as soon as we got back they started firing again and again the Navy balked.

In the story in the spring issues the writer states that we embarked at 0100 hours. We probably were re-scheduled to go at that hour, but actually it was daylight before

we left the dock at Mainz. I know positively because I requested that our artillery support cover our landing with a smoke screen and the request was denied for some reason. Fortunately, the Germans had left only a small contingent for a delaying action and we did not lose any men on the crossing.

Now about that so-called capture of a Champaign factory with 4,000 cases of Champaign. I was the first American military person at that site. It came about this way. One of the Germans that we captured told me about this German hospital a short distance away and that there were several U.S. Air Force prisoners that were being treated there. So, I took one of the company jeeps and three riflemen with me easily found the two-story wood frame house, which looked, like a large country estate. There was a giant red cross-painted on the roof to ward off bombings.

To make a long story short, I located the five U.S. Airmen who were in good shape and quite happy to know that we had crossed the Rhine. One of them told me that the hospital was built over an underground Champaign factory. We corralled the administrator of the hospital and demanded a tour.

As I recall there were five underground stories with huge barrels on the lowest level and different stages of the process leading up to the first underground story being the Packing and Shipping Dept. the Administrator told me that he might just be generous and give us a couple of cases. I had to laugh because he didn't seem to realize that we were the conquerors and to the victor belonged the spoils. My communications Sgt. commandeered a Volkswagen, removed all of the seats and crammed in at least 12 or 14 cases of the bubbly. I would give anything if I had a photo of him following us into Wiesbaden while driving sitting on several cases for a seat.

I don't know whether this has ever been reported or not but the citizens of the city lined the streets cheering us and showering us with flowers and Champaign. We were told that they had petitioned the German military contingent left to defend the city to leave and not put up a fight inasmuch as it would produce more harm than good, and they left. We were the first troops inside the city and not a single shot was fired.

George T. Jones. 1st Lt. Co. B, 317th INF.

P.S. My last assignment in Europe was Regimental S-1. A position I held until the 317th embarked from Le Harve in January 1946.

The III Corps' Counterattack Toward Bastogne

The Verdun meeting on 19 December set in chain the first of a series of actions, which the Allies would take to wrest the initiative from the enemy. Nonetheless a few momentous, nerve-shaking days had to elapse before the first gun of the counterattack could be fired. To gain time and save troops the Supreme Commander was willing to let the Allied forces fall back as far as necessary-although it was tacitly understood that the Meuse River must be the limit for any withdrawal. On the 20th General Strong, the SHAEF chief of intelligence, advised General Eisenhower that it looked as if the German command had committed everything it had to the offensive. Flying weather was poor and there was a chance that the Allies now could regroup for a concerted counterattack both north and south without these troop movements being discovered from the air. On this date, therefore, Eisenhower gave

Bradley and Montgomery their orders for a counteroffensive against the German salient, to be undertaken as soon as possible.

Air Chief Marshal Tedder, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, and a number of others on the SHAEF staff feared that the impetuous Patton would persuade Bradley to let him start the counterattack from the south with only a couple of divisions and that it then would develop piecemeal, as had the German counterattack in Normandy, without a solid tactical base or concrete result. The Supreme Commander himself was well aware of the Third Army commander's penchant for cut and thrust tactics and probably needed little urging to take some action calculated to hold Patton within the constraints of "the big picture." On the other hand Eisenhower recognized that the continued occupation of Bastogne, the key to the entire road net on the south side of the German Bulge, was essential to future offensive operations. Patton, as the SHAEF staff saw it, would make the narrow thrust on the Arlon-Bastogne axis, but any more ambitious plans would have to be subordinated to the larger strategy.¹ Eisenhower, therefore, told Bradley that the American counterattack via Bastogne should be held in check and not allowed to spread, that it was, after all, only a steppingstone for the "main counteroffensive."

Preparations for the Attack

Possibly the "lucky" commander needed some curb on his inherent optimism, but regardless of any pose which Patton may have assumed in the war council at Verdun he and his staff went about the business of mounting this first counterattack coolly and methodically. General Eisenhower, that is, north, already had set the direction of attack from an assembly area around Arlon. The immediate mission, assigned by the higher command after the Verdun meeting, was the "relief" of Bastogne and the use of its road net as a sally port for a drive by the Third Army to St. Vith in the larger Allied offensive. D-day for the counterattack was 22 December. It must be added that the Third Army order issued the day before the attack was rather ambitious, containing a typical Patton flourish in the prescription of an eventual wheel to the northeast and seizure of the Rhine crossings "in zone." The forces to be employed had been earmarked as early as the night of 18 December when Bradley and Patton agreed to move the new III Corps headquarters (as yet inexperienced and untried) from Metz to Arlon. The divisions given Maj. Gen. John Millikin (the 26th Infantry Division, 80th Infantry Division, and 4th Armored Division) all had been out of the line or in a quiet sector when the Third Army was ordered north and thus were selected almost automatically.

The area chosen for the III Corps counterattack extended from the Alzette River on the east to Neufchâteau in the west, a front of some thirty miles. Actually these points were not on formal boundaries but rather represent the limits within which the III Corps operation finally developed. This zone, the eastern part lying in Luxembourg, the western in Belgium, contains some of the most rugged ground in the Ardennes. East of the Arlon-Bastogne axis two deeply eroded corridors, cut by the Sure and Wiltz Rivers, form effective barriers to mechanized or motorized advance from the south. The entire area is crisscrossed with rivers and streams, but those of the tableland west of Bastogne lack the gorge-like beds found to the east. Here, as in other parts of the Ardennes, dense woods alternate with rolling fields and clearings. The land is veined with roads, but of varying quality; at their interlacing are found the single farmhouse or the village of a half-dozen dwellings, all promising the phenomenon common to military operations in the Ardennes—the

