

Bitch

1st Battle of



he rugged terrain of the Vosges Mountains was behind us and we had enjoyed our brief rest in Trois Fontaines. At 4 o'clock in the morning on December 2nd, we began preparations for a 12 mile motor movement to Schonberg. After receiving a hot meal in Schonberg, we were on the march again. Our objective was a forward assembly area located on a mountainside overlooking the town of Liepstein. It was a long, fatiguing hike we made to that assembly area, and as we started digging in, our miseries were accentuated by the cold and the rain.



arly the next morning we moved out in the direction of Puberg, which the Germans had vacated only a few hours previously. The townspeople, overjoyed to see American soldiers, left the shelter of their cellars to offer us l'eau de vie (schnapps), cider, and apples. Although our advance from Puberg was held up nearly an hour by Jerry artillery fire, nevertheless, by evening we had reached our destination... a position just to the rear of Easy company.

Notes on December the 5th

There I was tired, dirty, and feeling mighty low. We had marched all day and now we were entering some little one-horse town called Puberg, and it sure lived up to it's name. Like most Alsatian towns, this joint was pretty well beat up. And like all the rest, the people began streaming up out of the cellars to see what side was marching through today. Also they carried their

little jugs with booze. But unlike the other burgs, these people had something. I took one snort and I was an Olympian God chasing Venus around a fig tree; two, and I caught my armless beauty; three, and I was flat on my face. Now mind you, I don't mind chasing unclad women around fig trees, and falling flat on my face, but this was hardly the place. You see, the Germans with their usual bad timing were throwing shells in by the bushel. Some of the boys exclaimed they were going to catch an "88", but a few of the non-drinkers calmed them down a bit. As for myself... drunk or sober... I don't like shells even if they are from a BB gun. Rather shakily, I must confess, I began digging in.

With my third shovel of dirt came the order we were going to the woods. We took off in a rather broken formation, but as each shell came in, my soberness seemed to come back. I often wonder what the Krauts thought, when they saw a company of staggering American soldiers, singing in the midst of a barrage. It must have been rather frightening because all shelling stopped for the day.

John Chynoweth



he following day we experienced our first major small arms fire fight. We had passed through Easy and George companies when we received rifle fire from Jerries dug in to our left flank, during this Gabriel was wounded. Capt. Smith led Sgt. Monchino's squad into a position where they could deliver fire into the enemy's flank.

It wasn't me, Sarge

"It was about November 22, the first time "F" company hit small arms fire, and my squad was called on to wipe out the Jerry strong point that was delaying the company's advance.

We worked our way to the top of the ridge, and I knew that they had to be somewhere just below. Having lost my grenade in creeping and crawling, I called back to Kidd to toss his into a clump of bushes which looked like the logical place for the Krauts to be hiding. He heaved it out, and we ducked our heads into the dirt. "Boom!" Then, shortly after, another went off about four feet from my head. I exclaimed excitedly, "Geez, Kidd, can't you throw any farther than that?!"

Kidd lifted his head and soberly replied, "Hell, I didn't throw that one!"

...Just then four Jerries emerged from behind the bush, waving a white cloth."

John Manzi



eanwhile, the remainder of the first platoon, led by Lt. Ward, maneuvered into position on the left flank of the Germans, who by this time had commenced firing automatic rifles and machine guns. A few minutes later, when we had cleared the enemy from their positions and had sustained but one casualty ourselves, the score was four Jerries killed, two wounded and four prisoners.

"Charley, the Commando"

It was around Soucht, our first real fire fight, and our squad was on the right flank of the company. Suddenly, enemy fire cut the trees around us and "Ski" yelled, "Open up on them!" Barney

and I started firing immediately at the flashes of the Jerries' guns, and soon the whole squad was peppering the enemy.

I looked around and saw Charley Todeschini setting behind a tree firing up into the air. I yelled, "What the hell you doing that for, Charley?"

And Todichini answered back, "All I know is 'Ski' said to start firing!"

David Clay

"The Fire Fight"

We were on top of a hill and to our front the company was halted by the first scout... something was ahead. Capt. Smith, Lt. Horler, and Lippart went up to investigate. There was a group of Heinies that had seen us and were piling out of their truck, hitting the dirt, and running. We fired and killed one, and the rest headed for the woods.

Wortman was investigating the right flank with Luna when they spotted a Jerry half-track and started firing. The Jerries answered with bursting "20mm" fire. Wortman and Luna returned to the company to report this situation to some officer, but none was to be found immediately. Wortman took two machine gun sections back up to put fire on the half-track and Lt. Allen arrived, directing the fire of the right machine-gun. Suddenly, the enemy threw everything at us... mortars, rifle-fire, and more "20mm". We were almost surrounded by the enemy, but held our position until dark, then withdrew to Easy company's lines.

Julius Racy





es, we had come out on top after our first test at close-in combat and we took a definite satisfaction in our accomplishments. These woods were well occupied by the enemy, and even as we reorganized the company to continue toward our initial objective, we sensed that further action was soon to follow. The second platoon during a fire fight back at a road junction had its share of casualties; Barto and Ellis were hit by mortar fire.

Less than half a mile from the scene of the fire fight, we encountered a German truck which was moving up the road in our direction. The first scout Walsh signaled "Halt" to Capt. Smith, and everyone took cover. As the vehicle came within rifle range, it was fired upon by our forward elements. One of the two men in the truck was killed instantly; unfortunately the other escaped. Investigation proved that the vehicle was a prime mover, carrying supplies to enemy emplacements in the area.

The Half-Track

Around the bend in the road I saw a house nestled deep in the middle of a dense woods. I was first scout for the company, and seeing the house, I hit the ground to see if there was any activity around. Cautiously, we advanced, and while trying to break into the house, we heard the rising moan of a half-track headed our way. The company spread out and as soon as the half-track came into view we opened up on it.

It was a curious coincidence that everyone fired at the man seated next to the driver. His body was riddled but the driver jumped up, ran around the car, and ducked into the woods, unharmed.

Jack Walsh



pillbox was discovered on our right flank and the first platoon was chosen to approach it. When they had advanced to within three hundred yards of the fortification, they saw a Jerry come out and ride away on a motorcycle. However, they held their fire, realizing that they didn't have sufficient fire power to neutralize the emplacement. Suddenly a red flare exploded from the German lines and we were counter-attacked from our front and right flank. While we were

fighting to hold off these attacks, we heard a whistle from our left flank, and again the Jerries hit us. During the fighting that followed, Lt. Allen was wounded in the hand, and Ober, Veghts, and Abbey were wounded. As darkness closed over the battleground, we received word that Easy company had made contact with our rear. Capt. Smith ordered the withdrawal through Easy company's lines and we dug in for the night.

"One Day"

We started out one morning quite early, as usual, and before very long, ran into heavy small arms fire. It was on this day that I searched my first Jerry prisoner (an officer at that). He had everything from writing paper to a "music roll"! and I thought we carried a lot! We continued moving forward pushing the Jerries back all the time. About mid-day it started raining and hailing.

We reached the top of a prominent hill only to find that the Jerries were as thick as Kentucky "hill-billies at a whiskey still".

We started firing at them with more than satisfactory results. All of a sudden, an anti-tank gun, that we hadn't noticed before, started firing point blank, pinning us down in our tracks. My squad leader, St. Laurent, was yelling to me to go back and tell our C. O. that we couldn't move. At first I couldn't make out what he wanted but with the aid of a few hand signals he finally got his meaning across. I had to crawl two hundred yards on my hands and knees back to the C. O. because that anti-tank gun was getting pretty close. I reached Captain Smith, and explained the situation to him. He called for mortar fire which quickly silenced the enemy gun. After dark, we withdrew a little ways and dug in.

During the night, the Jerries pounded us with everything in the book including the table of contents, and unfortunately four men were hit.

Bill Joiner



*Jerry Hide -
out at Soucht*

"What a Story!"

We captured the town of Soucht about 4 o'clock one afternoon. (And when I say "WE", I mean thirteen confused and tired soldiers.) We had intended to enter and search the town of Meisenthal and how we wound up in Soucht is a mystery to me. What a mix-up!

We slipped into town and climbed into the first house. I guess the people didn't know whether we were Germans, Americans, or what. But soon "Whitey", being first scout, took off for the next house. We were expecting to run into Jerrys any minute. What a situation!

Finally one Frenchmann recognized us as Americans and came running out of his house yellin, "Viva L'Americain!", and the little kids seemed to know by instinct to ask for "chocolate" and "bon bon". The young girls kissed us and the old men tried to. What a town!

Soon two young French boys led us to Meisenthal through the woods. We entered the town and soon the greeting there became the same as it was at Soucht. What a patrol!

Adolph Mangeot



This had been our heaviest day of combat and everyone was weary. However, we were destined to get little rest that night because of the enemy artillery and mortar barrage that commenced shortly after midnight. At 2 o'clock, Lt. Adams passed the word around that chow had arrived, but few men cared to leave their holes even for a bite of food. From the barrage that night, we suffered several more casualties: Wheeler of company headquarters, Lawrence of the first platoon, Surmanek of the fourth platoon, Renieri one of our aidmen, and Williamson.

"Four Wounded in the Drizzling Rain"

After being pinned down for several hours in the afternoon, our first fire fight was really in session! Surrounded on three sides, we waited until dark to pull back through Easy company. Passing them we dug in on the side of a steep hill. It was raining and cold while digging in, all of a sudden the enemy artillery found its mark and shrapnel badly wounded four men who were

at company headquarters. They were transferred to the battalion medics and back to the rear. The four were Renieri, Surmanek, Lawrence, and Wheeler. They were examples of the courage of American soldiers and the will power that will never die.

Julius Racy

Robert Lawrence: When Lawrence first joined the outfit, he seemed a little aloof, hard to get acquainted with. Hailing from Massachussetts, "Larry" spoke with a New England accent that we found unusual. Before long "Larry" had a host of friends in the first platoon, and by the time we went into combat, he was "one of the boys". He took his job seriously, and did his work methodically. Although "Larry" was badly wounded, we know he will have the resourcefulness to pick up his life where it was interrupted. And he knows, too, that all of us are pulling for him.



The next morning we pulled back a few hundred yards to wooded terrain where it was possible to get more cover. Hot chow was a welcome sight, and with our stomachs full, we began work on our dugouts. Late in the morning corps artillery fired a mission to our front. Their target was the enemy emplacements we had encountered the day before.

We remained here for approximately thirty hours before orders were passed down from battalion that we were to move about four miles to the village of Rosert.

Having met units of the 44th Division as we marched along the main road into Volksberg, we were not surprised to find that Rosert also was occupied. We took a few hours rest in the village while Capt. Smith, Sgt. St. Laurent, and six men reconnoitered the terrain ahead in an effort to contact George company.

