

# BLUE RIDGE

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Issue 3




  
**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).

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**Albert J. Cresson (C-315 FA)**

**Don Davis (K-319)**

**George V. West (C-318)**

**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*

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# COMMANDER'S REPORT

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## *Greetings to Veterans and Friends of the 80th Division:*

I am near the end of my time as Commander of the 80th Division Veterans Association. I count it an honor and a privilege to have been a part of this great organization. First is to have been able to attend the Annual Reunions since 1991. Second is to have met Veterans and their families through these many years. Third, and perhaps the most unique, is the fact that we are all on the same level, whether officer or private, we are Veterans of the 80th Infantry Division.

Until February 1945, I did not know there was an 80th Infantry Division. That became a reality when I, as a replacement, was assigned to a squad with just 4 men remaining. Within a few days our Barman was killed and I was assigned to take his place. As we made our way across Germany, I learned how the fighting force of the 80th fulfilled its part in Patton's 3rd Army. Yes, we were a fighting force that only moved forward.

Sadly, we remember those that were wounded and died on the battlefield. Our coming each year to the Reunion reminds me that we have not forgotten the horrors of war or our comrades, both living and dead.

In March of this year, I was invited to attend an event at the Holocaust Center in Boston. It was held on June 15, 2006. Invitees were representatives of World War II units that had liberated the concentration camps. The 80th, although not first on the scene, was recognized for their part in liberating the Buchenwald and Ebensee concentration camps.

I flew from Columbus, Ohio to Boston and met Burt Marsh. We attended the Banquet, mingled with Veterans from 29 other units, and met our hosts, the Holden Oil Co. It was a wonderful evening. The Keynote Speaker was Joanne Holbrook Patton, the daughter-in-law of the late General George Patton. Her closing remark was "let there be peace on earth and let it begin with us". Several former inmates of the concentration camps were present.

We received a plaque that will be presented to the 80th Division Veterans Association at our annual Meeting in Columbus, GA and will be kept by the Historian. Finally, may I take this opportunity to express my thanks to each of you for your assistance during my year as Commander. It has been a pleasure to work with this fine organization. I could not have been successful without the assistance so many have given me.

*Best Regards, Walt Spangler*

**80th Division Veterans Association 87th Annual Reunion  
20-23 September 2006 The Hilton Garden Inn  
1500 Bradley Lake Blvd, Columbus, GA  
Phone: 877-782-9444**

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# LETTERS

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Please, I am looking for anyone who served or knew **LT. BEER**. (*Company or Battalion unknown to Editor*) Please contact: Robert E. Beer, P.O. Box 1402, Telluride, CO. 82435 Telephone (970) 728-3543. Thank You!

I am looking for any information on my Dad, **HERBERT EDWIN HATHAWAY**. He died in 1989 before I had an opportunity to talk with him about his experience. He was a POW in WWII in Germany from 11/28/1944 till 05/23/1945. US Army, Co. C, 317 Inf, 80th Division. ANY info is appreciated. Patty Humbert, 6082 W. Linda Lane, Chandler, AZ 85226

Hello, my name is Wade Founier. My address is 8602 Stonewall Road Manassas, VA 20110 and my E-mail is Wadef\_99@Yahoo.com. I am looking for any information on/who may remember my grandmother's brother, **GORDON H. LABOR** who was KIA on 8 October 1944 and was with the 319th.

*NOTE: For family members looking for information on a soldier that was KIA or is still MIA/unaccounted for they may write to: U.S. Army Human Resources Command, ATTN: AHRC-PER, 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria, VA 22332*

June 29, 2006

Dear Mr. Murrell:

The Lincoln Community Foundation has selected **ALYSSA M. DEMMEL** as the fourth recipient of the 80th Division Veterans Association-General Horace McBride Scholarship for 2006-2007.

Alyssa will receive a scholarship of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) which will be made payable to the University of Nebraska-Omaha in support of her education during the upcoming academic year.

Alyssa was the valedictorian at Madison High School this year. She participated in concert, marching and pep band, volleyball, track and basketball. She was a member of the Future Business Leaders of America, National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the People to People Student Ambassador program. She served as the class secretary, volleyball varsity co-captain and church youth group treasurer during her senior year. Alyssa received many awards and honors for athletics and academics throughout high school. In her spare time, Alyssa volunteers for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Madison County Historical Society, Habitat for Humanity, the Association of Retarded Citizens and the local food pantry. She is also a vacation Bible school teacher and Sunday school teacher at her church.

Alyssa will begin her college studies this fall. She has not yet selected a major.

Thank you once again for making this scholarship possible for deserving high school students from Madison High School. Alyssa will be very appreciative of this award.

Sincerely, Sonya Brakeman

Assistant Director of Program & Donor Relations

## LETTERS, CONTINUED

I am proud to say my stepfather **ED PREZSNAR** was a mortarman in the 80th Division. If anyone remembers serving with my septdad I would like to hear from you. Thank God for this greastest generation of warriors, or we would be speaking German and Japanese. Write or E-mail me. Scott Rocder, 1105 N. Taylor Street, Green Bay, WI 54303-E-Mail Address: Paratrooper752000@yahoo.com

I am hoping to reach anyone that might remember my uncle **S/SGT. CURTIS M. BRAY**. He was in Co. C 305th Engineers. He was KIA on 26 April 1945. He is buried near St. Avold. A Newspaper article I have states "Sgt. Bray, with an engineer company detailed to clean up a town that had been captured from the Germans, picked up an enemy weapon exploded and caused instant death. Mark Bray 206 Saddlerock Court Harvest, AL 35749 E-mail marc.bray2mchsi.com

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## MEMORIAL FUND

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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 September 2006.

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## LIFE PLUS CLUB 2005-2006

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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 September 2006.

Shoemaker, Howard           I-317  
Smith, Robert W.            L-317

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Michael R. Marchner 313th FA Bn  
1304 Charlie Griffin Road  
Plant City, FL 33566

Walker, Harold L. K-318  
606 VALHAVEN DRIVE  
ATTALLA, AL 35054  
256-538-0336

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## DUES

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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".

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## McBRIDE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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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 September 2006.

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## NOTICE

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

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## MAIL BAG

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Dr. Anthony traveled to France over the Memorial Day holiday, to participate in services at the American Cemeteries there. Representing the 80th Division Veterans Association, the Descendants of 80th Division Veterans and USNR, he presented the memorial wreath at the commemorative services at the Somme American Cemetery in Bony on Sunday, May 28.

Dr. Anthony also interacted with the French re-enactors (WW II), and explored the possibility of their receiving orders to the 80th vice their present 3rd Division patches which they wear. He also discussed two locations for a museum in France; Nantillois or Chatel-Chehery, both of which the 80th "visited" during WWI. There is a building in Nantillois which was erected by the 315th Infantry Regiment after WWI. The building is in need of maintenance, but has great possibilities. Chatel-Chehery is the village nearest the Alvin York battlefield, and we are friends with the owners of the battlefield.

He traveled extensively throughout the Somme, over the American battlefields, and on through the British sectors, into Belgium; Ypres, Passchendaele, etc. He also explored the possibility of arranging a tour of 80th WW I and WW II sites, concluding with a visit to Luxembourg in time for their annual June week celebrations. Dr. Anthony reaffirmed the strong friendship with Superintendent Craig Rahanian and his wife Lorna. (AMC at Bony.) He was the house guest of the Rahanians during his visit to France.

Sad to say, there was a series of Armistice Day observances last November, including Varennes, to which the 80th was not invited, even though another Pennsylvania Division was invited (28th ) MG Evans should be aware of this, and we need to participate next time. There will come a time, as we bring back units to the U.S., such as the 1st Division from Germany, when the 80th may need to send a Color Guard to some of the Commemorative services at the cemeteries in France. There are some of the French citizens who are strongly pro-American, and Dr. Anthony has been fortunate to meet and become friends with them.

Dr. Anthony expects to receive information through the museum at Peronne regarding the issuance of the Somme medals in the name of those who fought in the Somme in either WWI or WWII. We already have info in the Descendants' files regarding issuance of the Verdun and St. Mihiel medals.