fight for the crossroad. Bastogne, with seven entrant roads, naturally dominates the road complex in this area whether movement be from east to west, as attempted by the XLVII Panzer Corps, or from south to north, as planned for the American III Corps. But in addition to the south-to-north highway from Arlon to Bastogne, there are main roads branching from Arlon to the northeast and northwest, thus offering some flexibility of maneuver. Only one main road south of Bastogne runs east and west, that from Luxembourg City through Arlon to Neufchâteau. This road would form the base of operations for the III Corps. The enemy situation on the new III Corps front was obscure. The Bastogne garrison knew little of the German deployment beyond the encircling units in direct contact, while the VIII Corps' screen, behind which the III Corps was forming, had been too weak to fight for information. The situation along most of the tenuous and sketchy VIII Corps line was indeed so confused that the location of friendly roadblocks or outposts could hardly be plotted. On the day before the counterattack it was known that the German columns had carried to and beyond Bastogne. It was presumed that the Arlon-Bastogne road had been cut, but this was not certain. Elements of four German divisions were supposed to be in the line opposite the III Corps: the 5th Parachute and the 212th, 276th, and 352d Volks Grenadier Divisions. All but the 5th Parachute had been identified days earlier as belonging to the Seventh Army. What these enemy divisions could do and what they intended to do quite literally was any man's guess. The III Corps attack would have to push off through a fragmentary screen of friendly troops whose positions were uncertain, against an enemy whose exact location was unknown, over terrain which had not been scouted by the Third Army.

The enemy was equally in the dark as to the III Corps capabilities and intentions. The 26th Infantry Division could not be located by German intelligence after it left Metz and would not be identified as present in its new sector until two days after the American drive commenced. The enemy traced the 80th into Luxembourg, but on 22 December believed it was reinforcing "remnants" of the 4th Infantry Division in a purely defensive role.

When General Millikin and his staff settled into the Arlon headquarters on 20 December, with only two days to go before the counterattack target date, the divisions that made up the attack force were either still on the move or were barely completing their shift. The 26th Infantry Division was en route from Metz to Arlon; the 80th Division had just closed into an assembly area near Luxembourg City after a march of 150 miles; the 4th Armored Division had reached Arlon and was trying to find its assembly area on the Arlon-Neufchâteau road. Nor were the three divisions equally ready for return to the fray.

The 26th Division (Maj. Gen. Willard S. Paul) was full of rifle replacements, mostly inexperienced and lacking recent infantry training. This division had seen its first combat in October and had lost almost 3,000 men during bitter fighting in Lorraine. Withdrawn in early December to take over the Third Army "reinforcement" training program at Metz, the 26th Division had just received 2,585 men as replacements and, on 18 December, was beginning its program (scheduled for thirty days) when the German counteroffensive canceled its role as a training division. The "trainees," men taken from headquarters, antitank sections, and the like, at once were preempted to fill the ranks left gaping by the Lorraine battles. Knowing only that an undefined combat mission lay ahead, the division rolled north to Arlon, completing its move shortly before midnight of the 20th. Not until the next day did General Paul learn that his division was to attack on the early morning of the 22d.

The 80th Division (General McBride) was in good condition. As one of the units being primed by the Third Army for the forthcoming attack against the West Wall, the 80th had been granted priority on replacements, had been rested at St. Avold, and on 18 December was on its way into the line near Zweibrücken when General Patton ordered the move to Luxembourg. There the 80th found itself under the control of the III Corps, its only orders to take up a reserve battle position in the 4th Infantry Division zone. On 21 December McBride first learned that his division would attack the following morning.

The 4th Armored Division (Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey) had come north under hurried and contradictory orders, the result of the usual time lag between a command decision reached in personal conferences by the top commanders and the receipt of this decision in the lower tactical units. CCB, for example, operated for two days under VIII Corps while the rest of the division was en route to III Corps—a fact that has bearing on the subsequent story of Bastogne. On the night of 18 December General Bradley had told Patton, “I understand from General Ike you are to take over the VIII Corps.” That same night CCB, 4th Armored started for Longwy and the road to Luxembourg. The next day the rest of the division followed, under verbal orders from Patton attaching the 4th Armored Division to the III Corps. These orders were countermanded, then reaffirmed by the 12th Army Group in the course of the 19th.

The advance party of CCB arrived meanwhile at Arlon, and found that the VIII Corps was the only corps operating in the area, the III Corps headquarters not yet having appeared on the scene. Brig. Gen. Holmes E. Dager reported to the commander of the VIII Corps, which was officially under the First Army and would be until noon on 20 December, although all concerned knew that it was to pass to the Third Army. General Middleton perforce had command of this Third Army unit before the anticipated change, whereas Third Army records continued to show the entire 4th Armored Division as assigned to the III Corps. At Dager’s request the corps commander agreed to keep CCB together as a tactical unit instead of parceling it out along the front.

The 4th Armored Division had won a brilliant reputation during the autumn battles in Lorraine. It was a favorite of the Third Army commander; so, when its leader, Maj. Gen. John S. Wood, was returned to the United States for rest and recuperation, General Patton named his own chief of staff as Wood’s successor. On 10 December the 4th Armored Division came out of the line after five months of incessant fighting. The last phase of combat, the attack in the Saar mud, had been particularly trying and costly. Replacements, both men and materiel, were not to be had; trained tank crews could not be found in the conventional replacement centers—in fact these specialists no longer were trained in any number in the United States. When the division started for Luxembourg it was short 713 men and 19 officers in the tank and infantry battalions and the cavalry squadron.

The state of materiel was much poorer, for there was a shortage of medium tanks throughout the European theater. The division could replace only a few of its actual losses and was short twenty-one Shermans when ordered north; worse, ordnance could not exchange worn and battle-damaged tanks for new. Tanks issued in the United Kingdom in the spring of 1944 were still operating; many of them after several major repair jobs, and all with mileage records beyond named life expectancy. Some could be run only at medium speed. Others had turrets whose electrical traverse no longer functioned and had to be cranked around by hand. Tracks

and motors were worn badly: the 8th Tank Battalion alone had thirty-three tanks drop out because of mechanical failure in the 160-mile rush to the Ardennes. But even with battle-weary tanks and a large admixture of green tankers and armored infantry the 4th Armored Division, on its record, could be counted an asset in any operation requiring initiative and battle know-how.