Contacting George Company

Myself and the squad of eleven men went on a reconnaissance patrol, trying to contact George company. Previously, our jeep with chow for the boys, was fired on by Jerries. Because of that incident, we were sent to "recon" the area and to contact George company, also to see if any enemy were within our area. While patrolling we saw Krauts laid all over the area, dead of course! We completed our mission, what a relief!!

Oscar St Laurent



he rest of the company, taking advantage of the break, ate "C" rations, and we also found plenty of apples in the cellars. While we were making the most of the opportunity for chow, Lt. Adams went by jeep to Soucht ... a small town a few miles ahead. During his absence, a battalion runner brought word that we were to spend the night in Soucht, so with the return of Capt. Smith and the patrol, we left Rosert.

Lt. Adams joined us on the march and we continued until we approached an enemy road block. We detoured from the road and Capt. Smith and three other men, led by a civilian, had safely completed the alternate route when a booby trap exploded. Lt. Maronie, our forward observer, was killed instantly and Baker died a few hours later in the aid station. Ganz was badly wounded.

The rest of the company waited silently along the road... watching the engineers clear and mark that deadly field. Once again we rerouted our march, and as we came to the edge of Soucht, even the thought that we would have a roof over our heads for the night, could not boost our spirits.

"The Good Die Young"

This is a story of two swell guys, Bill Baker and Lt. Maronie. Theirs was the supreme sacrifice... both were killed in action near Soucht, France on Dec. 6, 1944. It happened this way...

Fox company was on the march. Com-

ing down from the hills, the men advanced along a road. Our destination was a little French town called Soucht. Captain Smith had already entered the town to seek billets for the men, so Lt. Adams was leading the company. Acting as a guide was an old Frenchman. Then came Hudson and myself, radiomen at the time. Behind us came the 1st platoon headed by Lt. Ward and his runner Baker. Lt. Maronie, artillery forward observer, was trying to get to the head of the column after taking, as he said, "One of those pauses that refreshes."

We soon encountered a road block, left by the retreating Jerries, and had to get off the road in order to continue on our way. Led by the guide, we moved down into the grassy valley bordering on the road. We continued hiking here, passing up the road block... Then it happened! The explosion caught us entirely unawares... most of us didn't know what had happened. We found out soon enough for we heard the cries of pain from a dying man... Baker. Lt. Maronie had been killed instantly. Another man, Ganz was seriously wounded.

At first we thought we had been caught in a mine field, so Lt. Ward and Lt. Adams ordered the men to "freeze" and not move from where they were standing. I was ordered by Lt. Adams to get out on the road, picking my steps carefully, and once I hit the road to "barrel down" the road to town and get the battalion medics.

When I came back with the medics in the ambulance, it was too late. Both men were dead. Still thinking it was a mine field, we had the engineers come up to clear it. Captain Smith and his bodyguard Lippart,

meanwhile probed a path to the men for the medics to enter.

Later we discovered it wasn't a mine field but a booby trap which Baker had set off by tripping the string to a charge of explosive. I guess it was fate that permitted the guide, Lt. Adams, Hudson and myself to pass without setting off the booby trap.

I saw Baker being taken out on a litter by the medics. Did you ever see a dead buddy being carted away? It's not a pleasant sight.

Baker was only going on nineteen when he met his death. Lt. Maronie was 20 and one of the youngest artillery officers in the division. They were both pretty swell guys, possessing that strength of character and personality that made them well liked by everyone that knew them.

Unfortunately they never had a chance. The good die young.

Best Bless

LT. MARONIE

Lt. Maronie, one of the youngest Field Artillery observers in the Regiment, was a very personable fellow immediately liked by all who came in contact with him. Possessing a pleasant personality, he had a fine sense of humor and was always good for a humorous remark at the appropriate time. By his friends, and he had many, Lt. Maronie will not easily be forgotten.

BAKER

Everyone who knew Bill was his friend. He was always willing to go out of his way to lend a helping hand.

When the going got tough, Baker always had a word of encouragement for the others. We can not soon forget him because he was one of the best.



W e fared well in Soucht, the kitchen moved up with us and we had hot meals. During our two and a half days there, the fourth platoon made several contact patrols with units of the 44th Division on our right flank. On December 7, we were called upon to send one officer and thirteen enlisted men to "A" company. The men transferred were Lt. Jost, Stoddard, Siuba, Hoffman, Sparrows, O'Drain, Barlow, Stanley, Lieberman, Shellhammer, Turner, Bradford, Laymon, and Lawrence. It was tough to see our buddies leave, but the orders had to be complied with. While we were cleaning our weapons, Murrel was accidentally shot. The bad news passed quickly through the platoons.

The next afternoon Capt. Smith returned from battalion headquarters with the news that we were to move out at 3:15 in the afternoon for the town of St. Louis.

Lt. Adams and Sgt. Posner went ahead with a quartering party. After a few hours walk, we descended a steep hill into the village. The quartering party had done a good job and again we moved into houses.

"Watch Your Step"

To contact the second battalion of the 44th Division on our left, who were approximately 2500 yards off a weather-beaten road, and to keep that large gap between us clear from any Krauts, was our mission on a cold December evening.

The patrol consisted of ten men including yours truly.

Orders were to take plenty of ammunition, wool knit caps without helmets, and to blacken our faces.

We had been told that the most dangerous part of our mission would be to cross a mine field in which two of our men had already been killed earlier that day. We said very little to each other except to discuss our orders. I could see the look in each

man's eye. What was going through each of their minds was clearly written in the expression on their faces. To us the night seemed to be the darkest in history.

The leader started out with the rest of the patrol following closely. We all hoped by some miracle the mine field would vanish but no such luck. It was soon staring us in the face.

The leader halted the patrol. We reconnoitered to find the path, but the tape that was supposed to have guided us was nowhere to be found.

After a brief conference the patrol leader decided to go first with the rest of the men following immediately behind him. Each man had to place his foot in the step of the man ahead of him. To maintain contact the men held on to the belts of the man ahead of him. The patrol leader also carried engineer tape which he fastened down at our entrance into the mine field, unwinding the tape as he went. This was a guide for our return.

We began. It was the start of planted death. One misplaced step and it was certain doom. How many of us would get through? Cold sweat broke out on our foreheads. Each step might be our last one. It was like an eternity. We thought the mine field would never end, although it was only about seventy-five yards across. If it were only daylight! If we could only see! Slowly, step by step, we advanced.

Finally the patrol was across. Then, one by one, the rest of the men stepped into the clear. It was like being released from bonds. Although we could not see each others faces, we could sense a tremendous feeling of elation among us. It seemed like no obstacle would be too great for us now.

It didn't take us long after that to contact the second battalion of 114th Infantry. Our mission was accomplished. Although we had seen no human enemy and had not fired a shot, this is a night that we shall not soon forget.

John Beekman



Saint Louis Story

It was during the rainy season in Alsace, early in December when the company moved into Saint Louis. We had been living in holes for a long time then, eating "K" rations so often that even Freid grew pale and swallowed hard at the sight of a can of beef and pork loaf. Saint Louis had been pretty badly shot up, but a few houses on one edge of town were in fair shape, and the company moved into these, the mortar section in one end of the second floor of an abandoned apartment building, the machine gunners into the other. It was already dark when we arrived, so there wasn't much chance to do anything that night except black out the windows, make out the guard list, and crawl into our sacks on the floor.

But, the next morning when it began to look as though we might stay a few hours, the scouts were out, and provisions began to pour into the kitchen of the mortarmen's end of the house. Nichols, Butler, and Petralia, drew first blood after four chickens were "liberated" from the chicken coop next door. Balch, the only one in the section who would admit he knew anything about cleaning a chicken, realized his mistake when he drew the job of skinning all four of them. Schmidt, lone machine gunner, in the group, soon had a fire going, was boiling the noodles that Howell and Beekman found in the house. Hedlund and Tuttle came back from down the road with a big crock of butter and two jars of jam. There were plenty of apples in our basement, and apple tarts were planned for dessert, using cinnamon we found in our kitchen.

It was nearly noon when the meal was finally ready. Vam-potic and Orel had moved two long tables together in the large dinning room, and uncovered clean linen tablecloths, gold-rimmed chinaware and silverware. Just as we were ready to sit down at

the table, the chow jeep arrived from the kitchen. No point in wasting good food; the section moved into the chow line as one man, plates extended. When the other platoons had been fed, all the seconds were appropriated and transferred to the kitchen above.

The mortar section sat down at the table, the menu running somewhat as follows: chicken noodle soup, steamed noodles, fried chicken, baked ham, carrots and peas, bread and butter and jam, with fruit cocktail and baked apple tarts for dessert. Coffee topped it all off, with a big pony of schnapps at each elbow from a supply found in the house. By this time, Rubano thought he was at the Waldorf! Just as the first round of chicken was being passed, there was a tap at the door. "Pancho" stepped in. "I have coom to veesit you", he announced in his inimitable accent, reaching for the fried chicken with both hands. No sooner had he been appeased and retired to a corner, a leg in each hand, than Capt. Smith, and his runner, Lippart, appeared. They had been on reconnaissance, and found out that the fourth platoon had looted all the chow. So they had to be fed. As they left with heaping plates, someone yelled, "bar the door!" and the meal was finished in a state of siege.

The company moved out a couple of hours later, even as plans were being completed for a bigger and better supper, but the big moment had been achieved. In the days to come, "K" rations were the only fare. Mortarmen's eyes would mist at the thought of that meal, served on clean plates in a dry house, during a momentary respite from the mud and danger that were the common lot for so long.

James Nichols



erry wasn't far from this town and so the next morning chow was served under the cover of darkness. After chow came the message to be ready to pull out on a moment's notice. At 1 o'clock, services were held in the local church... a beautiful building. However, the service was interrupted and the men were told to return to their houses and prepare to move out at 3 o'clock.

Chicken a la King

After finishing a long hike to a captured town, we were put in houses for the night. In the morning, the sun gave us a break; it was a swell day. We all took turns to pull guard. While I was on guard a bewildered Frenchman came up to me, and motioned with his hand toward the ground. I gathered that he was looking for his chickens. Only an hour ago some of the boys caught a couple of chickens (those delicious egg-makers!).

The Frenchman was really angry. After I had told him that I didn't know what he was talking about, he asked for the "Capitan". I pointed in a phony direction, while I was thinking of the two chickens that were roasting in the oven upstairs. A grand meal was had by the boys, with all the "trimmings". Maybe the Frenchman is still looking for the "Capitan". One hour later, after the delicious feed, we were on our way towards the enemy, picking our teeth, and satisfied with a belly full for once.

Gosh, French chicken tastes good!!

Julius Racy



Leaving St. Louis meant simply that we were on the go again... we were getting used to that by this time... but even the officers were totally ignorant of our mission. Their only information was that the battalion was on the march with Fox company leading, under the guidance of Major Kirkland.