**The Descendants of 80th Division Veterans look forward to participating in the Columbus reunion, and the dedication ceremonies for the new memorial at Fort Benning. We remind Veterans, spouses and family members that we will have a dinner meeting following the dedication on Friday. Anyone not otherwise committed for the evening is invited to attend.**

**Reservations will be accepted until September 14th at \$18.50 per person.**



**Descendants of 80th Division Veterans  
PO Box 206  
Fayetteville, PA 17222  
e-mail: [bcsmith@innernet.net](mailto:bcsmith@innernet.net)  
[www.80thdescendants.com](http://www.80thdescendants.com)**

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

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# TAPS

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Barth, Ernest — F-318  
250 Miller Ct.  
Elyria, OH 44035-8118  
Rptd by Daughter Suzanne

Bishop, William H.  
2601 Warm Hearth Drive APT 301  
Blackburg, VA 24060-6132  
8/23/2003 Rptd by wife

Bisick, Don  
3301 Delomar Drive  
Cincinnati, OH  
7/31/2006 Rptd by Art Rehling

Buss, Reno — A-315 FA Bn  
125 Carbon Street  
Easton, PA 18045  
1/28/2006 Rptd by Wife Grace

Coomer, Warren Kenneth — G-319  
P.O. Box 2134  
Evansville, IN 47728-0134  
1/28/2005 Rptd by E-mail of Obit

Drasler, Joseph — L-317  
14013 State Hwy 148  
Sesser, IL 62884-2549  
11/25/2005 Rptd by Sister Julie

Eckels, Charles W. IV — K-317  
3245 W Haleh Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89139-8837  
3/1/2006 Rptd by wife

Goode, Irving H. — K-317  
129 Burr Oak Court  
Deerfield, IL 60062-2206  
11/25/2005 Rptd by Son Steven

Honnold, Royal C. — Sv-319  
12510 N. Meadowlark Street  
Mead, WA 99021-9608  
6/9/2006 Rptd by wife Viola

Kanis, Herman C. — Hqs-319  
11080 E. 550 S.  
Zionsville, IN 46077-9706  
Rptd by Son Norman

Knoll, Frederick — B-317  
8385 Coral Reef Drive  
Palmetto Bay, FL 37157-2146  
Rptd by Nephew Ron

Merlino, Anthony — E-317  
879 Edgebrook Drive NO.  
Toms River, NJ 08757  
5/19/2006 Rptd by Daughter Josephine

Pfledderer, Robert H. — Cn-319  
420 S. Bill Street Box 147  
Francesville, IN 47946-0147  
6/2006 Rptd by Wife Norma

Richey, Thomas Sr. — 633rd AAA AW Bn  
455 Charring Cross Road  
Irmo, SC. 29063  
7/5/2006 Rptd by Daughter Tiffany

Silberman, Arnold L. — L-318  
951 S. Fair Oaks Ave.  
Pasadena, CA 91105-2631  
Mail Return marked deceased

Veith, James — 80th Rcn  
Milwaukee, WI. Unknown  
Rptd by Eleanor Schoenly

*Correction from Last Issue*  
Peter W. Mayer (not Mayer, W. Mayer)  
305 Engineers

While not a member, an old-time friend of the 80th known to a lot of you as the "Ice Man" who helped in most of the hospitality rooms, getting the ice, and helping out.

Joe Boronyak, Brother of Emil — 905th FA  
RR8 Box 260  
Greensburg, PA  
7/4/2006



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# POST NEWS

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## 3rd Battalion 317th Post #36

Just received a note from Bob Smith. Bob had a great Legion of Valor reunion in Washington, D.C. over 4th July and visited the WW II memorial and if ever in the area it is a must to visit. Had a visit from Bert Langdon and his wife who live in Lorange, CA and a former K Co. man.

Enclosed is a picture of a bronze plaque Pat my daughter had made for me and will be placed in the wall of the Veterans Memorial Museum in San Luis Obispo. I enjoy the California weather. Thanks for the picture Bob, you look great. Bob and his daughter Pat will be attending the reunion Georgia.

Bob and Joan Moorhead have had knee problems and plan to move to a building in the same complex that has elevators. They will be at the reunion if there are not a lot of steps. Bob and Pauline Parks will be at the reunion as long as Pauline's health is okay.

Please let us know how things are going. My address is 1739 Faunce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19111. Our prayers are with those who are ill and have physical problems. Have a great reunion.

*Bob Nathason, Sect.*



## Post # 37 80th Rcn

It is sad that Mrs. Paul Schoenly is giving up the posting the news of Post #37. Mrs. Schoenly has so many aches and pains along with other problems, and the fact people just didn't give her the news she needed to write the Column.

She writes if anyone wish's to take over the writing of the column, she will only be too glad to see the news of the post continue.

She wishes to report the death of James Veitch of Milwaukee, WI

## Post 44 Company M 318th Inf.

Sorry, I have received no news from any one. However, for a long period of time (August 1944) Joe Pemberton of "M" Company was listed as MIA. I was in touch with the Officials and was told that Joe had been captured and was in a POW Camp and was on a detail into some town, I failed to get where, but anyway some Artillery begin to fall where he was. All the German ran for safety, and Joe thought he could make a break for freedom. He was shot and ran into a wooded area and was never heard from again, so he is still listed as MIA.



## FLORIDA POST # 47

When you read this article the 87th Annual Reunion will have been history. It will have been the first time our gathering will have been held in this area. It gave us the opportunity to visit sites in the area. We will allow ample time to visit our grandchildren in Tennessee and to site-see to and from the reunion. Bob Burrows and his committee worked hard and diligently to provide a thorough and thoughtful Presentation of the Monument. It will be a rewarding memory for all that attended.

We received a call from Walter Cooper. He enlightened us on his problem that kept him from attending our meetings. Lately he has been keeping the medical profession busy (I know I was Doing my share late this winter and early spring) and he plans on attending our future meetings.

At this writing we heard that George West's wife Helen had fell while working in the garden and fractured her pelvis. It was a clean fracture; therefore, they do not expect any complications. We wish her a speedy recovery. Because of medical problems George and Helen will not make this years reunion but plan on attending future reunions.

Don't forget our October meeting in Ocala at the Hampton Inn, 3434 College Rd. The dates are October 26,27 and 28. The room rate is \$76.00 per night. Phone (352) 854-3200 for reservations be sure to tell them that you are with Post #47. See you there!

*Francis Rajnicek, Sect.*

## Company L 319th Inf.

Another summer is coming to a close and we can expect some relief from the extremely hot weather that most of us have experienced this season. The 80 and 90-degree days will be gone and the refreshing 60-70 degree days will invigorate our aging bones.

Officials at McLeod Regional Medical Center turned out en masse within the Pavilion on July 6th to recognize and honor Jim Young who was the first Chairman of the McLeod Board of Trustees.

A sculpture in his likeness which was created by a local South Carolina artist will be displayed in a wooden cabinet adorned with pecan wood inlays, a nod to Jim's years as President of Young Pecan Company. The new McLeod Pavilion Chapel, also a gift from Jim in memory of his deceased wife Florence was also dedicated during the event. Those who know Jim best, credited him with having the same motivation that he put to use six decades ago while serving as our Company Commander in the fight to liberate Europe from the Nazis during WWII.

Jim and his friend Doctor Vera Hyman are continuing to enjoy life. Jim said that Vera is keeping him alive with love, happiness and travel. Dr. Hyman continues to work as a multitiered Pathologist, although retired, and is in great demand by Physicians in the surrounding states.

My apologies to Billie Krehbiel. It was she and not Bill who had the Carpal Tunnel surgery as reported in our last column. Bill and Billie traveled to San Antonio to attend the graduation of grandson Moses from the Air Force Base in Lackland. Moses finished in the top 10% of his class and also received a marksmanship rifle award. Bill and Billie will visit Lou Rice, widow of Banner Rice, on their way to the Reunion.

We are sorry to report the death of Harold Ramsey who died on July 15th. Harold was 85 years old. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Evelyn and two daughters, Hannah and Brenda. Harold was a machine gunner in Fred Eckelmann's platoon. I

know you join me in expressing our sincere sympathy to Harold's family for this great loss of husband and father.

Fred Eckelmann celebrated his 89th birthday on August 8th. All of us wish Fred a rousing Happy Belated Birthday. Fred and Fred, Jr., are looking forward to attending the Reunion and will stop on the way to visit George, Fred's stepson, in Atlanta. A little humor from the Eckelmann family. Fred jr. sister asked her son to do something and he said he couldn't. When asked why, he replied "Because my brain won't listen to me when I talk to it"

John Balas reported that life in the Balas household is the same routine. Helen is still bothered by her back and hip problems and now has a valve problem in her heart. John's son Jack will have a showing of his art in New York in September.

Helen Hudock sends her love to all members of Company L and says she thinks about you often.

Bill Siebert wrote and told me that he is writing a life history that he intends to give to his children. He is doing this because he wished he had asked his Mom and Dad to write about their younger days. Maybe we should all consider doing this for our children.

Haven't heard a word from Lou Blatz but expect he and his brother Rich will be with us in Columbus.

Pattie Garren, Frank Soloninka's daughter, e-mails me frequently but doesn't pass along any information about Frank. Hearing nothing make me believe that Frank is doing OK and will be at the Reunion.

On the home front, Maria had a stent placed in her Carotid artery because she has been having occasions where she passes out. Doctor's thought that that would solve her problem but it hasn't worked out that way. They are still searching for a reason for these episodes and have been unable to produce the symptoms that cause the episodes to occur.

Enough for now. Must start packing for Columbus Georgia. See you there!

*Hank Einolf.*

## **Company H 319th Inf. Post 33**

Not much to report as I have had little contact with 'old' Co H members. Did hear from Jack and Kate Beebe. John reports that he had a bumper crop of tomatoes. Congrats Jack. Nick and Ginny are anxious for the wedding of their last son, and the gaining of an additional daughter in law. Irv and Hilda Robinson are holding down the fort in California. Irv is keeper of the keys for the woodworking department in their village. Talked to Lois Kudrna, she is well and enjoying the summer in Center Point Iowa. Says she has been busy canning fruits and veggies: send some. She will winter again in Florida and would enjoy any visitors. Mac and Wilma are taking it easy in Finksburg, although Wilma has recently had orthrosopic surgery on one knee, and is priming herself for the big knee replacement. Prayers to you. Ledbetter is still active ranching and cow poking in Texas. I assume Debbie is still keeping an eye on his activities.

I'm still doctoring my eyes and hope soon to have good vision again. Jere had a hectic flight from Col. to his East base. Received kudos from the passengers upon unloading. Penny and John lost a son by marriage; assume the home is again normal.

Word is that Barbs mother is not feeling well, so they will miss the first reunion in years. Hope mom is well by now.