The Ezell Task Force

It is obvious that the Third Army could never have put troops into the Luxembourg area as quickly as it did without a wholesale scuttling of “paper work” and “channels”; that improvisation and reliance on the field telephone as a medium for attaining clear understanding have inherent dangers is equally clear. A bizarre adventure that befell CCB of the 4th Armored in its peregrinations typifies the period of “piecemeal reaction,” as some of the participants style it, when Middleton’s VIII Corps was trying to plug the yawning gaps in its front with rifle platoons of engineers and mechanics, and before an American riposte could be made in force.

Bradley had told the VIII Corps commander on the night of 18 December that reinforcements were coming up from the Third Army. Sometime later Middleton learned that the 4th Armored Division was heading northward, led by CCB and apparently under attachment to his dwindling command. Another tank command from the Third Army (CCB, 10th Armored Division) had just arrived on the scene, but this Middleton had committed at once to shore up the crumbling defenses between Bastogne and Wiltz. At noon on the 19th (before the VIII Corps had passed to the Third Army) General Middleton telephoned the First Army commander and asked if he might use CCB of the 4th Armored on its arrival. Uncertain of the command situation Hodges referred the request to Bradley, who told the VIII Corps commander that he could employ CCB but only if necessary to hold his position.

By midnight CCB had ended its 150 mile ride and closed in villages on the east side of Vaux-lez-Rosières; all the journal sergeant could enter at this hour was “mission unknown.” But by the morning of the 20th the status and duties of Dager’s command were really confused, for the III Corps had opened its command post at Arlon and proceeded to give orders on the assumption that the 4th Armored Division in its entirety was reporting to General Millikin. The VIII Corps had ordered Dager to send an officer to Bastogne at daylight on the 20th to determine the exact situation there, but about 0500 that morning someone on the VIII Corps G-3 staff- who it was cannot be determined- ordered Dager to send a tank company, an armored infantry company, and a battery of self-propelled artillery into Bastogne.

Although Dager argued against this fragmentation of his force, at 1030 the small team was on its way, led by Capt. Bert Ezell, executive officer of the 8th Tank Battalion, who earlier had been named the liaison officer to the 101st Airborne. The only mission specified was “to aid CCB of the 10th Armored Division.” Since CCB had bivouacked close to the Neufchâteau-Bastogne road this route was used. There had been rumors that the Germans had cut the road, but nobody seemed to know for certain and American reconnaissance was woefully lacking in this sector. En route the team received- or heard- a little small arms fire. In Bastogne Ezell reported to the 101st chief of staff, who turned him over to the division G-3, who passed him on to General McAuliffe, who assigned him to Colonel Roberts, commanding CCB of the 10th Armored. Roberts ordered Ezell to assemble his task force at Villeroux two and a half miles southwest of Bastogne and gave him a number of missions.

About 1400 a radio message from CCB rescinded Ezell’s original orders and

told him to return to Nives, the 8th Tank Battalion bivouac. This is what had happened. Telephone connection between CCB and General Gaffey's 4th Armored command post had opened, giving Dager an opportunity to express his concern over the way in which his command was being whittled away piecemeal. Gaffey immediately ordered Dager to recall the task force at Bastogne and to move CCB into assembly with the rest of the division northwest of Arlon.

Figuring that someone higher in authority would inform Roberts or McAuliffe, Ezell and his team started for home. On the way into Bastogne the task force had noticed two battalions of field artillery beside the road, the pieces and prime movers jammed together, equipment scattered, and most of the gunners fleeing along the road to the south. This time the task force stopped found one dead man lying by his prime mover, shot in the head, and an artillery captain single-handedly trying to hitch up the guns and move them to the road. Lieutenant Kiley, who commanded the tank company, hitched three of the pieces to his tanks and left a few of his men to help the anonymous captain. Seven hours after the team set out it was back with CCB. Ezell had counted only three artillery rounds during the trip and had seen signalmen calmly laying wire along the highway. At dusk on the 20th, then, the Neufchâteau-Bastogne road still was in friendly hands. Why was CCB as a unit not put in to hold this corridor open? There is no certain answer. The episode of Ezell's task force can be read only through the fog of war as this is generated by the failure of communications, the complexity and unwieldiness of field command, and the natural, human proclivity for overrating (or underrating) the accomplishments of the enemy.

“Drive Like Hell”

General Patton inspected the III Corps dispositions and divisions on 20 December, concluded that the corps concentration was proceeding satisfactorily, and the following day gave the order for attack at 0600 on the 22d. The corps scheme of maneuver, issued to the divisions in the early afternoon, was simple. The III Corps would advance north in the direction of St. Vith. The 80th Infantry Division, on the right, would maintain contact during its advance with the left wing of the XII Corps. The 26th Division would form the center. The 4th Armored Division would advance on the left- Bastogne lay in its zone.

The last of the eleven field artillery battalions which had been taken from active engagement on the old Third Army front to form the corps artillery arrived during the day. They had wheeled north at an average twenty-mile-per-hour clip. In addition the infantry divisions each had a tank battalion and a self-propelled tank destroyer battalion attached. To eke out some cover on the open west flank, Task Force Lyon, consisting of the 178th Engineer Combat Battalion with reinforcements, was assigned the task of erecting roadblocks and preparing bridges for demolition.

The Third Army commander's last instruction to his commanders reflected the admonition against a dribbling attack given by General Eisenhower: he (General Patton) favored an attack in column of regiments, “or in any case lots of depth.” As usual Patton was optimistic. He felt certain that the enemy was unaware of the storm about to break that German intelligence had not spotted the appearance of the 26th Division in the area, and that it did not know the exact location of the other two divisions. “Drive like hell,” said Patton.