The sun set early those cold winter days and soon we were marching in darkness... such a total, solid blackness that each man had to grasp the pack of his buddy ahead in order to stay in column. After the first hour, we left the road and travelled cross-country. The jeeps which were following, bogged down in the mud and lost contact with the foot troops.

"And So We Bid Farewell"

Leaving the happy atmosphere of St. Louis was disheartening, but the news was good. We were going "five-hundred yards to sleep in a town".

We took off in the usual staggered column up the steep, sloping road to Sarriensberg. At the top of the hill we thought the march was finished, but sad news was in store for us. After a break we again took to the road; another break came and darkness began to close in. Up and down the line the buzz of voices proved that something was not as we had been told. The rumors were coming thick and fast... "Night attack!"... "We got the Jerries on the run!"... "We are being counter-attacked!"

"Saddle Up!", echoed up the street. This time we headed straight into the woods. The woods were dark as pitch, the trail rutty and tempers strained to the breaking point. "Damn this snafu army!"... "Sleep in houses, yeah!"... "Five-hundred yards, hell! Five-hundred miles!" We kept plodding along, spilling into the ditches and cursing the order that made us march in this pitch darkness.

"Quiet! we are in enemy territory!"... "Keep contact!"... "Pass the word up that 'G' company's off the road" ... "No! No! Not 'G' company! The jeep, the jeep!"... The jeep's off the road!"

Cursing, falling, sweating, slipping, tired, hungry, wet, and just a little scared we pulled into Mouterhouse. No, this wasn't it, either; we had to go two thousand yards farther. Cursing the Jerries, cursing the darkness, cursing the slimey mud and unseen holes, cursing the order to move ahead, on we trudged. Suddenly, snow began falling quietly on the ground we were to use for a bed that night.

At long last we reached our objective... a high hill. The company spread out to dig in. Dig in? Don't be silly. "88's" couldn't hurt us more than we were hurting now. The five-hundred yards had stretched to eleven miles and the town had turned into a pine forest white with snow. We zipped up and let a blanket of snow gradually cover us.

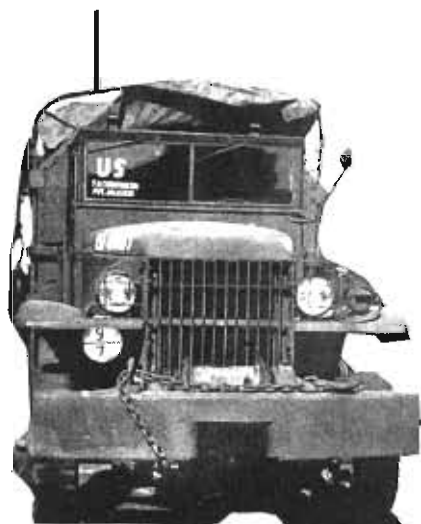
Sheldon Kofod



The Road Block: This is where Lt. Maronie and Baker lost their lives



Jerry Tanks



The House at Soucht





about midnight, we stopped near an old chateau which was the regimental headquarters of the 399th Infantry. The officers, having been summoned to the chateau, returned with the order that we would support the 399th Infantry.

Our assignment, to move into position behind Fox company of the 399th, was completed by 1 o'clock in the morning. The first platoon advanced another thousand yards to make physical contact with "F" company. The other platoons fumbled around in the blackness in an effort to prepare positions on the rear slope of the hill. The early morning hours were at hand before we had the chance to crawl into our sleeping sacks.

We had enjoyed only a few hours rest when it was time to move on. The first platoon rejoined the company and at 11 o'clock in the morning we were again advancing; this time toward one of the toughest objectives we were to encounter throughout our days in combat... the city of Bitche and its surrounding system of Maginot-line forts. The system at Bitche was the key to the southern end of the great French defense and had been considered impregnable... even the Germans had failed to reduce this citadel during their 1939—1940 campaign.

We were in the Hardt Mountains below Bitche and every hundred yards gained meant trudging up or down heavily wooded hillsides.

Although Hudson and Deskovitch were wounded, we carried on against only minor opposition for the next few hours. As we moved up to the outskirts of the fortifications, Fox company was spearheading the advance for the division.

"All in a Day's Work"

We were awakened early in the morning by Captain Smith and told that we were going to be in reserve for "F" company, 399th. After breakfast of French toast and coffee, Captain Smith was called to a company commander's meeting at battalion. When he returned, he said our orders had been changed and that we were to attack the next mountain and cut the Bitche railroad line in two. I had a hollow feeling in my stomach, for I knew it would be well defended. When we moved out, the Captain called for all anti-tank grenadiers to move to the head of the column. There were reports of Kraut half-tracks defending the area in front of us. At this, my morale hit the bottom, for I was in no mood whatsoever to tangle with any Germans. However, we took our objective and with no casualties. While digging in for the night, a burp gun opened up on our right flank. Lt. Lonsberg picked a small number of us to investigate and a small fire fight ensued with the score of no casualties for us and one Kraut killed and six prisoners. When Harden and myself were selected to march the prisoners back to battalion, I felt very happy, for I knew I would get to sleep in town that night. All had ended well for the day and my morale was considerably higher than before.

Lawrence Curbo

"I'll Never Forget"

I remember very clearly the day Hudson was hit. It was on top of one of those many hills between Soucht and Bitche.

Collins and myself had just finished digging in. Our hole was one of those super jobs with logs on top and covered over with a foot or more of dirt.

I was about twenty or thirty yards away from my fox-hole when I heard a shell coming in. Like a streak of greased- lightning, I bounded for my hole. About half way there, the first shell hit.

I still remember today, when I was starting to dive into my hole, how Lt. Mavrinac of Howe company came running over and asked if he could get in my hole, too. I never will forget the frightened look on his face. But I had to tell him there just wasn't enough room.

As a matter of fact when I did get in under cover, I wondered just how I did it so quickly. It took me at least a half minute to crawl out. This always was a feat that amazed me.

When the barrage was finally over, we all just lay there and sweated out hearing that old familiar, painful, cry. We didn't have long to wait. In a few seconds we could hear the cry "Medic" coming from several different directions. As soon as we hear it, we could see the medics wiggle out of their holes and run to where the wounded man lay oblivious of the fact that other shells might be coming in any second.

Hudson was about thirty yards away from my hole when it happened. He had been tending the radio ever since we moved up to our area. Consequently, he hadn't had a chance to dig in as yet.

Captain Smith was standing next to him at the time. He, what with organizing the company, had also been too busy to dig in. When they heard the shells coming, they both hit the ground.

The first shell exploded in the trees above their heads and tore up the ground all around them with hot shrapnel. One piece cut Hudson in the muscle of his lower leg.

After receiving first-aid from "Tex", our medic, Hudson was able to hobble down the hill to an ambulance to be evacuated.

William Pykonen

Logs and Togs

"Burma" (Oscar Braman to you) could at one time boast that he was never "caught with his pants down". He continued his boast until some "superman" and "88's" changed that. This all came to pass one day in December as the company was moving on the Maginot Line at Bitche.

One afternoon after we had reached our usual hilltop objective, the second squad was sent out to protect the company's right flank. "Burma" and I, being foxhole buddies, began to look for a place to dig in. Suddenly our eyes fell on a wood pile, the solution to our problem. We would build a lean-to of logs. As we completed the loghouse, it began to sprinkle, and "Burma" said he had "better" before the down-pour came. He moved off to drop his trousers while I crawled into the shelter to eat a "K" ration.

Suddenly, I heard the familiar scream of an "88" coming to call. Two more came fast on its heels, proving the Jerries had seen us. Simultaneously with the bursting of the shell, "Burma" burst into the shelter, head-first, followed by a cascade of logs. In his hurry, "Burma" had upset his end of the shelter. There he lay in the rain with a pile of logs heaped upon him. Weakly he called for me to pull them off. As I began to lift the logs, I noticed that "Burma's" pants were at his ankles. His white flesh gleaming in contrast to the sticky mud. I was seeing the unbelievable... "Burma" had been "caught with his pants down"!

Sheldon Kofod



Our supply lines were stretching each day and it was more difficult for our kitchen crew to get chow and water to us. We were weary soldiers when on the 13th of December we came to a position near the Maginot fort where we were to remain for a few days.

Good ol' Chow

It was early in December when Fox company was steadily closing in toward Puberg from which they could almost observe the great Fortress of Bitche. Hill after hill was being taken from the Jerries by the gallant leadership of Capt. Smith and his men. The terrain was rugged and dense forest was the only view surrounding the men. Mud was knee deep and a clear day was hardly known to the boys. Blanket rolls were not a morale builder any more for they too were soaked... grimy with mud. When night fell, the weather-beaten and fatigued men were too tired to dig in securely, so they either trusted fate or dug shallow trenches to protect them from flat trajectory bursts. They were disregarding tree bursts. The men guarded each other with the buddy system only sleeping in intervals, two hours apart.

Only foot paths were the trails on which to bring in the much needed ammunition, supplies, and food to our Joes before they would move forward on the ever advancing eastward conquest. As the wind blew every tree seemed to be a Jerry moving toward us on a night patrol. But caution was overlooked except for the stern command of "Halt", when a human being was close enough to touch in the black of night. Would rest ever come? When the night was still and a twig could be heard snapping at a hundred yards; it seemed as though we could reach out and touch a Jerry.

Then came 3 o'clock in the morning and the sound of a motor grinding through the thick wilds and underbrush. Our chow jeep was coming. Hot coffee and hot chow. The containers rattled as the vehicle sneaked and crawled through the rocks and brush. An auto could not travel on the muddy roads and fallen trees had obstructed what little passage that was left. With the quietness of a Daniel Boone, the men crept to the chow line and filed cautiously back to their area to eat the warm vitals. Omelet tasted like sirloin steak to these warriors who welcomed warm food and hot coffee as a package from Heaven. When chow was finished and mess cans were gathered to return to the jeep, the men made their rolls and waited to see how soon the well-known order "Attack" would come. Was there a Joe in the ranks who had dry feet? Never, for an extra grenade always filled the pocket that could have carried a clean change of socks.

"Say Joe, that rifle, it'll never fire; it's covered with mud and rust."

"That mud and rust will be blown out with the first Jerry who sticks his head up too high! It fired yesterday. Remember?"

Down the ranks they were ready. "We'll give 'em hell today." As ever, they moved forward; steady, stern and ready, they moved, to that never to be forgotten command, "Attack"!

Henry Steenson



he company C.P. was in an old dug-out, large enough to accommodate a dozen men or more. The rest of us found the digging easy, and there was plenty of timber to use for cover. The engineers cleared a road to our position and so our problem of getting chow and supplies was solved.

The same . . . Good ol' Chow

It was late in November before we had really gotten the problem of feeding solved. We found that the only way we could get to feed the platoons, was to divide the chow into sections and to have guides and carrying parties to lead us to the platoon's C. P. We very often found terrain impossible to travel by jeep and then formed carrying parties to get hot chow to the troops.