*God Bless, Ohly*

# The Siegfried and Beyond

After the January 1945 operations in northern Luxembourg, the 80 U.S. Infantry Division "Blue Ridge" was relocated to hold the high ground northwest Diekirch to Haller parallel to the Sauer River as of February 1. German units in this sector, especially remains of the weary 352nd VGD after their retreat from the Sauer river valley and bridgehead had managed to reoccupy most of the "Westwall"- pillboxes and bunkers on the east banks and highground of the Our river.

For about a week, 80th division organic units spent their time patrolling the east banks of the Our as well as training and preparing for the crossing of the river to attack the Siegfried line in this area. More specifically, the division's own 319th Infantry Regiment was called upon to carry out this task in the Hoesdorf-Wallendorf sector, whereas the 318th Infantry Rgt. was to follow the 319th 3rd Bn and tie in from a jump off line near Bettendorf and the 317th Rgt. was held in reserve in Diekirch.

In the early morning hours of February 7, 1945, the 1st Bn of 319th Infantry Rgt. moved, under cover of darkness, from its assembly area at Kleinreisdorf to the vicinity of the Our river north of Wallendorf. Around 10:00 a.m. the 2nd Bn 319th Inf., preparatory to forcing a crossing of the Our, closed into Hoesdorf. The battalion experienced considerable difficulty due to the high flood level of the Our, the swiftness of the current and heavy enemy artillery and "Nebelwerfer" concentrations. Engineers in support were unable to complete construction of bridges; thus all the crossings were made in assault boats. Units that had managed to get across, were pinned down by heavy mortar and accurate artillery fire on the north shore of the Our.

Units of the 319th Infantry Rgt were alerted to make a crossing early on the morning of February 8, 1945 and troops moved from their assembly area at Bettendorf into Moestroff and Kleinreisdorf preparatory to crossing. The regiment's 3rd Bn started to move to its crossing site, but at about 6:00 a.m. it had achieved no crossing due to German artillery shelling which wrecked the assault boats. Additional boats were brought up, but two subsequent crossings around 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. were unsuccessful. It was only on February 9 that elements of the 319th had managed to get across the Our near Wallendorf and were able to secure some terrain after overcoming enemy infantry counterattacks. Units of the 1st and 2nd Bn assisted in mopping up the high ground northeast Wallendorf and protect the north flank of the bridgehead.

It was only on February 11 that the 319th Inf. Rgt was able to assembly all its forces in an area approximately 1 Km northwest of the confluence of the Our and Sauer rivers after heavy fighting, spending the following two days mopping up pillboxes, pockets of resistance and expanding its bridgehead to the north and the east. Close artillery and heavy mortar support proved invaluable during those operations. On February 13-14, the Regiment continued clearing pillboxes north of Wallendorf as well as near Ammeldingen.

Private First Class Robert Harmon was a member of the anti-tank platoon of the Regimental Headquarters Company of the 319th Inf. Rgt and as such assigned to patrolling and combat missions in a bazooka team. He was ordered to cross the Our at Hoesdorf with elements of the 2nd Bn 319th Inf. Rgt. and recalls.

"We all did not have a clear idea of just what we were about to attempt. We were told we would make an assault crossing of the Our river into the "Westwall" forts and could expect heavy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. We had NO practice in working with the plywood assault boat (each of which was quite heavy, but large enough to carry

up to 10 men together with their weapons and gear) We made an “approach” march of a few kilometers from some nearby village through the forests under the cover of darkness. Unfortunately, just as we organized the final approach towards Hoesdorf, German artillery came in and there were a number of casualties. This was not good for morale!

When we reached the area just above the village of Hoesdorf, where the assault boats had been placed by our combat engineers we found that the boats were “nested” one inside the other so that there were probably - half-dozen - of these fairly heavy boats jammed together. Prying them apart and organizing people into boat teams and getting the boats away from the place where they had been dumped, was a nerve-wrecking chore and more than one GI had his fingers or a hand caught in the boats as we tried to wriggle them apart.

That assault, that night, failed for my boat crew: Shells came in when we got to the river; the boats were tipping over in the icy water and one could hear the cries of the wounded and the men who were drowning because their equipment was dragging them under. We were in Hoesdorf for 2 or 3 days, I do not know. Finally the division commander arranged for some medium and heavy mortars (81 mm and 4.2” chemical mortars) to “zero” the Westwall forts with special attention to trying to drop shells just behind the pillboxes’ escape and exit stairways on the German side of the hill opposite Hoesdorf. That “zeroing” of the heavy mortars took at least one full day. Then, some self-propelled 155 mm guns, firing a 100 pound projectile, rolled into Hoesdorf at dawn and finished all of the pillboxes in a few hours in the sector. They fired co-axial .50 caliber tracer rounds until the Germans closed the ports on their forts. Then, the 155 mm would fire. Usually one round -- usually , end of the story! I do not think they fired more than two rounds at any one fort. The range was short and the shells were accurate. When the high explosive projectile exploded in the Westwall forts, everyone inside ...died!

As we waited in the houses of Hoesdorf to make the crossings, there was a good deal of shelling.--from the Germans into Luxembourg and from our guns and machine guns into Germany. There were a number of “quad fifties (4x.50 cal machine guns) which were part of our anti-aircraft units. These highly-effective guns, together with the 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns were used to sweep a barrage of rounds over the German lines as “suppressing fire”. The night of February 7-8, 1945, the whole valley was lit with tracers, the crash of artillery and the usual mysterious flashes of light which sweep over battlefields.

We finally crossed the river downstream at Wallendorf, late in the day and in the dark and proceeded up the hill into some small village beyond the Our river and Wallendorf. Somewhere up there, in Germany, I spent part of an afternoon lying on top of the rearmost Westwall bunker, talking to the German troops inside. We were trying to get them to surrender. There was a German mortar in the area, probably firing from a small forest a few hundred yards from where we were. When we heard the shells in the mortar tube, we would scurry off the bunker and into shallow foxholes scraped in the dirt around the pillbox. Our usual argument to the German soldiers was simple: “The war is lost” (der Krieg ist verloren). They finally came out in surrender and another GI and I marched them down the hill into some sort of regimental POW (prisoner of war) area.

I was anxious to be one of the guards taking them to the POW concentration point, because we all knew that this would mean a chance of a hot meal at regimental headquarters. And, that’s what happened!” (Pfc. Robert Harmon, 319th Inf. Rgt., 80th Infantry Division.)

## **TRIP TO LUXEMBOURG**

### **June 17-25,2006**

*The following comments are presented by G. Virgil Myers, Veteran of Co. G. 317 Reg. 80th Div. This is a summary of our trip to Luxembourg June 2006, where we took part in the annual celebration, "American Friendship Week" June 20-25.*

The annual week of celebration is planned and sponsored by the U.S. Veterans Friends Organization of Luxembourg to honor those American Veterans that fought in "The Battle of the Bulge" and others that helped free Luxembourg from the Nazi forces, September 1944 through January 1945.

If you are reading this review and have never taken this vacation trip to Luxembourg in June, you should seriously start thinking about taking this trip next year before it is too late. If you need help or want questions answered, I will be glad to assist. If you are concerned about taking the trip alone, take your wife, a friend, or your children with you. They will thank you forever for having the chance to see and travel with you over some of the area you fought on during 1944-45.

#### **OUR FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE USVF CELEBRATION**

This year Bobbie and I went to Europe five days earlier than we usually do, arriving June 16. We were met at the Luxembourg airport by a group of U.S. Veterans friends. Constant Goergan, Marco Eifes and Denise Thill. It is always a pleasure to see these hospitable people of Luxembourg again.

We were transported to our hotel Eurohotel in Gonderange, Luxembourg where we rested and napped that afternoon and evening to ease the jet lag we felt after 20 hours from the time we left home, airports, flight and arrived at Luxembourg City completing the flight.

#### **SATURDAY JUNE 17-**

This morning Constant Goergan picked Bobbie and I up at the Eurohotel at 8:30 am. He had insisted on taking us to Farebersviller where I had made arrangements to meet the Mayor for a tour of the Village and area. Farebersviller is where the 317 Reg. fought the S.S. Armored Infantry for four days for this small village. It changed hands three times before 317 drove the S.S. out and held the area until we were relieved and sent to reserve.

Mayor Laurent Kleinhentz met us at 10 a.m. at City Hall. I really thought we would spend maybe an hour touring the village area then we would return to Luxembourg. But no way! Mayor Kleinhentz had a full day of activities planned. First we toured the town. It had grown so much you wouldn't have recognized it but Mayor Kleinhentz pointed out the 1944 area. I found the house my squad had climbed on the roof to hide from the German tank we saw coming in our direction. Lucky for us one of our T.D's fired on the German tank and it backed up and we were safe.

We then drove to Bitche where we took a tour of the citadel. A huge fort built in the 16th century by Charles III to protect the area of de Lorraine. It was a very interesting and educational tour that lasted almost two hours. After that we drove into Bitche which is located around the base of the mountain on which the fort was built. We had lunch in a five star French restaurant. It was one of the best meals I have ever eaten in Europe. On our way back to Farebersviller, we stopped to see and tour the

“Invincible Maginot Line” fort called Simserhof. They have built a new tourist center at the entrance of this mammoth underground strong hold. It covers 154 acres underground. A trolley took about 30 people at a time through the facility. The trip was told in English, stopping often to see a short video on what took place at each point when it was in operation 1939-40.