The 80th Division Advance

Despite hurried preparations the III Corps attack got off at the appointed hour on the 22d. The 80th Division, whose regiments earlier had assembled north of Luxembourg for the defense of that city, had as line of departure the Mersch-Arlon road on a front of five and a half miles. During the night it was learned that the 109th Infantry of the dispersed 28th Division still was facing the enemy near Vichten, five miles to the north. This would give some cover for the development of the 80th Division attack; so McBride ordered his left wing regiment to pass through the 109th Infantry, relieving it in place. There was no artillery preparation (nor were there any certain targets) for the surprise attack.

The two assault regiments, the 319th Infantry on the left and the 318th Infantry on the right, went forward fast on this cold cloudy morning, tramping over a light blanket of snow which had fallen during the night. In two hours the 319th Infantry (Col. William N. Taylor) reached Vichten and relieved the 109th; as the regiment moved on toward Merzig the first few rounds of small arms fire came in. The 318th Infantry (Col. Lansing McVickar) headed for Ettelbruck constricted to column formation by the Alzette River on the east and a high ridge on the west. South of the bridgehead town enemy shellfire briefly stopped the advance until the German guns were quieted by counter-battery from the 314th Field Artillery Battalion.

The cannonading was brought on by a peculiar circumstance. The 352d Volks Grenadier Division (General Schmidt) on this morning was advancing along the Diekirch-Ettelbruck-Merzig highway in front of but at a right angle to the American advance from the south. Schmidt was under the impression that his division had broken through the American line and was now marching through undefended, unoccupied country. The 914th Regiment had just entered Ettelbruck when the 318th Infantry appeared. It was the artillery regiment of the 352d, bringing up the tail of the division east of the town which ran afoul of the Americans. Quite obviously the Germans did not expect an attack from this direction. The 914th faced left and deployed hurriedly, using the town as a base, but in the process lost its heavy metal, for the German batteries were in no position to engage in an artillery duel, and fell back to Diekirch.

Farther west the rear of the 915th Regiment column was moving directly across the 319th Infantry line of march. To their amazement, troops of the 3d Battalion suddenly saw the Germans filing past, only a few hundred yards away and oblivious of any danger. Tanks, tank destroyers, and the 57-mm. antitank guns of the 1st Battalion ended this serene promenade. Many Germans were killed, a gun battery was blown to pieces and numerous trucks and horse-drawn weapons were destroyed. The 319th Infantry had knifed between head and tail of the 352d. It now swung right onto the Ettelbruck road and that afternoon reached the villages of Oberfeulen and Niederfeulen. Merzig, however, remained in German hands.

At sundown the 80th Division could look back on a highly successful day. Extensive gains had been the story along the entire III Corps front and Patton was very much pleased. This was, he told General Millikin, a chance to win the war; the attack must be kept rolling through the night. The 319th Infantry put its 2d Battalion, the reserve, into trucks as far as Oberfeulen. There the battalion dismounted about midnight and under a full moon began an advance to take Heiderscheid. The 318th Infantry, which had found it difficult to maneuver on the constricted southern approach to Ettelbruck or to bring its tanks and tank destroyers to bear

against the town, at nightfall began a series of successful assaults to gain the hills which looked down upon Ettelbruck from the West. Company B moved with such speed that it reached the houses at the western edge of the town. Although its commander was wounded during the assault his company held on alone. The 80th Division would have to do some bitter fighting before this bridgehead over the Sure and Alzette was cleared of the enemy, but the division had cut one of the main supply routes of the German Seventh Army.

One lone rifle company holding a few houses hardly made for a handhold on Ettelbruck. In and around the town the enemy had a grenadier regiment and many direct-fire heavy weapons. Because the bluffs surrounding the town precluded much maneuver in attack, assault on the west, or American, bank of the Alzette had to be made frontally. Lt. Col. A. S. Tosi had brought the two other rifle companies of his 1st Battalion close to the edge of the town when daylight came on the 24th (B Company still held inside), but three separate attempts to reach the town failed, and with severe casualties. In the afternoon a few tanks were maneuvered into the van and with their help the 1st Battalion reached the houses and took fifty or sixty prisoners. By this time the battalion had lost the equivalent of a full company, Colonel Tosi had been seriously wounded, and all company leaders had been killed or wounded. One tank reached the streets but found them cluttered with debris and impassable. The division commander decided to call off the attack; at dusk all of the companies withdrew while artillery plastered Ettelbruck. This second day had voided the bright promises of the first, for the 80th Division finally was in contact with the main German forces, well entrenched in towns and villages which could be attacked only over broken and difficult terrain.

In the course of the afternoon General McBride decided to keep the attack rolling by introducing his reserve regiment, the 317th, between the two attacking regiments. The 317th Infantry (Lt. Col. Henry G. Fisher), which had been following the 318th Infantry, was given the mission of clearing the ridge which ran north to Welscheid. Once beyond this town Fisher's troops were to turn east toward the Sure River, thus cutting to the rear of Ettelbruck. When night fell the regiment was on its way, the 2d Battalion in the lead and the 1st Battalion a thousand yards to its rear. Nearing Welscheid sometime after midnight, the forward battalion started into the assault over a series of rough slopes where each man was outlined by the bright moonlight reflecting from the glazed field of snow. The enemy, waiting with machine guns on the reverse slopes, had all the best of it. The American tanks tried but could not maneuver over the broken ground. The battalion commander therefore sent two of his companies to make a wide detour through a deep gorge, their place in the line being taken by the 1t Battalion. But this movement consumed too much time, and day broke on the 24th with the two battalions out in the open and dangerously exposed to German fire. The attack had to be abandoned; new plans were made for bypassing the town and striking directly at Bourscheid and the Sure River.