In December, we found the company deployed just above Lemberg, and when we arrived with morning chow and hot coffee, the troops had moved out on attack. There was "Sue", Bowlin, Blair, and myself. We were faced with the problem of how we could feed the company. We had traveled as far as vehicle could travel. Blair guarded the jeep while we proceeded to hunt the company. We found a runner who guided us to the company. Capt. Smith sent 12 men with us and we carried hot chow to the men.

The chow jeep always brought mail, supplies and food. Armstrong and I usually arrived before daybreak with hot chow, and often times ammunition and grenades needed for the day's attack. The biggest problem next to feeding safely, was to keep from artillery observation and sniper fire. Armstrong and myself had to bail out of the jeep and hug the ditch five or six times above Lemberg before we found the company. All the boys have often said that the most cheerful sight to see was Steensen coming with chow and supplies. Fox company ate hot chow almost regardless of the danger of the situation at hand.

Henry Steenson



hat night battalion headquarters asked us to send a patrol into Bitche. Pozner, Hunt, Condrey, and Channing were given the job. Their mission was to enter the town and return with a prisoner. They were the first American soldiers to enter the city. Because the Jerries were patrolling the streets in groups of three and four, Pozner and his men found it impossible to bring back a German, and they completed their trip about midnight.

Fox Company Men Enter Bitche First

FELLBACH. There has been a great deal of publicity and talk about the entering and taking of Bitche, the Alsatian fortress city, by this division. In due fairness to all concerned, it should be pointed out that the first men to enter the city were from Fox Company of the Battalion. This action took place during the first unsuccessful assault in December of 1944. Let Fox company's official record, written on the spot, speak for itself:

"Battalion headquarters asked us to send a patrol down to the town of Bitche. Sgt. Pozner picked three men and took the mission, the object being to enter the town and observe any activity and to bring back a prisoner. It was a tough assignment and the squad had a close call, but they were unable to bring back a prisoner. The Jerries were walking the streets with at least three in a group. We were greatly relieved to see the patrol return intact."

The Sergeant Pozner referred to is S/Sgt. Irving Pozner of the first platoon, wounded badly about a month later, invalided home and discharged.

The three who went with him were S/Sgt. Talmage Hunt (then a Pfc.), Pfc. Eugene Condrey and Pfc. Donald Channing. Channing was recently transferred to the 36th Division, but Hunt and Condrey are still with Fox company.

"You know how dark those nights were there," Sgt. Hunt says, "we went down a long hill in the dark, falling down a four foot drop on the way, and nearly waking the dead. As we came into the town, we heard the motor of a German tank behind us in the direction we had come from. We came to a big house surrounded by a hedge fence and went through the gate at the front. I looked around, the corner of the house and there was a Jerry standing, bold as you please. I looked at him and he looked

at me. I do not know what he was thinking about 'cause he never said a word. I guess he thought I was a Kraut, and I was too surprised to do anything."

"We got out of there through a hole in the hedge," Pfc. Condrey speaking. "I was the last man through, and I remember thinking while we were all lined up that all a Jerry would have to do is walk up with a club and knock us all in the head."

Sergeant Hunt picked up the story again. "We went down to the crossroads in the center of town and turned left, still looking for a prisoner. We were passing an embankment when a door across the street opened and a Jerry with a flashlight came out. We hit the ground behind the embankment while he stood there and flashed his light around."

"We could have made history that night," Sergeant Hunt continued regretfully. "Just hit that Jerry in the head and carry him back. But we were pretty far into town, and before we could do anything, he put out his light and went back into the house. We worked our way back out of the town and came back to the company. We reported to Captain Smith, and he gave us all a shot of wine and we crawled into our holes and went to sleep."

A week later the Third Battalion made its great assault on the forts outside the city which won them the Presidential Unit Citation. The division was pulled north to support the Third Army during the Ardennes offensive, and the final taking of Bitche was left until last March.

The Badge, Aug 18, 1945



R

emaining in the area for four days, gave us the opportunity to rest, improve our shelters, and catch up on some of the meals we had missed. Besides, we took pleasure in listening to the corps artillery's "240's" blast those pillboxes in front of us. On the clear days, we could see the P-47's diving down to strafe the city of Bitche. A couple of 155 self propelled guns moved up on line with us and fired point blank at the enemy emplacements.

"Sleeping in a Fox-Hole"

"Wake up, Kofod! ... Are you awake? Good. Wait a minute, I'll wake up Burger. Hey, Burger! Wake up. Do you hear me, Burger? Wake up! Well, it's about time you woke up. Wait a minute ... Kofod's asleep again. Hey Kofod, for Christ's sake, wake up and stay awake. O.K. now, you both awake? Well ... let's roll over!"

Oscar Braman

"Picking Them Apart With Lead Pencils"

On our first attack on the Maginot Line, the infantry didn't have much luck. We couldn't get close enough to most of them to do any real good. We tried to knock them out with our artillery and tanks. At first, we had several light tanks to go in, but their 37 MM guns didn't even knock the dust off of the boxes so we tried heavier artillery. We used all of our anti-tank guns, but none seemed to do the trick. Finally, we got a S.P. 155 to come up and see what damage it could do. It kept the Jerries buttoned up but still couldn't penetrate the thick walls of the forts. The Jerries had one fort that gave us more trouble than any of the others. In that particular fort was a high caliber rising gun which would come up, fire several rounds, and then sink down back out of sight. We zeroed our anti-tanks in on the fort and every time the gun came up, we threw everything we had at it. The Air Corps finally came around, and with a few P-47's, dropped several bombs on the fort. Even this could not knock out the fort. We then got our Corps artillery to drop some 240 MM shells on it, and finally the rising gun stopped firing. I still don't know if we had knocked the gun out or whether it just decided to stop firing.

J. M. Chaney



e stuck close to our holes and “sweated” out a lot of shells by the Germans. “Poncho” Luna of the fourth platoon was seriously wounded when shell fragments hit both his legs. After Capt. Smith, Wortman, and Racy had given him first aid treatment, he was evacuated to the battalion aid station.

Little Luna

*Somewhere now in Amarillo,
Women weep who laughed before.
The fiestas spell is broken;
Luna lives, but walks no more.*

*Little Luna, hardly eighteen,
Born with visions of romance,
Soft guitars would make him tremble
To the tempo of the dance.*

*Legs as limber as a sapling,
Voice as gay as Robin's song;
No fiesta night was shorter
Than when he danced the whole night long.*

*Now in Amarillo's corners
Hidden by the creaky doors
Stand guitars without guitarists,
Luna lives, but walks no more.*

*Luna trained in Carolina
And practiced military stance;
But what he learned in Carolina
Were variations of the dance.*

*Girls would fight to dance with Luna
And formed in lines to take their place,
While men would look with admiration
And marvel at his sylph-like grace.*

*But the castanets are quiet
And the rhumba beat's ignored.
Those who danced now sit in silence,
Luna lives, but walks no more.*



*Luna never used a razor
And caught the taunts of company wits.
But Christmas Eve the mails were heavy
And Luna owned three shaving kits.*

*On Christmas Day the front was still
With only an occasional scream
Of eighty-eight to emphasize
That peace was a civilian's dream*

*Ring the bells in Amarillo
Christ was born to be adored.
Toll the bells in Amarillo
Luna lives, but walks no more.*

*“Damn”, he said, “I fight, I man.”
And laughed to see his buddies scoff.
He left the shelter of his trench
To trim imagined whiskers off.*

*Luna never used a razor,
Nor did he on that Christmas Day;
The shell that burst where Luna sat
Severed more than hair away.*

*Somewhere now in Amarillo
Sits a man of years a score,
While women weep and gray men whisper,
“Luna lives, but walks no more.”*

*(“Stars and Stripes” March 17, 1945)
S/Sgt. Orey Y. Shrogin*

O

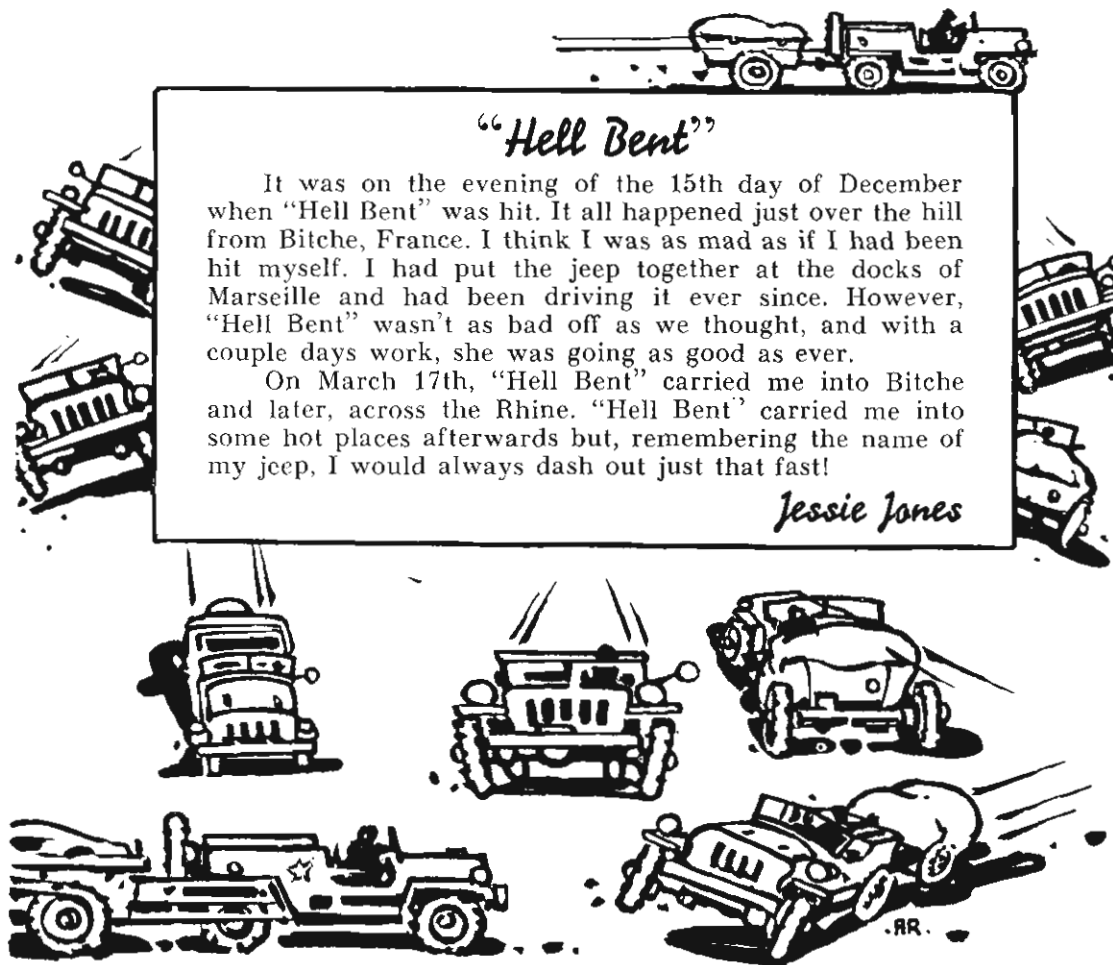
ur only other casualty during those four days was "Hell Bent". A shell fragment pierced the hood and knocked the motor out of commission. Jessie Jones' familiar comment was, "Mr. Hitler, count your chillun' now!"