With its eight battle blocks, Fort Simserhof was one of the largest artillery works of the Maginot Line. In June 1940, it won renown by protecting the neighboring fornication's; it did not lay down arms until ordered to do so by the Chiefs of Staff, after signature of the cease fire.

We returned to Farebersviller City Hall where we were met by the rest of the City Council, a photographer and a newspaper reporter. The Mayor had a short program then presented Bobbie with a beautiful photo album. He then called me up where he presented me with a Medal of Peace, then a certificate declaring me an honorary citizen of Farebersviller, France. That was a big surprise to me for I never dreamed of receiving these honors from the Mayor of the French.

After the program, the Mayor insisted that we go to his house for coffee and dessert. He had a beautiful home on the tallest hill in the village. He said the hill had been the place where a fierce battle took place between the 80th Division and the German S.S. After dessert, we went to visit the monument that the people of Farebersviller had erected to the 80th Division men. It is located in a well-groomed small park along a stream in the southwest part of the village. After the laying of flowers at the monument we returned to Gonderange, Luxembourg. It had been a great and unexpectedly interesting day.

#### SUNDAY JUNE 18-

A friend from Amsterdam drove to Gonderange to see Bobbie and I. Rick Rimmelzuraar and I have e-mailed one another for two years. He was seeking information about the Battle of the Bulge and I was able to satisfy his request. We had a very friendly and interesting two and a half-hour conversation. He had to return to Amsterdam, which was a five-hour drive for work Monday.

At 12:30 Constant and Berthe picked Bobbie and I up at the Hotel and we went to Thionville for lunch at the restaurant high on the hill overlooking Thionville. That was the headquarters for the 3rd Calvary during the campaign in that area.

We were taken to our table by the hostess and to our surprise Helen Patton- Plusczyk (the grand daughter of General George S. Patton and her family were at the next table. It was like ole home week for a few minutes, for Helen and I met first in 2001 and have seen each other every year since, at the U.S. Veterans Friends Celebration, where she always talks to us veterans, and sings at least one song to the group.

#### MONDAY JUNE 19-

John Parker picked us up from the Hotel about 12:30 p.m. and was taking us to the middle school at Heiderscheid. I was to talk to the children at 2 p.m. I expected to spend around 30 or 40 minutes telling them what happened to their town in 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. All of the children had questions they wanted to ask me. So we ended up spending over two hours with the class. It was a great experience for me. The teacher, Ms. Morel Celanese, was an excellent interpreter who could speak perfect English.

After my talking to the children, Bobbie and I gave each student two candy bars with the 80th Division patch on each bar. I told the students we the 80th Division GI's

at Christmas 1944 had given their grandparents candy, and the candy bars today were in memory of the candy we gave to the children of that time. The kids thanked us and gave us a great hand to show their appreciation. It was a wonderful afternoon.

## **TUESDAY JUNE 20-**

Everyone was arriving in Luxembourg today for the U.S. Veterans Friends Celebration. Bobbie and I rested and greeted the people as they arrived at Hotel Euro.

## **LUXEMBOURG-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP WEEK SCHEDULE FROM WEDNESDAY JUNE 21-25, 2006**

This annual week of celebration is planned and sponsored by The U.S. Veterans Friends Organization of Luxembourg, to honor those American Veterans that fought in “The Battle of the Bulge” and others that helped free Luxembourg from the Nazi earlier in 1944.

## **WEDNESDAY JUNE 21-**

We started our week of celebration from the Euro Hotel Gonderange just after lunch. A new bus that was a beauty, to see and view the city from picked us up. The drivers we had all week were wizards at driving and traveling the narrow, winding and hilly countryside of Luxembourg. The group of 43 people had a wonderful guided tour of most of the Luxembourg countryside by the time the celebration ended.

We had a great tour of Luxembourg City. We visited all parts of that beautiful city. We saw the new buildings that have been built by the Government of Europe that are a part of the European markets and now use the Euro as their legal currency. Luxembourg is the center for the European markers headquarters. Luxembourg City is also one of the world’s largest banking centers. Last year there were 215 international banks in the city. Due to mergers of banks, this year there are 184 international banks in the city.

We visited the Foundation Pescatore Building where General Patton had his headquarters during the “Battle of the Bulge”. This is also where his famous prayer was composed during the Bulge. A copy of the General’s prayer is always available in the chapel.

Next we were taken to the City Hall, where the mayor’s assistant received and welcomed us. The mayor was in Parliament that day, where an important vote was to be made and her present was required. We enjoyed the champagne, orange juice and water reception.

At 6 p.m., a commemorative ceremony was conducted at the Hamm American Cemetery located just east of Luxembourg City, and one mile south of the city airport. Constant Goergan, Ann Wagner, American Ambassador and I placed flowers at the Unknown Veteran’s grave. The ambassador gave a beautiful tribute to the American Veterans buried in Hamm Cemetery and to we the veterans, that was there that day. We can be proud of Ann Wagner, our Ambassador to Luxembourg.

At 7 p.m. certificates from The Chapel of Four Chaplains were presented to first time veterans and selfless people of Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium who were recipients of the certificates. This ceremony was followed by a beautiful banquet by the people of Oetrange, Luxembourg. A music program was presented by Gilbert Kolen while we ate. It was music from the 40’s to the 60’s. Helen Patton spoke and sang a song with Gilbert. We were back at the hotel before midnight. What a wonderful day. One we will all remember.

## THURSDAY JUNE 22-

The bus picked us up around 9:30 am and headed south and west through Luxembourg to Bettembourg. This was a big rail junction used by the Germans to supply the Moselle River Valley troops with ammunition and food. The British and U.S. Air force bombed the railroad in a night raid making it useless for shipping, but the night raid caused many civilian deaths.

Today the city is a beautiful place. Big parks, wide streets and a huge monument to those civilians that lost their lives in that surprise night bombing raid. After flowers were placed at the monument and a short speech by the mayor, our bus took us to the Parc Merveilleux where the local commune served us lunch. In reality, it was a banquet with all the food.

This park was the headquarters for Colonel James Polk and his 3rd Cavalrymen during their dash into southern Luxembourg. After lunch we had some time to see the animals in the park, then we loaded on the bus to proceed onto Thionville, France. This was only the second time the tour has included France in the program. There were almost 20 people representing the 3rd Calvary in their group, so today was their day.

When we arrived in Thionville, we were where greeted by a big marching flag bearing group of 20 or more people and a huge crowd of local civilians. We left the bus, lined up behind the band and flag bearers and marched over a block to a big monument in honor of a Lieutenant that lost his life at the point. The officer had crossed the bridge on foot to check where the Germans were and to see if the bridge over the Moselle had explosives before any tanks crossed. As he returned the officer was almost back when the enemy opened fire, and he was killed. Other 3rd Calvary men were also casualties at this point.

Flowers were placed at the monument and then the national anthems for both U.S.A. and France were played. After the anthems were played the band and flag bearers started to march down the street and we were asked to follow to a reception in the city hall. After the reception we were back on the bus heading to Metzewis for dinner.

When we arrived in Metzewis, the banquet was in a big hall. As we entered there was a thunderous reception from over 200 local civilians that had joined the 3rd Calvary and the rest of us for an evening of festivity. The 3rd Calvary freed this village in WWII. After an outstanding banquet each veteran received gifts from the mayor and his staff. The band played music of the WWII era and everyone loved it. As we left for our hotel, civilians crowded around to shake our hand and give us goodbye hugs. I honestly didn't believe the French had that much hospitality to ward Americans in their blood. I apologize, they do. We were back to the hotel at 11: 00 p.m.

## FRIDAY JUNE 23-

Today is the national holiday and Grand Duke's Birthday celebration at the Cathedral in Luxembourg City. This is dress up day for everyone. Medals, ribbons and hats for the ladies, if they wanted to wear one. A big fireworks display is planned for tonight. Each person attending the Grand Dukes celebration had a personal invitation and place to sit.

We arrived at the church around 10:30 am. We were among the first people to enter the church. We were escorted to our assigned seating area at the very front of the church on the left side of the altar where the Grand Duke, his wife and two children were to sit on the alter area.



The Royal family are always last to enter the completely filled cathedral. Everyone stands in respect to his or her position as leader of Luxembourg.

The ceremony consisted of almost an hour of songs, prayers and music. It was a very impressive ceremony. Ambassadors, Embassy heads attended it, and CEO's of all the huge companies and banks in Luxembourg. Their seats were all designated by row, number and name. The men wore formal long tailed coats with pin striped trousers. The ladies wore formal outfits, hats, shoes and matching gloves. The next day the same ceremony is repeated for the general Luxembourg public, they are allowed to wear casual attire.

Our bus was waiting to pick us up and take us to the north central part of beautiful Luxembourg, to the castle near Bourscheid. Right in the center of where the "Battle of the Bulge" was fought. The castle is located on the mountains just south and west of Bourscheid. The view from there is just breath taking. To know that the 80th Infantry Division traveled those hills and valleys during "the Battle of the Bulge" in 15 inches of snow seemed almost impossible when you see the countryside today.

The communes of Heiderscheid and Bourscheid went together and served us an outstanding meal with coffee, dessert and wine if you wanted it. The mayor of Bourscheid gave a short talk thanking us veterans for what we did for Luxembourg in WWII, and for freeing their village from the Nazi.