The 319h Infantry had continued its battle by sending the 2d Battalion against Heiderscheid, which lay on the Ettelbruck-Bastogne route and from which a secondary road ran laterally west to Martelange across the 26th Division zone of advance. Just north of Heiderscheid were several crossing points on the Sure River, the chief natural obstacle to be surmounted by the 80th Division in its march northward. The 2d Battalion (Lt. Col. Paul Bandy) reached Heiderscheid about 0230 on the morning of the 23d, but when two rifle companies neared the edge of the village they were stopped by assault gun fire and machine guns firing tracers to point the

targets for the gun crews. Infantrymen with submachine guns worked close enough to fire bursts into the positions from which the orange line of the tracers came but could not deal with the German assault guns. Two American tanks belonging to the 702d Tank Battalion came forward only to be checked by a minefield at a crossroad. A German gun took a shot at the tanks but in so doing gave away its own location, and a quick return shot set the assault gun afire. Guided by the light from the blazing gun carriage the American riflemen rushed the gendarmerie, took it, and there barricaded themselves. About this time the explosion of a German shell detonated the minefield, and the tanks ground forward to the village. An hour or so before noon the last of the stubborn defenders had been routed out and the 2d Battalion was north of the village.

The fight was not finished, for at noon two enemy companies converged in a yelling assault on Heiderscheid. Some of the 2d Battalion broke but the rest stood firm, killed the German infantry commander, and wrote quietus to this threat. Then affairs took a more serious turn as eleven enemy tanks hove in sight, decks and cupolas packed with snow for camouflage. While a hurried call was dispatched for armored aid, bazooka teams crawled forward to try their luck. Two of the enemy tanks fell prey to the bazooka teams, led by 2d Lt. Michael Hritsik, whereupon the others showed themselves loath to close in. Friendly tank destroyers appeared in time to account for four more German tanks, and an American tank knocked out a fifth.

By the time the 3d Battalion (Lt. Col. Elliott B. Cheston) came hurrying up the battle was ended. Cheston's battalion, having spent most of the morning rounding up a large enemy detachment in Merzig, now turned northeast from Heiderscheid and marched through a deep defile to reach and take the hamlet of Tadler on the Sure. The Germans blew the nearby bridge, then sat back on the far bank to pound the battalion with rocket salvos. About dark the regimental commander ordered a company to move west along the river and outpost Heiderscheidergrund; admittedly this was poaching in the zone of the 26th Division, but the bridge there was needed. The company found the bridge intact and a stream of German vehicles running back and forth. Organizing an ambush, the company spent the night picking off unwary travelers.

On the eastern flank the 1st Battalion and its tank support spent most of the 23d negotiating the rough ground, dense woods, and deep snow in an advance from Feulen toward Kehmen. From a hill south of Kehmen the advance guard counted twenty-four tanks rolling toward the village from the east, apparently on their way to retake Heiderscheid. Word already had gone back for more tanks, but those with infantry, plus a few tank destroyers, got in the first fire, immobilized two of the leaders, and so surprised the rest that they turned tail and hurried back to Bourscheid-which the 905th Field Artillery Battalion promptly took under fire. Discerning at least a tank platoon backing the grenadiers inside Kehmen, the 1st Battalion waited until after dark for reinforcements-ten tanks formerly attached to the 28th Infantry Division. With their help, the battalion delivered a sharp assault, destroying three German tanks and freeing the village.

The night battles had shown clearly that the 80th Infantry Division faced hard going as the 24th dawned. The advance had carried north to a point where it impinged on the Seventh Army communications leading to the Bastogne battleground. The main fight for the III Corps was that flaring farther west. Henceforth McBride's operation would be subsidiary to the attack by the corps' left and center, an operation designed to interdict the movement of reinforcements heading

for Bastogne and to contain the enemy in the Ettelbruck and Bourscheid sectors. Orders from General Millikin, received at the 80th Division command post early on the 24th, underlined the shift of gravity westward: McBride was to send two battalions of the 318th Infantry from Ettelbruck to assist the 4th Armored Division, and at once.

The 26th Infantry Division Attack

The 26th Division advance in the center of the III Corps zone began under circumstances similar to those in the sector of the 80th Division.⁸ Before dawn on 22 December the 104th Infantry and the 328th Infantry moved from their assembly areas east of Arlon to the line of departure at the Attert River. A very large number of men in the rifle companies had yet to see their first German, many of them were replacements whose only recent experience with a rifle consisted of a day or two at the Metz training ground. All had heard the current rumors of atrocities perpetrated by the German SS troops and paratroopers; all were steeled, according to the capacity of the individual, to meet a ruthless enemy.

The general axis of advance was Arlon-Wiltz; but there was no main road from the Attert north to Wiltz—indeed the advance would have to reach Eschdorf, seven air miles away, before it could follow a main thoroughfare. There were numerous secondary roads and trails going north, and, the attack would fan out over these. But this network became increasingly difficult to traverse as it descended into the ravines and through the forests leading to the gorges of the Sure River. The ground between the Sure trench and the valley of the Wiltz was equally rugged. Since little was known of the enemy, the division plan simply called for the troops to expand over roads and trails, eliminating German resistance wherever found.

While the 26th Reconnaissance Troop rolled out as a screen several thousand yards to the fore, the 104th Infantry (Lt. Col. Ralph A. Palladino) on the right and the 328th Infantry (Col. Ben R. Jacobs) on the left marched through dense woods and over slushy, muddy trails, finally coming out onto open, rolling fields near the village of Pratz, about three miles by road from the Attert. Unaware of the fact, the Americans were nearing the advance guard of the 915th Regiment, marching out from Ettelbruck. (It was this column of the 352d Volks Grenadier Division whose tail the 80th Division pinched near Merzig.)

The 104th Infantry continued north, assailed only by scattered small arms fire and machine gun bursts fired at long range. A mile farther on a small detachment of enemy tanks and infantry essayed an attack but were repelled by mortar fire.

The first real test of strength came when the leading company was a couple of miles southeast of Grosbous, from which town a road led north to Eschdorf. Here the advance battalion of the 915th Regiment struck so suddenly and with such force that the lead company fell back for at least half a mile. The guns supporting the 104th Infantry were in position, however, and finally bent back the counterattack. In the meantime a handful of riflemen from the 109th Infantry, 28th Division, who had been waging a long battle in Grosbous until driven out by four German tanks, made their way back to the 104th. As it turned out the body of the 352d Volks Grenadier Division was not present here but was in the 80th Division zone. The 915th Regiment consisting of troops now split off from their trains, artillery, and the bulk of the division by the wedge which the 80th had thrust forward west of Ettelbruck, withdrew to make a stand in the neighborhood of Grosbous. Colonel Palladino left Company E to hold in check some Germans who had taken to the

nearby woods, while the rest of the 104th Infantry continued tramping north along the road to Grosbous. The village itself was taken a couple of hours after midnight in a surprise attack by a combat patrol from Company G.