"Hell Bent"

It was on the evening of the 15th day of December when "Hell Bent" was hit. It all happened just over the hill from Bitche, France. I think I was as mad as if I had been hit myself. I had put the jeep together at the docks of Marseille and had been driving it ever since. However, "Hell Bent" wasn't as bad off as we thought, and with a couple days work, she was going as good as ever.

On March 17th, "Hell Bent" carried me into Bitche and later, across the Rhine. "Hell Bent" carried me into some hot places afterwards but, remembering the name of my jeep, I would always dash out just that fast!

Jessie Jones



W

e had decided that this was the way to win a war... just sit back and let the Air Corps and artillery blast away all resistance. But, not everyone agreed with us, for on the morning of December 18, we received the order to advance. Fox company was to follow Easy company and move up with the third battalion. However, since the third battalion

was delayed, we had gone only a few hundred yards when we stopped to wait for the other companies. We sat along the roadside for four hours and finally got word that we were to return to our old dugouts. This message sounded like music to our ears, for it meant that we wouldn't have to dig in that night and would be able to get at least a couple of hot meals.

The next day brought another long wait behind the third battalion. It was cold and everyone had the feeling of dread as we sat in ditches and along hill slopes awaiting the order to move out. After five hours of shivering and restless walking to and fro to keep the bitter cold from our feet, the word was passed down the long line, "Saddle Up!"

Over hills, through woods, and down steep slopes onto paved roads, doubling back and marching past wrecked pill-boxes, we followed Easy company. Finally, from the top of a long winding set of stairs, we could see the plateau which held the battered ruins of Freudenberg Farms. Enemy sniper and mortar fire followed us as we ran and hit the ground and ran again to finally reach protection amid the piled debris of the "Farms".

To our rear was at least two-thousand yards of flat open grazing land for the now dead cattle that pock-marked the landscape. To our front was one of the most strongly defended forts in history. Settling there by the piles of debris we neither thought of what lay ahead nor cared what lay behind. We were tired and scared...and in a ditch we saw a little lamb tired and scared too, and we wished we could help it, but we couldn't even help ourselves.



The Little Lamb

Tired, dirty troops staggering under a heavy load, ... complete weariness. Whither are we drifting?

The moon was slowly descending, and backs were steadily drooping.

Even the grey dusk could not hide our utter fatigue and bewilderment. The action of our minds could be summed up as a total blank.

Moving things with no souls. Like robots we marched in single file along the embankment of a road to avoid being observed by the enemy. A narrow and seemingly endless muddy ditch dropped us below the skyline. Two shoe packs could not occupy the width of it. Slowly, quietly, exhausted, we made our way single file through sucking mud. The moon was deathly white. The trees were silhouetted in black against a colorless sky. Twisted branches reached out like hungry snakes. To our left tank traps, with their iron rusted posts embedded solidly in the ground, stood in silent defiance, like a grave yard.

A line of aching, sweating human flesh, moving, moving like a caterpillar. Even the moon looked sad. But this constant, even shuffling was soon broken, and empty minds filled with thoughts. Parched, hanging lips turned to pathetic smiles. In the muddy ditch, away from the rest of the world, lay a baby lamb, alive, but motionless, and as each soldier, one by one, climbed over it, who did not want to hold it to his bosom? Who didn't wonder as to its significance? And who hasn't carried the memory of that little lamb with him ever since?

*Oh, little lamb, alone and cold
Amidst the battle of the night,
What prophecy do you hold,
That makes our hearts so light?*

*Oh, little lamb of God,
Protect us day to day,
And as we trod the bloody sod,
Forever guide our way.*

Aldo Rubano



ur day ended in our freshly dug foxholes about a thousand yards past the "Farms". In that thousand yards was a maze of steel tank traps intertwined with barbed-wire, through which there was only one narrow, twisting pathway. Rations were carried down that pathway in the pitch darkness of night and our retreat was to be through it when the time came.

"88's"

We were tired as we passed "the farms". It took all of our energy to drop into the water filled ditches as the "88's" droned over our heads and landed a short distance from us. After we made our way through the maze of barbed wire and dragon's teeth, it was almost dark. Our last ounce of strength was spent in an effort to dig a shallow hole and fill our canteens from a nearby shell hole.

It was late and I was cold as I sat on the edge of the fox-hole guarding while my buddy slept. I had my "sack" zipped up around my waist to keep me warm. In the distance I heard the "bark" of an "88". It whistled over head and burst at the top of the hill. Another "bark" and my tired brain told me I'd better roll into the hole for this one. Luckily I did. It hit between our hole and the next. The concussion seemed to lift me ten feet and the rocks, dirt, and shrapnel flew for what seemed like hours. No one was hurt but the next morning we found three rifles ruined by shrapnel, a canteen punctured, and three clips of ammunition had exploded in one fellow's belt. We were lucky!

James Ripper



ince early morning the first platoon had been over supporting Easy company. Late that night in an attempt to return to Fox company they ran into difficulty when McNamara stepped on an "S" mine, injuring himself, Hunt and Condrey.

The "S" Mine

It happened on December 19, the day the first platoon was in support of Easy company at Freudenberg Farms. Heavy artillery fire from the pill boxes had Easy company pinned down and so we couldn't advance. After we had lain in the ditch along the road for hours, the order came for Easy company to withdraw to their old positions for the night. Our platoon was supposed to rejoin Fox company, but we couldn't contact them; and since it was getting dark, Lt. Ward decided we would dig in by ourselves.

As we were crossing one of the farms to a spot where we would have good cover, I stepped on an "S" mine. The ground was frozen so the mine didn't explode with its full force. I was wounded in the arm and leg, and Hunt got hit in the leg. McNamara was slightly wounded also. He and Birchall helped Hunt and I to the spot where the rest of the platoon was going to dig in. After getting first-aid from our buddies we were taken back to the aid station. We were only slightly wounded, and it wasn't so bad; it meant we were going to spend Christmas in a hospital instead of a fox-hole.

Gene Condrey



he battle of the "Cabbage Patch" is familiar to us as well as to George company. We followed them on the morning of Wednesday, December 20th, across a long low open field and through a slate lined draw in single file as "88's" whined and exploded on both sides. Rocks and shrapnel were thrown all around us, but there were no direct hits in the draw. Savarese, George and Ragel were all wounded by the flying bits of steel.

Listen

The hole was very small but when I crawled into it, I saw some of my buddies laying on top of the ground all around me. Then, I bowed my head and said a few words to God.

It seemed that God answered my prayers. The barrage stopped, then came the call "Is anybody hit?" Those words nearly tore the heart out of me and I feel the same every time. I hope and pray for the day when we won't have to listen to those words.

Oliver E. Balch

One Night on the "Cabbage Patch"

The day was over but the sky was being lit by continual artillery fire. Van and I had dug us a small hole and were alternating sleeping when I noticed that Kofod and Burger were still digging in their hole. Suddenly I heard Kofod's voice in a weary whisper, "Oh, to hell with it. That's deep enough ... if we get hit, we get hit."

Immediately following Kofod's words, a terrifying scream of an "88" went over our heads and it exploded too quickly for our comfort. There was a quick scramble in Kofod's hole and rapid digging began again, this time to last many hours.

Earnest Johnson



The "Ditch"

"Cabbage Patch"



uring this artillery battle St. Laurent took a patrol out of the ditch and over by George company in search of a sniper. Vampotic also went out to observe for mortar targets, but the mortars were not used because of our precarious position.

The retreat from the "Cabbage Patch" was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the following day. As each platoon's turn came, we left our holes...running! As we ran we listened and when the whistling of an "88" was heard, we'd all dive behind whatever cover was within reach. Practically the whole battalion had to file through that one pathway made in the barbed wire entanglement.

For nearly all of the first hour of our march we were shelled, which meant getting down in and out of ditches so many times we were dizzy. Gradually we left the barraged area and the walking brought us to the side of a steep mountain, where we stayed for the night. The road below us moaned with slow moving autos and tanks, among which was our company jeep with hot chow.

Friday we moved into the positions of the 44th Division on the side of a low hill that over-looked miles of flat open country. From an "O.P." set up by the second platoon, we could see the Jerries in their holes, who seemed to be even colder, and more restless than we were.

Saturday Lt. Horler paid us and Lt. Hannigan collected it to send home for us.

The company C.P. was in a dilapidated old barn (the holes in the walls were patched with hay) and in this shelter the orders came by way of the "double-E eight" for a daylight patrol to be sent to look over a road junction straight out into enemy territory. The story of how Monchino, Powers and Channing were wounded and how Birchall alone carried out the mission of the squad, is told by Brown, who was one of the men on the patrol.

Daylight Patrol

It was during that week before Christmas, I believe December 23rd was the exact date, that this little episode became part of the history of Joe Ward's "Fightin' First Platoon".

Rumor had it that Jerry was counter-attacking somewhere in the north and had cut off the 101st Airborne. That was why we pulled out from around Bitche and went into defensive positions along the Maginot Line.

The sky was pale blue but the wind was as cold as ice, blowing constantly across the barren hills around us.

About nine in the morning, Lt. Ward informed Monchino that regiment wanted a patrol sent out to reconnoiter a road junction about a thousand yards to our front and that he was to be in charge of it.

It seemed like a senseless idea to send eight men in broad daylight across terrain so void of cover that the Jerries couldn't help but see us. But that was not for us to decide.

Our course led us out along the edge of a draw past Howe company's foremost machine gun and straight toward the Kraut lines. As we ascended the slope at the end of the draw, we came to a paved road where we stopped momentarily for a brief orientation. From there our course was across a long flat plateau and down into a second draw. It was during this operation that I'm certain the enemy became aware of our presence.

About halfway down the slope leading into the draw there were a line of holes that looked to be alternate defense positions dug by the Krauts.

Just about this time, Monchino called a halt by one of the holes and told us that he thought he had heard a man shout as through to give an alarm. Powers confirmed this and we were about ready to take off in the fastest manner possible. But Birchall seemed convinced that there wasn't any danger as yet, so, as he was willing to act as first scout, we proceeded.

Our path from there was parallel to the contour of the hill about halfway down the side of the draw. We were dispersed in a very open squad column formation, and by this time, moving very cautiously. Suddenly Birchall, who had just rounded a

little knoll ahead of us, turned and in a very excited manner motioned for us to withdraw "toot sweet". At first, the squad seemed confused as to his meaning but they were quickly straightened out by the burst of a burp-gun. Monchino shouted to us to get back to our own lines in the quickest possible way.