As we were getting ready to go the Heiderscheid for a commemorative ceremony at the 80th Division monument, a group of local people drove up in refurbished WWII military vehicles all dressed as WWII soldiers. They asked all of us WWII Veterans to ride to Heiderscheid in their vehicles. I rode in a jeep. Others in command cars, 6x6 truck, and a big supply truck. The six-kilometer trip was rough but brought back a lot of memories and we had a ball.

They rolled us right up in front of the 80th Division monument just a couple of blocks west of Heiderscheid, Luxembourg in a drive through park along side of Hwy N-15, that runs east and west between Ettlebruck and Bastogne. It was in the most beautiful location of all monuments in Luxembourg and Belgium. The monument overlooks the mountains and the valley that the Sauer River flows through. Across the mountains to the north you see beautiful farms and the villages of Goesdorf and Dahl. To the east you see the hills above Kehman and Bourscheid. The view is absolutely awesome to look at. This area was where some of the fiercest fighting took place during the Battle of the Bulge. Three of us 80th Division Veterans did the honors of placing flower sprays at the 80th monument. When Taps was played, it made chills go up your spine.

Marco Schank, the mayor of Heiderscheid gave a very moving talk about how the 80th Division saved the village from the Nazi. He also mentioned in his comments that I had talked to the school children on Monday, and he was there also with the school children. Today was a day to remember. It was definitely was the 80th day.

#### **SATURDAY JUNE 24-**

Today we left the hotel at 9 a.m. We traveled to the northwest section of Luxembourg to the village of Cinqfontaines. Here was the monument where the Nazi had built a deportation camp to export the Jews from Luxembourg and Belgium to concentration camps in Germany, Poland, and Austria. This camp operated three years, then was closed due to the lack of people to export. Flowers were placed at the monument then a Jewish service was said by one of the Jewish veterans. It was a very moving ceremony. A reception, then lunch was provided by the village of Wincrange.

It was actually a beautiful banquet, as all meals are.

About 2:30 p.m. the bus left to take us to Diekirch WWII Museum. One of the best collections of American and German WWII weaponry in the world. We were there over two hours and could have spent another two just looking.

About 7 p.m. the bus took us to Contern where we were treated to a pipe organ concert at 8 p.m. Kevin Birch of Bangor, ME, U.S.A., a world renowned organist played for one hour on the new pipe organ installed in their completely remodeled church.

The countryside we have seen so far this week gives you a very good view of what all parts of Luxembourg looks like. A beautiful rolling countryside with mountains forests rivers and fertile farmland. Once you see this country you fall in love with it again.

### **SUNDAY JUNE 25-**

Today we boarded the bus at 9 a.m. We are again traveling to north central Luxembourg about five miles north of Heiderscheid where we attended mass at the church in Dahl. This mass was in remembrance of all the American soldiers who gave their lives during “the Battle of the Bulge”. This area was where 319 Reg. had a fierce fight with the Germans. After mass, we all proceeded to Michie’s farm.

Here we held a flag raising ceremony at Sgt. Day Turner’s Monument raising the American and Luxembourg flags. The story of what Sgt. Turner and his squad did at that farm house is related to the crowd and the telling of how Sgt. Turner received his Congressional Medal of Honor. Flowers were placed at Sgt. Turner’s monument by us three 80th Division Veterans. This was again an 80th Division day. In case any 80th Division Veterans aren’t aware of it, the 80th Division has monuments at Heiderscheid, Goesdorf, Dahl, Nocher, Neiderfeulen and Patton’s Park, Ettelbruck.

After the memorial services at Sgt. Turners Memorial everyone went to Michie’s Tavern (his large machine shed). The people of Dahl had brought food for Michie’s Bar-B-Q. It was again an outstanding meal and attended by a very big crowd of locals, as well as we veterans and family members.

From Michie’s we were taken to the church in Goesdorf, where we were again treated to an organ program by Kevin Kirch who holds a doctrine degree in musical arts from the University of Iowa. He has studied at the conservatory of Amsterdam and is also a member of the faculty at the University Of Maine School of Performing Arts.

We were back to the Euro Hotel by 7 p.m. where a farewell dinner was offered by the Luxembourg government for us. It was a gala time for all. Everyone was toasting, taking pictures and exchanging last minute good-byes. It had been a wonderful week of seeing where you traveled in 1944-45, meeting many gracious Luxembourg people, and enjoying a great trip over most of the Luxembourg countryside.

### **MONDAY JUNE 26-**

Most everyone either left for home today or continued on with their extended trips in Europe.

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## OUT OF THE PAST...

### continued from last issue

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#### **The 4th Armored Division Attack (CONTINUED)**

It was growing dark. Oden brought his light tank company and assault guns (used throughout the Bastogne relief as medium tanks) abreast of the medium tank company with orders to continue the advance through the night. The head of the task force now was close to the village of Warnach, which lay to the east of the main road. The light tanks had just come in sight of the village when the company of armored infantry appeared around a bend in the main road. The Germans in Warnach, apparently waiting for such a thin-skinned target, knocked out the first two half-tracks. To bypass the village at night was out of the question. While the assault guns shelled the houses a light tank platoon and a rifle platoon went in. Only one of the tanks got out, although most of the foot troops finally straggled back. Shortly after midnight a company of Shermans tried to get into Warnach but were stopped by antitank fire. Meanwhile tanks and infantry of the task force pushed on to the north, clearing the woods on either side of the main highway (the leading tank company ended up in a marsh).

It was daylight when tanks and infantry resumed the assault at Warnach, driving in from three sides with the riflemen clinging to the tanks. The battle which ensued was the most bitter fought by CCA during the whole Bastogne operation. Heilmann, commanding the 5th Parachute Division, had reasoned that the sector he held south of Bastogne was far too wide for a connected linear defense, and so had concentrated the 15th Parachute Regiment along the Martelange-Bastogne road. Warnach was the regimental command post and there was at least one rifle battalion in the village, reinforced by a battery of self-propelled tank destroyers. Two American artillery battalions kept this enemy force down, firing with speed and accuracy as the Shermans swept in, but once the artillery lifted, a house-to-house battle royal commenced in earnest. Four Shermans were destroyed by tank destroyer fire at close range. The enemy infantry fought desperately, filtering back into houses which had been cleared, organizing short, savage rushes to retake lost buildings, and showing little taste for surrender. But try as they might the German paratroopers could not get past the American armored infantry and at the tanks-only one was knocked out by German bazooka fire. The result was slow to be seen but none the less certain. At noon, when the battle ended, the Americans had killed one hundred and thirty-five Germans and taken an equal number of prisoners. The little village cost them sixty-eight officers and men, dead and wounded.

Chaumont, on the 23d, and Warnach, on the 24th, are tabbed in the journals of the 4th Armored as "hot spots" on the march to Bastogne. Quite unexpectedly, however, a third developed at Bigonville, a village some two and a half miles east of the Bastogne highway close to the boundary between the 4th Armored and the 26th Infantry Division. The gap between these divisions, only partially screened by light forces, suddenly became a matter of more than normal concern on the night of 22 December with reports that a large body of German armor was moving in (actually the advance guard of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade which had appeared in front of

the left wing of the 26th Division). To protect CCA's open right flank, Gaffey ordered Col. Wendell Blanchard to form the Reserve Combat Command as a balanced task force (using the 53d Armored Infantry Battalion and 37th Tank Battalion) and advance toward Bigonville. Early on 23 December CCR left Quatre-Vents, followed the main road nearly to Martelange, then turned right onto a secondary road which angled northeast. This road was "sheer ice" and much time was consumed moving the column forward.

About noon the advance guard came under fire from a small plot of woods near a crossroads at which point CCR would have to turn due north. The accompanying artillery battalion went into action, pouring high explosive into the woods for nearly an hour. One rifle company then dismounted and went in to clean out the survivors. The company found no serious resistance, returned to the road, and was just mounting its half-tracks when a fusillade of bullets burst from the little wood. Apparently the enemy had withdrawn during the shelling, only to return at the heels of the departing Americans. Tanks were now sent toward the crossroad but were stopped by mines. All this had been time-consuming. Bigonville was still a mile away, and Blanchard ordered a halt. The enemy in the woods continued to inflict casualties on the troops halted beside the road. Even the tankers were not immune—nearly all of the tank commanders of one company were picked off by rifle fire.

In the course of the night the Germans left the wood and fell back to the shelter of the stone houses in Bigonville. The assault on the morning of the 24th followed what had become standard tactics with the 4th Armored. First came a short concentration fired by the artillery. There followed an advance into the village by two teams, each composed of one tank and one infantry company working closely together. As at Chaumont and Warnach there was little trouble from the enemy artillery, for by this time the 5th Parachute Division was rationed to only seven rounds per howitzer a day. Mostly the German infantry held their fire until the Americans were in the streets, then cut loose with their bazookas, light mortars, and small arms. While the two assault companies of the 53d advanced from house to house the tanks of the 37th blasted the buildings ahead, machine-gunned the Germans when they broke into the open, and set barns and outbuildings afire with tracer bullets. One team burst through to the northern exit road and the garrison was trapped. By 1100 the village was clear. Most of the 328 prisoners taken here were from the 13th Parachute Regiment, which had just been released from its flank guard positions farther to the east on Heilmann's insistence that the 5th Parachute Division could not possibly block the American drive north with only two of its regiments in hand.