The series of blocks thrown against the 352d Volks Grenadier Division by the 80th Division and the 104th Infantry gave the western wing of the 26th Division a clear field. By the middle of the afternoon the 328th had covered nearly six miles without firing or receiving a shot. The advance guard was nearing the village of Arsdorf, from which a series of small roads and trails radiated through ravines and along ridges to the Sure, when a few rounds came in from self-propelled guns firing from a hill to the north. Concurrently reports arrived from the 26th Reconnaissance Troop that there was a strong German force in Rambrouch on the left flank. Night was near and the true strength of the enemy unknown; so the regiment halted while scouts worked their way to the front and flanks.

Who were these German troops? Since it was known that the 352d Volks Grenadier Division could not have reached this point the first guess was that the 5th Parachute Division, believed to be farther north, had pushed down into the area. Actually the 328th Infantry had run into the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, which the Seventh Army had borrowed from the OKW reserve, rushing it across the front to bolster this south flank. At first the brigade had been sent in to hold the Sure River line, but the Seventh Army then decided to expand its blocking position well to the south of the river, and so turned the brigade through Bourscheid and Eschdorf to the neighborhood of Arsdorf. This unit contained a battalion of forty Mark IV and Panther tanks, one battalion of mobile infantry, and one of foot, but thus far only a few tanks and the rifle battalion in personnel carriers were on the scene.

The new turn of events caused General Paul some concern about his left flank. The 4th Armored attack had carried abreast of the line held by the 328th Infantry but there remained a gap of three miles, densely wooded, between the two. As a temporary expedient a small task force, organized around Company K, 101st Infantry, and Company A, 735th Tank Battalion, deployed to screen the open left flank of the 26th Division. Meanwhile Paul's two regiments prepared to continue the attack through the night as the army and corps commanders had ordered. The objective was Wiltz, once the command post of the American 28th Infantry Division and now the headquarters of the German Seventh Army and the concentration point for enemy troops feeding in from the northeast.

While the 104th moved forward to hit the enemy congregated at Grosbous, the 328th Infantry reorganized to keep the drive going, under somewhat optimistic orders to seize crossings on the Wiltz River. At midnight the 1st and 3d Battalions jumped off to take Grevils-Brésil, from which a fairly good ridge road ran north to Eschdorf. The village was garrisoned by two companies of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, reinforced by several Panthers from the Seventh Army reserve. Unshaken by a half-hour shelling, the Germans held tenaciously to the village all night long.

When daylight came on 23 December the 26th Division had little to show for its night attack. The 104th Infantry held Grosbous, but a company of stubborn German infantry backed up with a few tanks checked the 328th at Grevils-Brésil. In the woods south of Grosbous the men of Company E, 104th Infantry, had taken on more than they had bargained for: a couple of hundred riflemen from the 915th Regiment led in person by the regimental commander. (The American regimental commander had to throw in Company I, but even so this pocket was not wiped out until Christmas Eve.)

Although the right wing of the 26th Division was driving along the boundary between the isolated forward regiment of the 352d Volks Grenadier Division and the incoming Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, only a small part of the new brigade was in contact with the forward American battalions early on the 23d. A shell fragment while reconnoitering on the previous evening had seriously wounded the German brigade commander, the hurried march to action had prevented unified commitment, and the heavy woods south of the Sure made control very difficult. Also there were troubles with fuel.

The LXXXV Corps hoped to repel the American attack by means of a coordinated counterattack south of the Sure, which would develop as a pincers movement, grappling the American troops who had penetrated into the dense forest north of the Ettelbruck-Grosbous road. For this maneuver, set to open on the 23d, the new 79th Volks Grenadier Division was to attack toward Niederfeulen, secure the Wark River, and hook to the northwest. On its right the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade would attack in a southeastern direction from Heiderscheid and Eschdorf with Grosbous and union with the 915th Regiment as the immediate objective. This German scheme was slow to come into operation and only a part of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade was brought against the 26th Division during the 23d, and then mostly in small packets of infantry supported by a platoon or less of tanks.

The two attacking regiments of the 26th Division continued to fan out over secondary roads and trails, moving very cautiously for fear of ambush as the woods thickened and pressed closer to the roadways. Here the supporting weapons came into play. Detachments of the 390th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, moving close behind the infantry point, blasted at wood lines, hedges, haystacks, and farm buildings. Their .50-caliber machine guns and the 37-mm. cannon mounted on half-tracks pinned the German infantry down until supporting artillery could be brought to bear, then shifted to a new position before the German gunners could get on target.

The American cannoners wheeled their pieces from position to position so as to give the closest support possible. At one point the commanding officer of the 102d Field Artillery Battalion, Lt. Col. R. W. Kinney, went forward alone under direct enemy fire to pick out the targets for his guns. (Kinney was awarded the DSC.) When an enemy pocket was discovered in some corner of the woods the self-propelled tank destroyers went into action, spraying the enemy with high explosive. Thus a platoon of the 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion ultimately blasted the lost battalion of the 915th Regiment out of the woods near Grosbous.

It was no more than natural that the 26th Division, full of green troops, wanted the comforting presence of friendly tanks or guns. The 735th Tank Battalion after action report says that the 104th Infantry would not enter Dellen ahead of the tanks. The 328th Infantry also was slow in moving without tanks ahead. Since through all this day the Americans had little or no idea of the enemy strength that lay ahead or perhaps lurked on the flanks, the lack of swashbuckling haste was not abnormal.