As we withdrew, Raulerson, Varner and Powers found enough cover to fire from and wounded at least three of the Jerries. But we were not without casualties ourselves. Channing was hit in the shoulder and Powers was hit in the forearm and finger. One slug got Monchino just above the hip inflicting a very painful wound. In this condition, he ran nearly a quarter of a mile before he collapsed.

When we had rejoined the platoon, Lt. Ward began asking questions as to what had happened. It was then discovered that Birchall had not gotten out with us. So it was taken for granted that he had either been killed or was taken prisoner. But that was not the case.

When the fight first started, he was out in front and very probably would have been killed if he had tried to run. So he hid in some bushes and remained there all day. As the afternoon waned, the Germans, who had remained in the draw after we left, returned to their own positions.

When darkness fell, Birchall, stiff and nearly frozen, got out of his hiding place, but instead of returning immediately to the safety of our lines, as would have been expected, he proceeded to reconnoiter the road junction, which had been the mission of our patrol. Upon completing this task, he returned to the company with the desired information.

For this action, Birchall was awarded the Silver Star.

William Brown



hristmas Eve brought another long march to a final position a mile in front of the "M.L.R." (main line of resistance). Behind us all bridges were mined and miles of trees were ready to be blown across the roads in case we should be attacked. Our closest support on the right was George company ...two miles away!







D

uring the night the "240's" droned over our heads and exploded a "Merry Christmas" deep in Jerry-land. As we lay in our fox-holes we thought of many Christmases before... with "Mom" and "Dad"...with the wife or sweetheart.

Christmas in Fox-holes

It was the night before Christmas and we were all cold, tired, and wondering what kind of a Christmas Day we would have; wondering if we would have to do any fighting, whether the Heinies would give us a present consisting of an artillery barrage, or if we would get to spend a nice quiet day as we wanted to.

"Come on, wake up... Merry Christmas." It was Birchall waking me up to go on guard a few minutes after midnight. "What a way to start Christmas Day", I thought, as I got up and started walking around to try to keep warm.

The day turned out to be a nice one, and we were soon going from hole to hole, sampling all of the good things to eat that everyone had gotten in their Christmas packages. The two gas stoves were going all morning long as we made hot coffee, hot cocoa, and steaming soup. Then came the wonderful Christmas dinner with all of the trimmings including mince pie, candy and nuts. I believe everyone spent the entire day eating. It was up to Lt. Ward to add the finishing touch to a wonderful day, as late that evening he brought out a bottle of Schenley's Black Label, which he had been saving for the occasion, and passed it around the platoon.

It had been, after all, a very Merry Christmas.

Vernon Sherman





he sun broke through the clouds on Christmas Day and although it was still cold we gathered in small groups, "batting-the-breeze". In the early afternoon, parkas were brought up and distributed to the platoons. These were reversible snow coats...white on one side and grey on the other, with a seperate fleece lining that came down to the knees. The climax of the day came around 3 o'clock, when "Nellie Fay" rolled up the hill sporting the most delicious meal we had ever had in Europe...turkey, dressing, peas, potatoes, mince pie, candy and nuts.

Christmas Night

We had just finished eating our Christmas dinner, which consisted of turkey with all the trimmings, topped off with cherry pie, and assorted nuts and hard candy. The fellows, I believe, appreciated most of all the issuing out of coat-length, furlined parkas which would help us combat the rain and coldness that seemed to be as much of our every day life as breathing. Mail came up with chow and a few packages, of which I was lucky enough to receive one...date sticks. Yes, our Christmas was quite more than we had expected with just these few things which had been a God-send. Our morale was greatly boosted by all this.

Night began to creep up on us and I found myself hoping against great odds I would be able to get four to six hours of sleep. What with the new parka and my sack, I could be half way warm. After what seemed like minutes of blissful sleep, I was awakened and told I would have to take out five men and myself and set up positions to our right front behind a knoll as a security measure, for Jerry had been reported active in this area. We were quite reluctant about giving up our sleep but more afraid of the report of Jerries being active in this particular area. This would mean another fire fight and with only six men, the prospects did not look too good. We sweated out our six hour "hitch" but no Jerries appeared. All of which brought us to the end of another Christmas and the start of another cold, miserable, back-breaking day of front line warfare.

G. Noble



about 7 o'clock in the evening (it was fairly dark) George company called excitedly over the phone that they were being attacked and to send aid. Lt. Horler took ten men from the fourth platoon, contacted George company, and dug in on their left flank. Later the second and third platoon sent a squad each to help Lt. Horler. Our men were out in the cold, without bed rolls or decent holes, for what to them seemed like an endless night. Finally, word came down from battalion that the enemy force reported by George company had been... "greatly over estimated".

At noon on Tuesday we left our hill in the direction of George company's area. We crossed two streams on logs, marched down a muddy road, then quietly crawled into the fox-holes that George company vacated. This area was to be named "Sheep-Hill" or "Rocket Barn Hill".

Soon after the company headquarters unloaded their paraphernalia in an old battered farm building, a shell crashed through the roof and exploded. Even though the building was filled with men, no one was injured...another freakish incident which the Gods of War seemingly delight to cause to happen. On Wednesday a man at a time from each platoon went back to the C. P. for an hour or so. It was bitter cold and in the old headquarters building was a roaring fire. Steensen, "Tippy" and "Sue" had baked cherry pies and were there serving it to the boys. There was a table inside with stacks of V-Mail blanks, another with soap, shaving cream and razors, and in the corner a "G.I." can full of clean hot water. Out in the holes we lived for the time when our turn would come to go back to the "company rest-center" for that blessed hour.

The Jerries were quite active in front of Easy company that night, so a patrol was sent out from the second platoon to reconnoiter; Levesque was in charge. It was a very calm night and, although sounds could be heard for miles, very little movement was reported.

"When Better Patrols are Made"

Any resemblance between persons in this article and those living or in the army of occupation is purely coincidental.

"One of you guys will have to go on a patrol with me, tonight", Levesque said as he leaned precariously into our two-man foxhole. I looked inquiringly at Mace.

"Hit makes no difference to me, Braman", drawled Mace.

"Okay, you go", I said and completely dismissed the matter as far as I was concerned.

"Now, Braman", he said, "hit really makes no difference to me."

I looked up, thought a second, rolled over, closed my eyes and said, "Okay, Mace, you go."

"Now, wait a minute, Braman. I want you to know it makes no difference to me."

"Okay, so it makes no difference, so you go."

"But, Braman ..."

"Okay, okay, we'll flip for it. What do you say?"

"Heads."

"Heads it is; you win; you go."

Mace looked a little perplexed at first, then frowned, "Now just a minute, Braman, I don't think that was quite fair."

It surprised me to think a buddy of mine actually thought I would try to cheat him. So just to show him I was a "square-shooter" we flipped again. Again it was heads, and again Mace won. The coin had hardly touched the ground before I was pushed bodily out of the hole. He handed me my rifle saying "Hope ya don't run into any trouble", as he quickly closed the canvas door to our fox-hole.

What a patrol! ... "Pretty-Boy" Allen, "Killer" Matheny, "Little Willie" Levesque and me. The Krauts must have thought we were four of their buddies coming in drunk.

We were about a thousand yards into enemy territory when "Little Willie" stopped to talk the situation over with "Pretty Boy". I bet Captain Smith could have heard that conversation back at the C.P.! Suddenly "Killer" Matheny went into the most terrible coughing and sneezing antic I've ever witnessed.

He ended it up with a gargling noise deep in his throat, that sounded like a "death-rattle".

I leaned all my weight on my left foot and took a cautious step forward. They all three looked around and in a coarse whisper blurted out, "Geesus, Braman! Can't you be quiet?"

About that time a deer jumped up out of the brush and charged through the woods like "G" company in a bayonet assault. I said to myself, "Braman, if you're goin' to have any fun out of life, you'd better do it quick, cause you've just aroused two panzer divisions."

But nothing happened and we quietly stumbled back to our own lines. Once there we were halted by Van Duren, and to our dismay, "Little Willie" had forgotten the pass-word. (Outside of probably getting us shot, there was no real danger in forgetting the pass-word.) We finally reported in ... all quiet on the Western Front

Oscar Braman



he morning brought with it a blanket of snow and a bright sun warmed us, reflecting against the whiteness. The "rest center" was to stay open all the time we were at "Sheep Hill" and even a few men were taken back to the village of Horbach for showers.

My Biggest Scare

The date was December 28th. I remember it well because it was my mother's birthday. To some, the place was to be known as "Rocket Barn Hill" and to others as "Sheep Hill". About dusk we all gathered in the barn that housed the C.P. A couple of shells had just landed nearby and everyone was quiet. Lt. Smith who was then our communications sergeant, came in with the report that one of the shells had cut the fourth platoon line. As I expected, he told me to take someone with me and go out and fix the break. Chuck Allen said he'd go, so we collected the necessary material and took off.

It seemed as though we had gone halfway to Berlin before we finally discovered the damage. There were a couple of inches of snow on the ground and the wind was bitter as I tried to hurry and get back to what protection the C.P. had to offer.

We were nearly finished when I happened to glance up and see two men in dark overcoats (every one in the company had been issued white coats) advancing toward us. It was very dark, but I could see they were both carrying rifles and had them pointed very menacingly toward us.

Chuck had his back toward them, so I explained to him what I thought was about to happen. Gradually he turned and slowly brought his rifle to bear on them. When they were only ten yards from us, I heard Chuck's safety snap off.

He was just about to fire when one of the supposed enemy blurted out in a voice that could be none but that of a G.I., "Hey, take it easy with that rifle, Jack, It's liable to be loaded."

What a relief! They turned out to be two artillery observers who were orienting themselves as to our position.

Edward Mila

The surprise came when the platoons were called and told to "come on up the C.P. and get your P.X. rations!" We had candy, beer, cigars and peanuts and in the words of Lt. Adams, "It was a beautiful sight...men walking from fox-hole to fox-hole with a can of beer in each hand and a cigar hanging between their teeth." It's odd what importance small things like that take on when circumstances aren't exactly favorable (to put it mildly!).

The day was spent in preparation...the night in suspense. To our front were two panzer divisions and two infantry divisions. Every man was given a double supply of ammunition; gas-masks were handed out. Our manpower situation was desperately low, which meant long hours on guard, usually six or seven hours a night. All along the entire European front the Jerries were counter-attacking.

"The Interrogation"

From the interrogation of a prisoner, we learned that the Jerries are calling this drive, "The Drive to the Channel". Their general told them that they would have to get their cigarettes and "hops" from the Americans. Another piece of information that he volunteered to give was concerning signal flares. The white was used to point out our troops, the red was the signal to attack, and the green to cease firing. We've seen these flares... now we'll know what to expect the next time we see them.