The pitched battles at Bigonville and Warnach on 24 December made a considerable dent in the front line fighting strength of the 5th Parachute Division but failed to bring CCR and CCA appreciably closer to Bastogne. CCB, the most advanced of the combat commands, had only two platoons of medium tanks left after the affair at Chaumont and had spent the day quietly waiting for replacement tanks from the repair echelons and for the rest of the division to draw abreast. Meanwhile the American paratroopers and their heterogeneous comrades inside the Bastogne perimeter fought and waited, confining their radio messages to oblique hints that the 4th Armored should get a move on. Thus, at the close of the 23d McAuliffe sent the message: "Sorry I did not get to shake hands today. I was disappointed." A less formal exhortation from one of his staff reached the 4th Armored command post at midnight: "There is only one more shopping day before Christmas!"

Perhaps a few of the armored officers still believed that a hell-for-leather tank

attack could cleave a way to Bastogne. But by the evening of 24 December it seemed to both Gaffey and Millikin that tanks were bound to meet tough going in frontal attack on the hard-surfaced roads to which they were confined and that the operation would demand more use of the foot-slogger, particularly since the German infantry showed a marked proclivity for stealing back into the villages nominally “taken” by the tankers. Attack around the clock, enjoined by General Patton, had not been notably successful so far as the tank arm was concerned. From commander down, the 4th Armored was opposed to further use of the weakened tank battalions in hours of darkness. Further, night attacks by the two infantry divisions had failed to achieve any unusual gains and the troops were tiring.

The corps commander therefore ordered that his divisions hold during the night of the 24th in preparation for attack early on Christmas day. Two battalions of the 318th Infantry were joining the 4th Armored to give the needed infantry strength in the corps’ main effort. Reinforcement by the fighter-bombers had been requested (Gaffey asked the corps for high-priority flights over the 4th Armored as a Christmas present), and good flying weather seemed likely. On the debit side there were indications that reinforcements were arriving to bolster the German line facing the III Corps.

Thus far the Third Army counterattack had tended to be a slugging match with frontal assault and little maneuver. General Patton’s insistence on bypassing centers of resistance had been negated by the terrain, the weather, and the wide-reaching impact of the earlier VIII Corps demolitions scheme. Perhaps the pace could be speeded up by maneuver, now that the enemy had been drawn into the defense of the Arlon-Bastogne approach. At Gaffey’s request the III Corps commander shifted the boundary between the 4th Armored and the 26th Division, making the infantry division responsible for the Bigonville sector and releasing CCR, on the night of the 24th, for employment on the open west flank of the corps with entry into Bastogne as its primary mission.

## **The 80th Division Battle in the Woods**

24-26 DECEMBER

On the morning of 24 December the 80th Division lost the two battalions preempted by the corps commander as infantry reinforcement for the 4th Armored Division. This diminution in its rifle strength and successive collisions with German units crossing the front en route to the Bastogne sector in the west constituted the closest link the 80th Division would have with the dramatic effort being made to reach the encircled 101st Airborne. From this time forward the 80th Division attack would be related to the fighting farther west only in that it was blocking the efforts of the Seventh Army to move its reserves into the Bastogne area.

For the next three days the division would wage a lone battle to reach and cross the Sure River, the scene of action being limited to the wedge formed on the north by the Sure and on the east by the Sauer River with a base represented by the Ettelbruck-Heiderscheidergrund road. This area the 80th came to know as the Bourscheid triangle. Within this frame lay thick forests, deep ravines, and masked ridges, the whole a checkerboard of little terrain compartments. Control of a force larger than the battalion would be most difficult, artillery support—except at clearings and villages—would be ineffective, and the maintenance of an interlocking, impervious front nigh impossible. Once a battalion cleared a compartment and advanced to the next the enemy

could be counted on to seep back to his original position. Unobserved fire and loss of direction in the deep woods, down the blind draws, and along the twisting ridges made each American unit a potential threat to its neighbors, often forcing the use of a single battalion at a time. The infantryman would be duly thankful when tanks, tank destroyers, or artillery could give a hand or at least encourage by their presence, but the battle in woods and ravines was his own.

On the 23d the enemy forces facing the 80th Division were so weak and so disorganized that the Seventh Army commander, Brandenberger, had feared that the 80th Division would drive across the Sure during the course of the night and sever the main line of communications leading to the west. By the morning of the 24th, however, reinforcements had arrived and the threat of a clean, quick American penetration was on the wane. The LXXXV Corps (Kniess) thus far had faced the American III Corps with only two divisions, the 5th Parachute and the 352d. Despite the Seventh Army apprehension that two divisions would not possibly hold the long blocking line from Ettelbruck to Vaux-lez-Rosières and despite daily requests that OKW release additional divisions to the army to strengthen this line, the German High Command was slow to dip into its strategic reserve.

The two larger units earmarked for employment by the Seventh Army were the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade and the 79th Volks Grenadier Division. Both were a considerable distance to the rear and both were equipped with the conglomeration of makeshift, battle-weary vehicles that was the lot of those divisions not scheduled to join in the original breakthrough and penetration. Even when they were released from the OKW Reserve, it would be a matter of days-not hours-before the mass of either unit could be placed in the front lines. When OKW finally responded to the pleas of the Seventh Army, the most optimistic estimates placed the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade and the 79th Volks Grenadier Division in the LXXXV Corps area on the morning of 23 December.

Neither of these two formations was rated as having a high combat value. Theoretically the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, a younger brother of the elite Grossdeutschland Panzer Division and like it charged with guarding Hitler's headquarters (albeit as the outer guard), should have been one of the first of the Wehrmacht formations. In fact this brigade was of very recent vintage, had suffered intense losses in East Prussia during its single commitment as a unit, and was not fully refitted when finally sent marching to the west. Replacements, drawn from the same pool as those for the Grossdeutschland and the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade, were hand-picked from the younger classes but had little training. The Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade numbered some six thousand men, had a rifle regiment mounted on armored half-tracks and 1 1/2-ton trucks, a reconnaissance battalion, an assault gun battalion, and a mixed tank battalion made up of Mark IV's and Panthers. The 79th Volks Grenadier Division possessed an old Wehrmacht number but, as it stood at the time of its commitment in the Ardennes, was a green division the bulk of whose riflemen had been combed out of headquarters troops in early December. Woefully under-strength in both transportation and supporting weapons, it had neither a flak battalion nor an assault gun battalion and would be forced to lean heavily on its artillery regiment.

The Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, the first to start for the battle front, was ordered to take the road from Ettelbruck to Martelange and there deploy in support of the 5th Parachute Division. Its mission, assigned before the Third Army began its counterattack, was changed on the evening of 21 December, and so was its route, now menaced by the 80th Division advance on Ettelbruck. Trying to cross the Our River at the Roth

bridges, the brigade ran into trouble. The bridges had been damaged by attack from the air, and traffic was backed up for miles on both sides of the river. Untrained drivers and mechanical failures further delayed the brigade as its columns entered the icy, narrow, twisting roads of the Ardennes, but by 23 December the reconnaissance battalion, a rifle battalion in armored carriers, and two tank companies had reached Eschdorf and Heiderscheid. Gravely concerned by the rate of the American advance, the Seventh Army commander sidetracked these troops short of the Bastogne sector to restore the gap which was opening between the 5th Parachute Division and the 352d Volks Grenadier Division, and, as already noted, the main body went in on the 23d to stop the 80th Division at Heiderscheid. A part of the battalion of armored infantry marched south from Eschdorf and succeeded in getting cut off by the 26th Division night attack at Grevels-Brésil.

The heavy losses suffered by the green brigade in its first hours of battle had a marked adverse impact on the morale of the entire command. Many times, in subsequent days of battle, higher commanders would comment on the damage done the brigade by piecemeal commitment and defeat in its baptism of fire. The loss of the brigade commander, Col. Hans-Joachim Kahler, further demoralized the Fuehrer Grenadier. For successive days the command-changed hands as new elements of the brigade arrived under more senior officers; this lack of leadership hardly was calculated to restore the shaken confidence of young, inexperienced troops. Yet despite these early reverses in the counterattack role the young soldiers of the brigade would prove tough and tenacious on the defensive.

On the morning of the 24th the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, still without artillery and with half of its tanks and infantry still east of the Our River, stood opposite the inner wings of the American 26th and 80th Divisions. The force of perhaps two rifle companies, which had been cut off by the 26th Division south of Eschdorf, was known to be fighting its way out to the east. The LXXXV Corps commander therefore decided to use his incoming reinforcements-infantry of the 79th Volks Grenadier Division-in a counterattack to regain contact with the lost companies somewhere around Eschdorf. A pivot would follow this to the east, intended to strike the Americans in the flank at Heiderscheid. For this maneuver Col. Alois Weber, commanding the 79th, had available one regiment, the 208th, and a single battalion of the 212th. His division, like the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, had encountered the traffic jam at the Our River and while crossing on the Gentingen bridge had been further delayed by American fighter-bombers. The assault gun battalion and tanks from the Fuehrer Grenadier were at Weber's disposal, but his artillery regiment was missing, entangled someplace on the road east of the Our. By chance the 79th found an artillery battalion, belonging to the 5th Parachute Division, which had been left behind when its prime movers broke down, and these guns were impressed to support the counterattack toward Heiderscheid.