The corps commander shared the feeling that caution was due. At dark he ordered General Paul to keep pushing with small patrols but enjoined him to keep the mass of the two regiments (the third was corps reserve) from getting too far forward. Patrols, Millikin advised, should try to get to the Sure River bridges before daylight of the 24th. As things now stood, the 80th Division had pushed a salient ahead on the right of the 26th Division in the Kehmen sector and was waiting for

the center division to come abreast. On the left there remained a fair-sized gap between the 4th Armored Division and the 26th, only partially screened by very small detachments at roadblock positions. Thus far the enemy had failed to recognize or exploit this gap.

The 4th Armored Division Attack

On 21 December the 4th Armored Division, then assembled in the L glise-Arlon area, learned what its mission would be when the III Corps attacked on the 22d: advance north and relieve Bastogne. Martelange, an outpost of the VIII Corps engineer barrier line on the Sure River, was twelve miles on a hard-surfaced highway from the center of Bastogne. A Sherman tank could make it from Martelange to Bastogne in a half hour-if the road was passable and if the enemy confined his opposition to loosing rifle and machine gun bursts. The task at hand, however, was to "destroy the enemy in zone" and cover the open west flank of the corps.

Of the three divisions aligned to jump off in the III Corps counterattack, the 4th Armored would come under the closest scrutiny by the Third Army commander. Its mission was dramatic. It was also definite, geographically speaking, and so lent itself the more readily to assessment on the map in terms of success or failure. Furthermore, the reputation of the 4th Armored as a slashing, wheeling outfit would naturally attract attention, even though its materiel was not up to par, either in amount or mechanical fitness, and many green troops were riding in its tanks and infantry half-tracks. To all this must be added a less tangible item in evaluating readiness for battle. General Gaffey, the division commander, was a relative newcomer to this veteran and closely-knit fighting team; he had as yet to lead the entire division in combat. CCA likewise had a commander who was a stranger to the division, Brig. Gen. Herbert L. Earnest. It might be expected, therefore, that the 4th Armored would take some little time in growing accustomed to the new leaders and their ways of conducting battle.

Theoretically the VIII Corps covered the western flank of the III Corps, but on 22 December the situation in Middleton's area was so fluid and his forces were so weak that no definite boundary or contact existed between the VIII and III Corps. The actual zone of operations for the 4th Armored Division, therefore, proved to be an area delimited by Bigonville on the east and Neufch teau on the east and Neufch teau on the west, a front of over fifteen miles. The mission assigned the 4th Armored, rather than zones and boundaries, determined the commitment of the division and the routes it would employ.

Bastogne could be reached from the south by two main approaches, on the right the Arlon-Bastogne road, on the left the Neufch teau-Bastogne road. General Millikin and the III Corps staff preferred the Arlon route, at whose entrance the 4th Armored already was poised. General Middleton, whose VIII Corps nominally controlled the troops in Bastogne, favored a broad thrust to employ both routes but with the weight placed on the Neufch teau road. The Arlon-Bastogne road was the shortest by a few miles and on the most direct line from the III Corps assembly area. To control the Arlon approach would block the reinforcement of the enemy troops already south of Bastogne. Attack on this axis also would allow the left and center divisions of the III Corps to maintain a somewhat closer contact with each other. The Neufch teau-Bastogne route, on the other hand, was less tightly controlled by the enemy, although there was some evidence that German strength was building up in that direction.

The problem facing the III Corps was not the simple one of gaining access to Bastogne or of restoring physical contact with the forces therein, contact which had existed as late as 20 December. The problem was: (a) to restore and maintain a permanent corridor into the city; and (b) to jar the surrounding enemy loose so that Bastogne and its road net could be used by the Third Army as a base for further operations to the north and northeast. The problem was well understood by the

4th Armored Division. General Gaffey's letter of instructions to General Dager, commanding CCB, said, "...you will drive in, relieve the force, and proceed [italics supplied] from Bastogne to the NE..." The impression held by 4th Armored commanders and staff was that an independent tank column could cut its way through to the city ("at any time," said Dager), but that the opening of a corridor equivalent to the width of the road bed would be self-sealing once the thin-skinned or light armored columns started north to resupply and reinforce the heavy armor which reached Bastogne. The mission set the 4th Armored would require the co-ordinated efforts of the entire division, nor could it be fulfilled by a dramatic ride to the rescue of the Bastogne garrison, although this may have been what General Patton had in mind.

The Third Army commander, veteran tanker, himself prescribed the tactics to be used by Gaffey and the 4th Armored. The attack should lead off with the tanks, artillery, tank destroyers, and armored engineers in the van. The main body of armored infantry should be kept back. When stiff resistance was encountered, envelopment tactics should be used: no close-in envelopment should be attempted; all envelopment's should be started a mile or a mile and a half mile back and be made at right angles. Patton, whose experience against the Panther tank during the Lorraine campaign had made him keenly aware of its superiority over the American Sherman in gun and armor, ordered that the new, modified Sherman with heavier armor (the so-called Jumbo) should be put in the lead when available. But there were very few of the Jumbos in the Third Army.

At 0600 on 22 December (H-hour for the III Corps counterattack) two combat commands stood ready behind a line of departure which stretched from Habay-la-Neuve east to Niedercolpach. General Gaffey planned to send CCA and CCB into the attack abreast, CCA working along the main Arlon-Bastogne road while CCB advanced on secondary roads to the west. In effect the two commands would be traversing parallel ridgelines. Although the full extent of damage done the roads and bridges during the VIII Corps withdrawal was not yet clear, it was known that the Sure bridges at Martelange had been blown. In the event that CCA was delayed unduly at the Sure crossing CCB might be switched east and take the lead on the main road. In any case CCB was scheduled to lead the 4th Armored Division into Bastogne.