From the notes of Lt. Adams

Saturday was a calm day, but darkness brought an enemy patrol into Easy company's area. Our area remained quiet except for a roaming flock of sheep that kept our nerves on edge. George company sent a combat patrol out into the little village to our front. The town was called Dolenbach and it seemed alive with Krauts. They slipped quietly into the town and surprised a group of Krauts lined up for "chow". Taking the enemy completely by surprise, the patrol opened fire on the chow line, piling up enemy dead and causing great confusion. They continued through the town kicking open doors and hurling grenades inside adding to the German demoralization as they went. The patrol then quietly withdrew successfully leaving Jerries still shooting at each other.

The last day of the year slipped by with little happening. Ralph Johnson took a patrol to our rear to make certain Jerries hadn't infiltrated in during the night. "Jonesy" and Marcum brought hot chow up and stayed all night with the "troops".

Shortly after taking up our positions on "Sheep-Hill" the men were startled by a sound coming from the left front about a mile away. We had never heard anything like it before in our lives. Men on guard looked up dumbfounded; men in the holes stood up and peered out in the direction of the peculiar noise. Lt. Ward said, "It sounds like a gravel pit trying to give birth to a bolder". Suddenly, as the first sound ceased, the scream and rapid burst of rockets told us this strange roaring came from the German's rocket-launchers.

The mid-night was celebrated by the Germans, who fired their rifles and yelled. The phones were alive all night, everyone expecting an attack. Flares and rifle shots were heard to our rear, as Lt. Adams put it, "We knew we were in a hell of a spot!"

"Maybe Down But Never Out"

Early in the afternoon, Capt. Smith and myself began discussing the subject of the New Year's Day football games. We were so curious as to the results of the games that we at last placed a call to battalion S-2 and asked him for the scores. It so happened that at this same time, there was a conference meeting of the big "moguls" and they were "sweating out" the situation. When they learned that we asked such a question at this time, the tension was greatly relieved in the conference room. We seemed to have a great reputation down in battalion headquarters. No matter how tough the going gets, we somehow come through with some prize remark that captures the spirit and heart of those who are less concerned.

From the notes of Lt. Adams

One Night On Guard

One night while on guard in a place known to us as "Sheep Hill", I and two other riflemen were standing guard with one of our company's machine gun squads. The M.G. was dug in just off to the left of our fox-hole. One rifleman and a machine gunner stood guard at the time. There was plenty of barbed-wire laid out in front of our positions. Suddenly that night about 11 o'clock one of the guards woke us up, and told us that they heard the Jerries trying to cut through our wire. Then we all got in position, two men manning the machine gun, one on a B.A.R., the rest of them with M-1's. We stood quietly for a while and then we heard the wire making noise, as though it were being cut. Then we gave them everything we had, and waited a few minutes in silence. Two of us remained on the machine gun and one on the B.A.R. while the rest of us, armed with rifle's and grenades began to move cautiously from tree to tree to where the noises came from. There was another foxhole out in front of our positions that we hadn't occupied, so we threw a grenade in it. This assured us that everything was cleared out. We anxiously awaited daylight to see what we had accomplished. Morning came and we went out to count the number of Jerries we got. Very much to our surprise, the total dead was a weasel!

Elmac Fioretti



he first day of the year was quiet for us. George company sent another patrol into the village... no casualties on either side. "Steve" brought up some "P.X." candy for the "rest-center" and Chaplain Sam Tyler came up and held Protestant Services for the boys. Special service even sent up a movie, but the machine wouldn't work (as usual). Joe Whorten was now running the "rest-center".

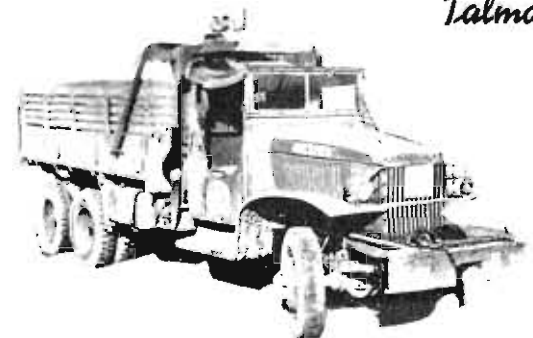
As the days went by the rumors got worse... we were practically cut off, the Germans could attack anytime, the outfits on our flanks were falling back. The monotony of long hours on guard, the continued cold, the diarrhea, and the dread of the Germans attacking was gradually pulling the men into deep melancholy. Plans were made in case we were forced to retreat, but stories of Kraut paratroopers behind our lines suggested that retreat would be impossible. "When are we going to get support?" was on every man's mind.

Bazooka Lesson

It happened one morning last December. Fox company was dug in on the side of a steep hill, and snow covered the frozen earth. The company commander got word that the Germans were supposed to have a lot of mechanized equipment out in front of us, so he had more bazookas brought up on line. I took one over to Vine and Lester's hole and had gone about half-way back to my foxhole when I heard an explosion. I rushed back to Lester's dugout. His eyes were as big as silver dollars and the bazooka was still on his shoulder.

He spoke with a slow West Virginia drawl, "I just wanted to see if it would fire or not." Since that day, the guys in the first platoon have called Lester, "Our Bazooka Kid".

Talmadge Hunt





about dusk on January 2nd, "Chuck" Allen was cut in the wrist by an exploding flare. The second platoon was out laying barbed-wire protection when someone tripped the flare. It was one left by George company.

On the 3rd all jeeps and trucks were given red panels to display on their hoods, so the air-corps could recognize them. Our front lines laid out yellow panels on the ground.

The "88's" had our mortars zeroed in perfectly. The mortar teams were firing protective fire when suddenly the shrill scream of an "88" and the rapid explosion, and continued screams and explosions, pounded the small knoll. The men were still at the mortars when Petralia and Butler were hit. Sleparski and a new medic in the company were injured by the same barrage. "Slep" had some cuts in his chest and stomach...not serious and the medic had a wound in the shoulder. Of the first casualties, Petralia and Butler had their legs badly hurt...Petralia's broken, Butlers internally damaged. At the same time Balch had fallen with a gasoline can, spilling gasoline into his face. He had pains in his eyes and ears but was not hospitalized long.

"Pat"

This is another story about "Sheep Hill", but it is really more about a fellow well known and liked to all members of the fourth platoon. William "Pat" Petralia was a likeable fellow. A little hard to understand at first, but when you got to know him, he was a grand guy. In the "old" days at Ft. Bragg, he was continually telling us of his twins and beautiful wife.

"Pat" came over with mental spirits like the rest of us, for his home. He was a little scared, not for himself so much, but for his wonderful family. From Marseille up to Sheep Hill he was the average G. I. He had his gripes and bitches and aired them freely, but, nevertheless when he was called on for mortar fire, he was always ready and willing to give it all he had.

Then came the fateful day...It was a cold clear day in January. Jerry had moved a gun up to plaster our positions and he set about doing it in a merciless fashion. Counter fire was

called for from the mortars section. Their mission was to saturate a draw in front of us so no Germans could come forward under the cover of our artillery. "Pat" manned his mortar and was dropping in shells as fast as Butler could hand them to him. Both men could hear the blast of enemy shells landing near by but a job had to be done and neither of them thought of going to their holes until the "cease fire" order came. It finally did come, and just in time for wasn't the last Jerrie shell almost on top of them? Yes, it was, and "Pat" and Butler made a dash for their holes! Then came the one shell fate had destined for both of them. There was no warning. Both of their ears were still ringing from firing their own guns so they could not hear the enemy shell screaming through the air. "Pat" felt his leg go out from underneath him, yet he knew he had to make his hole. Near by, men of the fourth platoon came to his aid. His leg looked bad. There was an ugly gash above the knee. His first words were, "What is my wife going to say?"

Everyone was sorry when the news came back to us that he had lost his leg, but all through the evacuation and general hospitals, his spirits were high and he refused to let this get him down.

"Pat's" fine spirit in face of his handicap, and his love for his family is all he will need to bring him through...He always was, and shall be, a swell guy.

Albert Schmidt

BUTLER

Butler was an easy-come, easy-go Texan, just one of many in the fourth platoon. A naturally quiet boy, he was modest and appeared bashful, except when it came to describing the wonders of his beloved home state, Texas.





arly in the morning on Thursday, January 4th, Johnson in "Whiteys" squad spotted some Jerries standing in our woods. He fired and the whole woods came alive with rifle fire. The rest of the second platoon was too far away to be of any help, so "Whitey" and his four man squad routed the approximated 25 Krauts. Following this a larger amount of Jerries attacked on our right, but were driven back by very timely and effective "60" fire. We then laid in "81" fire and artillery to put the final scare into them. The Jerries must have been trying to feel out our positions and strength.

"What a Night!"

It was about two o'clock in the morning when they attacked us. Johnson and Fuehrer were standing guard. Suddenly Johnson spotted the Germans across the open space between the woods where we were situated and no man's land. Johnson, acting quickly, told Fuehrer to get in his hole. A few minutes later, Johnson started firing and the fire works began. White worked his way down to our hole and gave us the situation. He told us when he threw a hand grenade, that would be the signal for everybody to "open up". White worked his way over to our right and threw the grenade. It hit a tree and bounced back, landing about ten feet away from him. When it went off

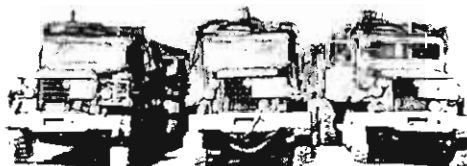
the Krauts again opened up with everything they had. We returned fire and hoped our plan would work. They finally withdrew and we called for mortar fire. The 60's threw in a perfect concentration, which supplied the finishing touches desired.

David Clay



n the afternoon we watched P-47's strafe and bomb "A" company on our left flank. We were not touched, probably because of the jeep at our C.P. with the red panel displayed. The front lines had been ordered not to lay out their yellow panels yet. So amid this confusion American planes bombed and strafed American troops.

Rockets pounded and shook our C.P. Friday morning, thirty minutes after midnight. All our communication wires were out and an anti-tank truck was set on fire. The runners, although nervous from the experience, quickly left the comparative safety of the buildings and followed the wires until the breaks were repaired. Johnson, Pykonen, Mila, and Joiner were the "trouble-shooters" that night.



Rocket Hill

It was twelve-thirty early Friday morning. Mila and I were standing guard in a little wood shed beside the barn where our company C. P. was located. Everything was very quiet and then all of a sudden, we heard the rocket shells coming in. Mila and I hit the dirt. It sounded like they hit on top of us. They threw rocks and stones all over us. Let me tell you, Mila and I were really praying! After they had momentarily stopped we tried to find a place that gave us better protection. One of the rockets hit a truck loaded with ammo. It sounded like the Jerries had broken through. Mila and I didn't know if we should go around the house or not, so finally, we made a dash around the building. We found out that one of the rockets landed about three-hundred yards away, hitting an ammo truck. We were greatly relieved, until our company commander told us that all the telephone lines were out.