There remained to the LXXXV Corps the 352d Volks Grenadier Division, by this time reduced to two battered regiments huddled north and east of Ettelbruck. These regiments were needed where they stood for not only did they guard the Ettelbruck bridgehead, covering the flank of the Sauer crossings in the LXXXV Corps sector, but they also represented the only cohesive defense on the north bank of the river in the event that the American XII Corps decided to turn in that direction. The bulk of the 915th Regiment of the 352d, cut off by the American advance on 23 December, could no longer be reckoned with. (The major portion of these troops finally escaped through the thick woods, but would not reach the lines of the 352d until 2 December

and then minus most of their equipment.) The fight to bring the American 80th Division to a halt south of the Sure, or at the river itself, would have to be waged by the half-strength 79th Volks Grenadier Division. The battleground, be it said, favored the defender so long as he retained sufficient strength to seal off all penetrations. Whether he could do so remained to be seen.

General McBride continued the attack on 24 December with the 317th and 319th, whose forward battalions had been engaged with the enemy all through the previous night. After the loss of the two battalions from the 318th to the 4th Armored Division, the 317th had simply bypassed Ettelbruck, and the 3d Battalion of the 318th was left to harass the enemy therein with artillery and mortar fire. The immediate division mission remained the same: to root out the enemy south of the Sure River and close in the north along the Sauer.

The 319th, on the left, was in possession of the road net at Heiderscheid and had only a mile to cover before the regiment was on the Sure. Indeed, two companies had spent the night within sight of the river at Heiderscheid although this was in the zone of the 26th Division. The 317th had farther to go because the Sure looped away to the north in its sector. Furthermore the regiment was advancing with its right flank exposed to any riposte coming from east of the Sauer River. Advance northward would have to be made under the eyes of German observers atop two dominating hill masses, one close to the Sure at Ringel, the other rising on the west bank of the Sauer near the bridgehead village of Bourscheid, the initial assembly area of the 79th Volks Grenadier Division. Fortunately for the Americans the 79th lacked the artillery to make full use of such commanding ground, but the German gunners proved to be very accurate.

For the past twenty-four hours the 317th Infantry had been attacking to reach Bourscheid and the high ground there. Although the 2d Battalion lunged ahead as far as Welscheid during the night, it failed to take the village and spent all the daylight hours of the 24th waiting for two companies to extricate themselves from the ridge on whose slope they lay pinned by German fire. (The regimental commander would later remark on the excellent musketry training and first-rate small arms practice of this German unit.)

The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, tried to hook around to the northeast and gain entrance to Bourscheid along the main road. This advance brought the battalion onto open ground where the enemy assault guns spotted farther north could get to work. Then the battalion came under flanking fire from the Germans around Kehmen, in the zone of the neighboring regiment. Mercilessly pounded from front and flank the battalion fell back for half a mile; its casualties numbered 197, mostly wounded. At this point each of the three battalions had taken a crack at punching a way through to Bourscheid. At the close of the 24th the 317th Infantry could report severe losses but no progress and the German tanks and assault guns were raking the Americans wherever they concentrated, even laying with accuracy on the battalion command posts.

While the 317th was being held in check by well-directed gunfire, the 319th attack collided with the enemy counterattack aimed at Eschdorf and Heiderscheid. For this the 79th seems to have assembled at least two battalions of infantry, as well as tanks, assault guns, and armored cars from the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade. The 319th occupied a triangular position: at the apex the 3d Battalion held Tadler, overlooking the Sure, to the right and rear the 1st Battalion had bivouacked in Kehmen on the Bourscheid road; the 2d Battalion (less its two companies near the Heiderscheidergrund crossing) was stationed as the left wing anchor at Heiderscheid. Colonel Taylor, the



regimental commander, wished to bring his right forward to the river. In the dark, on the morning of the 24th, the 1st Battalion (Lt. Col. Hiram D. Ives) marched west out of Kehmen intending to turn north at the next crossroad, two miles away, and push for Ringel on the river.

Daylight was breaking when the head of the column came in sight of the crossroad. About that time two things happened. A German detachment rushed into Kehmen, which the 1st Battalion had just left, while a German tank suddenly opened fire from a masked position near the crossroad and knocked out two Sherman tanks with the advance guard. The remaining American tanks hastily reversed to the cover of a nearby draw and the infantry deployed along the road. About 0930 one of the attached self-propelled tank destroyers sneaked forward and gave the coup de grâce to the German tank. New orders, however, left the battalion standing at the crossroad, for the 2d Battalion at Heiderscheid was hard hit by the main force of the German counterattack and needed protection on the east. Ultimately fire from the 1st Battalion did contribute to halting an enemy attempt at encircling Heiderscheid.

Colonel Bandy had held his 2d Battalion in Heiderscheid during the night of 23 December while awaiting the return of the two companies that had been sent down to the river. An hour or so before daylight the first German shells came in. After ten minutes of this preparation the enemy, on trucks, armored half-trucks, and armored cars, suddenly appeared at the southwest corner of the village. This was the main counterattack of the day for the 79th Volks Grenadier Division, launched as planned, from Eschdorf. The single American tank in the way was surprised and put out of action, but strangely enough the German armored vehicles, mostly light flak tanks with 20-mm. guns, did not risk a precipitate dash into the village, contenting themselves with racing up and down the road which passed on the south, firing madly at the houses. The Americans, for their part, clustered at the windows and returned the fire with every weapon they could lay hand on.

One tank destroyer was in position to enfilade the road but by a curious chance it had been in the path of a bomb dropped by a stray German plane during the night and the firing mechanism was damaged. The tank destroyer commander tracked his gun on the passing targets, jumped up and down on the firing treadle, swore volubly, and banged the firing mechanism with a hammer but to no avail. Twice the German grenadiers got close enough to pitch grenades through windows. Finally one American tank worked its way around to get clear aim and did destroy four of the enemy armored vehicles. Eventually the enemy foot troops made their way into the streets. With this the forward observer for the 315th Field Artillery Battalion took over, calling for his 155-mm. howitzers to shell the village. For half an hour shells exploded, killing and lacerating the unprotected enemy. When the Germans retired they left 76 dead and 26 badly wounded; their Red Cross had removed many more during the fight.

By midafternoon firing died down all along the 319th front. The hastily organized 79th Volks Grenadier Division counterattack had failed in its larger purpose although it had led Colonel Taylor to recall his advance battalion from its position of vantage close to the Sure. On the whole the 80th Division had been through a hard day's fight, and McBride was more than willing to accept the corps commander's orders to hold up the attack until the following morning.

Across the lines the Seventh Army was bringing in a new, provisional headquarters to assume direction of the battle around Bastogne. The boundary, to be effective on Christmas Day, ran between Eschdorf and Heiderscheid, approximating that between the American 26th and 80th Infantry Divisions. The Fuehrer Grenadier Bri-

gade now passed to the new Corps Rothkirch but would continue to oppose the 26th Division just as the major part of its strength had done on 24 December. The LXXXV Corps was left with the 79th and 352d. On Christmas Eve the last troops of the 352d left Ettelbruck, shelled out by high explosive and white phosphorus. The German line north and east of the city hereafter would rest on the far bank of the Sauer.

Kniess was not yet ready to withdraw his right wing to the protection of the river barrier, nor would the Seventh Army commander permit it, for the high ground in the Bourscheid bridgehead could still be used to observe and interdict any crossing of the Sauer farther south and at the same time act as an anchor at the eastern end of the Sure. Because the 79th Volks Grenadier Division still lacked much of its infantry and nearly all of its heavy weapons, the corps commander ordered Colonel Weber to defend the bridgehead by concentrating in the heavy woods around Kehmen and Welscheid. With the limited rifle strength at his disposal, Weber was able to man the Burden ridge, his left flank thus adhering to the Sauer, but in the north the right flank of the 79th consisted only of a thin outpost line extending to Ringel Hill and the Sure. Early on Christmas morning in the bitter cold the 80th Division returned to the attack, its main thrust aimed at Bourscheid. Colonel Fisher sent the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 317th Infantry toward Kehmen and Scheidel, hoping to open the road east into Bourscheid. At Scheidel the attack surprised the enemy infantry; one platoon captured the hamlet and a large number of prisoners. But when the two battalions turned north toward Kehmen the enemy (a battalion of the 266th Regiment) was ready and waiting. Each assault, made across open ground, was repelled by deadly fire from the village and the woods to the north. When General McBride finally intervened to end the attack the assault battalions had lost nearly two hundred officers and men. Kehmen once again had proved a hard nut to crack.

While the 317th Infantry hit head on against the main position held by the 79th Volks Grenadier Division, the 319th Infantry moved north into the gap on the German right flank. The 3d Battalion, which had withdrawn from its location close to the Sure in order to back up the other battalions in the fighting around Heiderscheid on the previous day, simply marched back into Tadler. Since General McBride had ordered the regiment to close up to the Sure but eschew any crossing attempt, the battalion was content to outpost along the river. From Tadler small groups of the enemy could be seen moving about on Ringel Hill, farther to the east. The 90th Field Artillery Battalion dropped a few shells into the village atop the hill; then the 2d Battalion occupied the area with little trouble. The hill position seriously endangered the German bridgehead, but the 79th was too far understrength to mount any sizable counterattack on this flank.

During the afternoon an American outpost saw a small German detachment marching in column of twos up a draw east of Ringel. The men at the outpost could not believe their eyes; they could only conclude that the approaching Germans were coming to surrender. When challenged the little column kept on coming, until a light machine gun put an end to this "counterattack." An hour before midnight more figures were seen approaching from the same direction. What had happened was that the Seventh Army commander had intervened personally to order that Ringel Hill be retaken. Not only was its possession necessary to the defense of the 79th Volks Grenadier Division bridgehead but Brandenberger needed the services of an army engineer brigade that had been committed as infantry on the north bank of the Sure, in the sector overlooked by the hill. If this high ground could be retaken and some command of this stretch of the Sure retained, the engineers could be employed elsewhere.