On the right CCA (General Earnest) moved out behind A Troop of the 25th Cavalry Squadron in two task forces of battalion size. Visibility was poor, the ground was snow-covered, but the tracked vehicles were able to move without difficulty over the frozen terrain-without difficulty, that is, until the eastern task force commenced to encounter demolitions executed earlier by the VIII Corps engineers. The upshot was that both task forces converged on the main Arlon road and proceeded as a single column. Near Martelange a large crater delayed the column for some time. Shortly after noon it was bridged and the advance guard became embroiled in a fire fight with a rifle company of the 15th Regiment (5th Parachute Division) guarding the bridges, now demolished, at Martelange. The town, sprawl-

ing on a series of terraces rising from the river was too large for effective artillery fire and the enemy riflemen held on until about 0300 the next morning when, unaccountably, they allowed a company of armored infantry to cross on one of the broken spans. Most of the 23d was spent in bridging the Sure. The width and depth of the cut through which the stream flowed forbade the use of either pontoon or treadway. Corps engineers came up to fabricate a 90-foot Bailey bridge, but it was afternoon before the tanks could start moving. Delays, however, had not dimmed the general impression that CCA could cut its way through to Bastogne in short order, and at 1500 the III Corps sent word to Middleton that contact with the 101st was expected "by tonight."

On the lesser roads to the west, General Dager's CCB, which had started out at 0430, also was delayed by demolitions. Nonetheless at noon of the 22d the 8th Tank Battalion was in sight of Burnon, only seven miles from Bastogne, nor was there evidence that the enemy could make a stand. Here orders came from General Patton: the advance was to be continued through the night "to relieve Bastogne." Then ensued the usual delay: still another bridge destroyed during the withdrawal had to be replaced, and it was past midnight when light tanks and infantry cleared a small German rear guard from Burnon itself.

Wary of German bazookas in this wooded country, tanks and cavalry jeeps moved cautiously over the frozen ground toward Chaumont, the next sizable village. Thus far the column had been subject only to small arms fire, although a couple of jeeps had been lost to German bazookas. But when the cavalry and light tanks neared Chaumont antitank guns knocked out one of the tanks and the advance guard withdrew to the main body, deployed on a ridge south of the village. Daylight was near. CCB had covered only about a quarter of a mile during the night, but because Chaumont appeared to be guarded by German guns on the flanking hills a formal, time-consuming, coordinated attack seemed necessary.

During the morning the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion and the twenty-two Shermans of the 8th Tank Battalion that were in fighting condition organized for a sweep around Chaumont to west and north, coupled with a direct punch to drive the enemy out of the village. To keep the enemy occupied, an armored field artillery battalion shelled the houses. Then, as the morning fog cleared away, fighter-bombers from the XIX Tactical Air Command (a trusted friend of the 4th Armored Division) detoured from their main mission of covering the cargo planes flying supplies to Bastogne and hammered Chaumont, pausing briefly for a dogfight with Luftwaffe intruders as tankers and infantry below formed a spellbound audience.

While CCB paused south of Chaumont and CCA waited for the Martelange bridge to be finished, the Third Army commander fretted at the delay. He telephoned the III Corps headquarters: "There is too much piddling around. Bypass these towns and clear them up later. Tanks can operate on this ground now." It was clear to all that General Patton's eye was on the 4th Armored Division and his erstwhile chief of staff, General Gaffey, and that he counted on the 4th Armored to cut its way into Bastogne.

At Chaumont the ground assault came about 1330 on the heels of a particularly telling strike by friendly fighter-bombers. German artillery had begun to come alive an hour or so earlier, but with the Jabos in the sky the enemy gunners were quiet. Two rifle platoons mounted on tanks made a dash into the village, where more of the armored infantry soon arrived on foot. Even so, the lunge to envelop Chaumont on the west failed of its intent for the fields were thawing in the afternoon sun and

the Shermans were left churning in the mud. A company of the 14th Regiment, 5th Parachute Division, tried to fight it out in the houses, but after a couple of hours nearly all the enemy had been rounded up. Then the scene changed with some abruptness.

During the night a liaison officer carrying the CCB attack orders had taken the wrong turning and driven into the German lines. Perhaps the enemy had seized the orders before they could be destroyed. Perhaps the cavalry foray in the early morning had given advance warning. In any case General Kokott, commanding the 26th Volks Grenadier Division responsible for the Chaumont-Martelange sector, had taken steps to reply to the attack on Chaumont. This village lies at the bottom of a bowl whose sides are formed by hills and connecting ridges. The rim to the north-east is densely wooded but is tapped by a trail leading on to the north. Along this trail, screened by the woods, the Germans brought up the 11th Assault Gun Brigade, numbering ten to fifteen remodeled Mark III carriages. Bearing 75-mm. guns and with riflemen clinging to their decks and sides. Rolling down the slope behind an artillery smoke screen, the German assault guns knocked out those American tanks they could sight and discharged their gray-clad passengers into the village.

The American riflemen (Lt. Col. Harold Cohen's 10th Armored Infantry Battalion) battled beside the crippled and mired tanks in what Maj. Albin Irzyk, the veteran commander of the 9th Tank Battalion, called the bitterest fighting his battalion ever had encountered. The forward artillery observer was dead and there was no quick means of bringing fire on the enemy assault guns, which simply stood off and blasted a road for the German infantry. Company A, 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, which had led the original assault against Chaumont, lost some sixty-five men. The battle soon ended.¹² In small groups the Americans fell back through the dusk to their original positions, leaving eleven Shermans as victims of the assault guns and the mud. The only officer of Company A left alive, 1st Lt. Charles R. Gniot, stayed behind to cover the withdrawal until he too was killed. Gniot was awarded the DSC, posthumously.

At the hour when the CCB assault first reached Chaumont, the eastern combat command had started moving across the Martelange bridge. Since it would take a long while for the whole column to close up and cross, General Earnest ordered Lt. Col. Delk Oden, commander of the 35th Tank Battalion, to forge ahead with his task force in a bid to reach Bastogne. The road ahead climbed out of the valley and onto a chain of ridges, these ridges closely flanked by higher ground so that the pavement ran through a series of cuts that limited maneuver off the road. The cavalry point had just gained the ridge line when, at a sharp bend, the Germans opened fire. Fortunately the tank company following was able to leave the highway and find cover behind the rise to the west of the pavement. For half hour artillery worked over the enemy location, and then the artillery observer with the tanks "walked" the fire along the successive ridges while the tanks moved north in defilade. At the same time the half-tracks of Company G, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, clanked forward along the pavement.

...CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE

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