Since the fight with the 317th Infantry had died down some hours earlier, Colonel Weber was able to gather a substantial force for the counterattack, but there was little ammunition for the few guns supporting the 79th. The Americans, on the other hand, were wired in to their division artillery and by now had a prearranged pattern of fire: four battalions answered the 2d Battalion call for help. A few of the attackers got close to Ringel, only to meet the whistling ricochet of armor-piercing shells fired by a single tank destroyer that rushed around the village like a man stamping out a lawn fire.

Christmas Day witnessed the most artillery activity of the entire division advance; the guns were well forward, the infantry held good ground for observation, and the fighting now surged at many points out of the woods and into the open. The total number of rounds fired by the 80th Division artillery was large when assessed against the terrain: 3,878 rounds and 142 missions. The 80th Division advance ended the day after Christmas, with the 319th Infantry chasing the enemy out of the woods on the near bank of the Sure, the 317th digging in opposite the Bourscheid bridgehead, and the lone battalion of the 318th exchanging fire with the Germans across the Sauer, in the course of which the commander of the 352d was severely wounded.

General Patton was in the process of strengthening the Third Army attack with more divisions. One of these, the 35th Division, was assembling in the rear before joining the III Corps. General McBride's division, as a result, transferred to the XII Corps on 26 December without a change of ground. In the days that followed battalions rotated between the deep snow of the outpost lines and the relative warmth of shell-torn villages, waiting while General Patton debated giving the XII Corps the go sign for an attack across the chill, swollen courses of the Sure and the Sauer. In the corresponding German headquarters other plans were under consideration, plans to use the Bourscheid bridgehead as a springboard from which to throw a spoiling attack against the flank of the American forces congregated around Bastogne. But neither Brandenberger nor Knies could scrape up the men, guns, and shells for such an ambitious adventure. The 79th Volks Grenadier Division did what it could with what it had in almost daily counterattacks of small compass, only to be beaten off each time by the American howitzers. Ringel Hill continued as the chief objective in these fruitless and costly attempts, and here the 79th made its last full-blown effort in a pre-dawn attack on 30 December. The previous evening Company E, 319th Infantry, at that time forming the Ringel garrison, learned from prisoners taken on patrol that the attack would be made. The American division arranged for nine battalions of field artillery to give protective fire and the men in the garrison strengthened their outposts. The enemy made the assault, as promised, but with such speed and skill as to enter the village before a single salvo could be fired. One group of Germans penetrated as far as the battalion command post, but Pfc. W. J. McKenzie drove them off, killing the leaders, then taking sixteen prisoners. (McKenzie was awarded the DSC.) Their surprise tactics failed to save the attackers.

Concentration after concentration poured in on the buildings that sheltered the garrison troops, killing, maiming, and demoralizing the grenadiers. Those of the enemy who could not escape surrendered in-groups to the first Americans they could find.

When the 80th Division got its orders on 5 January to resume the attack, it could look back on a record of important accomplishment. It had contained and badly mauled two German divisions, had helped delay and cripple the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, on its way to enter the Bastogne battle, and had advanced sixteen miles and erased the Ettelbruck bridgehead, so important in the communications system of the Seventh Army.

## The 26th Division Fight for a Bridgehead on the Sure

24-27 DECEMBER

The 26th Division had not yet been able to push patrols through the woods to the Sure River when morning dawned on 24 December. Two companies of the 80th Division had crossed into the division zone and were waiting on the river near Heiderscheidergrund, but the foremost troops of the 26th Division were at Dellen, three and a half miles away, while the main force still was around Grosbous. Although small pockets of German riflemen fought stubbornly in the woods there seemed to be no cohesive, planned resistance by the enemy. To get the attack rolling and out of the woods, however, the Americans had to open the main road to the Sure. And to open the road they had to capture the town of Eschdorf.

There are many trails and byroads leading to the Sure but they become lost in deep, twisting ravines or run blindly through dense timber. All at this time were clogged by snow and ice. The road to Eschdorf follows a well-defined ridge and for much of its length gives a clear field of vision on both sides. Eschdorf, a town with perhaps two thousand people, is built on three hills, which rise well above the surrounding countryside and give excellent observation over open ground for a half-mile to a mile in every direction. The ascent to the town is made across ridge folds. The main road coming in from the south turns away east to Heiderscheid and the Sauer crossing at Bourscheid, but other roads, three in all, continue north to the Sure River, one leading to the bridge at Heiderscheidergrund.

The road net centering at Eschdorf was very important in the German plans to hold the Seventh Army blocking position south of the Sure. Originally Brandenberger hoped to use the town as a concentration point for a counterattack by the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade along the road to Martelange. The brigade, as recounted earlier, had started this move by piecemeal commitment while the main body still was on the march to the front, but when the 26th Division banged into the Fuehrer Grenadier advance guard southwest of Eschdorf a part of the leading battalion was cut off and the way to Martelange effectively barred. The staff of the LXXXV Corps therefore drew new plans on the night of the 23d to conform with Brandenberger's order that the American attack must be checked south of the Sure. The idea was that the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade, on the west, and the 79th Volks Grenadier Division, from the east, should launch a concentric drive, pinching off the most forward units in the American advance. Although much of the heavy weapon strength of the brigade was loaned to the 79th, the brigade itself was expected to hold back the Americans south of Eschdorf, at the same time striking in strength east from that town to retake Heiderscheid. But whether the operation ordered for 24 December fared well or ill, the Seventh Army commander was adamant on one point: Eschdorf was to be held.

General Paul was equally convinced of the importance attaching to the command of Eschdorf and its radial roads. As early as the night of the 22d, when the III Corps optimistically prescribed the capture of Wiltz as the next step to be taken by the 26th Division, Paul ordered that a task force be created to leapfrog ahead of the 104th Infantry, capture Eschdorf, and chisel a groove to the Sure. Unwilling to expend his division reserve, Paul took the 2d Battalion, 328th Infantry, as the task force nucleus and turned it over to an officer with the division staff, Lt. Col. Paul Hamilton. A few tanks and tank destroyers were added, but through confusion in orders the engineer company supposed to be attached never joined the task force.

In the first hour of the 23d, Task Force Hamilton left Hostert in trucks. As the

column turned north it found the 104th Infantry busy along the roadside with small groups of German infantry who were holding out in the woods. North of Grosbous two German tanks lay in wait just off the road, but were dispatched summarily by an assault gun. The column dismounted about a mile and a half south of Eschdorf, sent back the trucks, and put out pickets for the night. By this time Germans had appeared in some numbers east and west of the task force and their tanks had opened fire, but the 104th was coming up and by agreement was to cover Hamilton's flanks.

At daylight on the 24th scouts on the hills to the front reported much activity around Eschdorf, with vehicles dashing in and out of the town. The Fuehrer Grenadier attack against the 80th Division garrison in Heiderscheid was in full swing, although hardly developing according to plan. The road to Eschdorf, now ahead of Task Force Hamilton, rose and dipped to conform with the ridge folds reaching back to the hills on either side. The leading company had just climbed to the crest of one of these wooded folds when a storm of bullet and tank fire raked into its flank, coming down the length of the main ridge. The second company attempted to swing wide and to the van; it too found the ridge a bullet conductor. About this time the rear of the column came under direct and rapid shellfire from a hill on the right. Boxed in on front and rear, Task Force Hamilton spent most of the day trying to maneuver off the road and across the wooded nose ahead. The 81-mm. mortars got a real workout, churning the woods until they had fired four times their normal load of shells.

Toward sundown help came in the air. P-47's of the 379th Squadron (362d Fighter Group), out on their last mission of the day, swept low over the pine stands on the ridge, dropping fragmentation bombs and strafing. For some fifty Germans, well and wounded, this was the finishing touch; they came straggling out of the woods, hands high. Now that bullet fire no longer shaved the ridge like a razor Task Force Hamilton could move. It took the hamlet of Hierheck, where the woods gave way to the open ground leading up to Eschdorf, and then Hamilton gave orders to dig in for the night-orders which were countermanded almost at once by the division commander, who wanted Eschdorf that night.

While Task Force Hamilton was pinned down, General Paul had notified the III Corps that the 104th Infantry was taking over the task force. In early evening the 104th Infantry received orders for the 1st Battalion (Maj. Leon D. Gladding) to take Eschdorf, while Hamilton went on to secure the Sure crossing. Later the division ordered the 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry, to make the Sure crossing and Hamilton to take Eschdorf. Taking Eschdorf would not be an easy job. When a small group of Hamilton's men started forward to set up an observation post, they encountered enemy fire before they had moved twenty-five yards from their foxholes. The Germans in Eschdorf were alert and waiting.

Colonel Hamilton and Maj. Albert Friedman, the 2d Battalion commander worked as rapidly as they could to devise a plan of attack and bring the task force into assault position, but it was midnight before all was ready. Two companies, E and F, were to lead the attack, moving on either side of Eschdorf with their inner flanks touching, but they were not to enter the village. Company G, with tank supports, would follow the assault companies and clear the village. This plan had been adopted in deference to the ground, since Eschdorf rose well above the undulating ridges and there was no higher ground to lend itself to a wider flanking movement.

**continued in next issue...**

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