He sent "Pike" and myself out to fix the lines to the battalion which had been downed by the exploding truck. Mila and Johnson fixed the others. Boy, I sure was scared and so was "Pike"! We talked, going down to the truck, about more of the shells going off. We just felt that one of the shells had not exploded and would probably explode when we got down there. We fixed the wires, shaking all the time (and it wasn't from the snow on the ground either). About three hours later we returned to our area, only to find we were on guard again.

William H. Joiner

E

arly in the afternoon large formations of Allied planes flew over us toward Germany. The P-47's dived and strafed while the B-24's and B-17's snail-paced across the sky and finally turned into small specks in the distance. On their homeward journey, a "B-17" broke formation and nosed lower toward ground amid the bursting "ack-ack" fire. While they were still deep in German territory, five parachutes opened and the men, dangling under the white silk, were carried out of our sight and out of any possible aid we could give them.

Company "G", 255th Infantry Regiment of the 63rd Division relieved us at 6 o'clock on the morning of January 6th, 1945.

The platoons left as they were ready and formed at a junction near Hottviller. From there the company marched a long seven miles to a small village on the top of a steep hill, called Glassenberg. About noon breakfast chow was handed out to the men, who were weak from the long hike.

Sunday morning a false rumor of an attack was called to us from the 399th regiment, but all the day was quiet. It seemed all the division was on edge, expecting the Jerries to take advantage of our weakened defense. We had a good breakfast, after which Protestant services were held near by. During the day the men gathered eggs and other local delicacies the village offered and cooked them into wonderful meals. The fourth platoon killed a lamb on "Sheep Hill", skinned it, carried it on the march and finally shared it with the other platoons at Glassenberg.

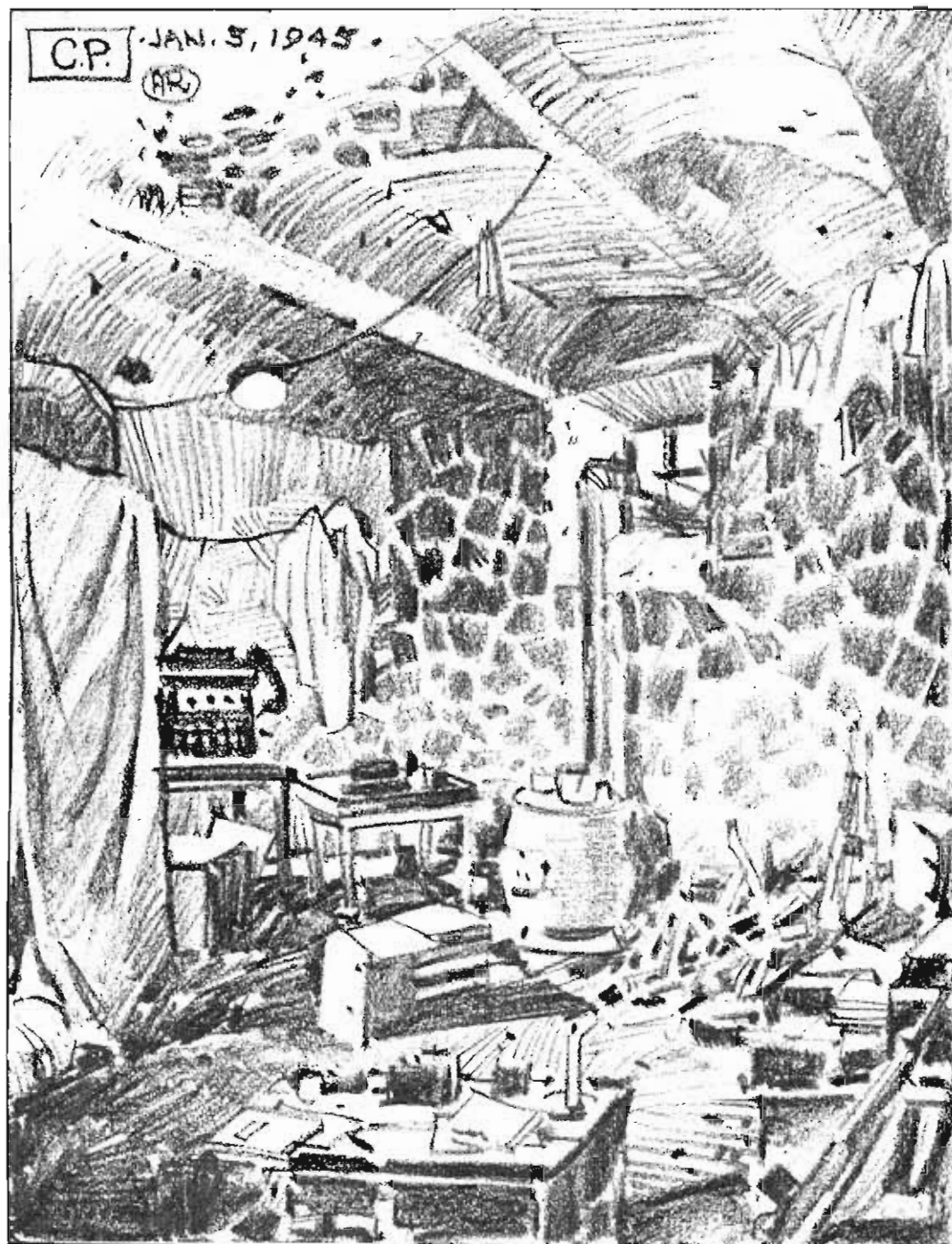
Church Services

While the thought is still fresh in my mind, and it's a thought we all want to keep, I'd like to elaborate on these church services. The environment is not quite fitting. The house of worship is usually a barn, a hay-loft, or any place where a few can gather in seclusion and worship God. As I glance around the congregation, I see dirty faces, bushy heads of hair, bearded chins, torn and muddy clothes, and eyes that have seen death and know fear, sparkling now with the enlightenment as the words of our Saviour come from the lips of the chaplain. As for the

chaplain, we are all proud of him. He follows us through all battles and when the situation permits, he is there to hold services. We are all thinking and praying more over here, and when we return home we will be better Christians.

From the notes of Lt. Adams





The kitchen wasn't having it all peaceful, either. At Echenberg the rockets were coming in as "Tippy" and "Bo" baked cake for our "rest-center". The kitchen crew and jeep drivers somehow always got the chow to us. (At least if they didn't get it to us, they spent the night trying.)

"Echenberg"

I remember it all very well. "Sue" and I were sleeping down in the kitchen. Steenson and Stackhouse were upstairs playing cards. When they started throwing shells in, I grabbed my shoes and ran for the "kellar". I guess I must have been down there about six hours. They hit an ammunition truck three houses down from ours that was loaded down with 155mm shells. You couldn't step outside for a minute what with shrapnel flying all over. I was plenty nervous but yet I could still knock off some sleep. After a while the whole kitchen crew carrying their sleeping bags, came down to the cellar. They kept up their bombardment all night, throwing in thousands of shells. Next morning "Tip" and I cooked breakfast.

"Bo" Bowlin



teve brought "P.X." rations to us...two cans of beer, Whitman chocolates, two chocolate bars, cigars and shaving equipment. As the men took turns standing guard, the rest played cards, drank, and "batted-the-breeze". The tension of battle seemed to be lifted in the houses where the eating and laughing was, but out on guard the burning city of Bitchel lit the eastern sky and remained as a continual reminder that this strong fortress still lay in enemy hands. Even amid the pushed-back chairs, the cigar smoke and the general gaiety inside, we were too quick to laugh at each others jokes, too ready to take a casual statement the wrong way. In each heart was an utter disgust for this war...a war we could see no end to.

Down in the C.P. the "Ol' Man" was pouring over maps and rehashing the situation, for in the morning we were going into the attack with the 399th regiment. Night closed on our 60th day in combat; we've lead the regiment more than any other company; we've had fewer casualties; and we've taken every objective. But we were to be jarred from this self-assurance in only a few days.

Around 2 o'clock Monday afternoon "I" company of the 399th reported a counter-attack. We grabbed bandoliers, rifles and hand grenades, almost running out of town toward the spot we were to remember as "Suicide Hill".

"Prelude to Suicide Hill"

After living in ice-covered holes on "Sheep Hill" for more than a week, Lambach looked pretty good. We entered our section of the town after climbing a half mile long hill that left most of us so "pooped" that all we could do was take off our packs and gasp, before we even thought of looking for a house to sleep in. By that time, "C" and "K" rations, that we had been eating most of the winter, were beginning to tell on the best of us.

The weapons platoon moved into two houses at the very summit of the hill, about a hundred yards apart, both of which were just outside the limit of observation of a Jerry O.P. This O.P. on a hill a thousand yards away, directed fire for the bat-

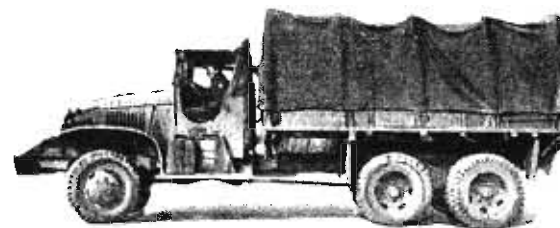
teries during the time we were there. Luckily, none of these shells actually fell in the company area.

The house which most of the platoon occupied was crowded, but fairly warm and comfortable; there were rabbits and potatoes and jam in the cellar, wood in the shed next door, and flour, grease, sugar and cereal in the kitchen. The sheep that Nichols and Schmidt had shot the last day on "Sheep Hill" had been skinned and dressed by Petrell, loaded on the jeep, and was now hanging in the woodshed, ready for the skillet. The C.P. of the third battalion, 399th was next door. In the wall there was a gaping hole through which three of us crawled in search of the cows that we had heard were there. They were in a stall next to the battalion commander's bedroom, but at four in the morning we milked them anyway, braving the guards that were thick around the C.P. We needed milk for our breakfast oatmeal.

By noon of the second day, great preparations were underway. Every stove in the house was in use, coffee was being made, oatmeal cooked, a good portion of the sheep was still intact, and rabbits and chickens from neighboring yards were being prepared. It had begun to look as though we were to stay for some time in the village, when the platoon runner brushed aside the shelter half covering our front door and shouted, "Get ready to move. Don't take anything with you but your weapons, we'll be moving in a hurry when we do!" The platoon came through the doors in a hurry; the cereal and coffee steaming on the stoves, the veal roast still sputtering in the pan.

This was the end; all our plans were kaput! The platoon moved out with the company along the snow covered trail clinging to the side of a hill in the direction of a wooded knoll in the distance. We were moving to reinforce Item company, 399th, dug in on a forested rise that was soon to be known, and with good reason, as "Suicide Hill".

James Nichols





ur officers were doubtful of our situation, and "I" company didn't bother to enlighten us. We soon found ourselves in front of "I" company; the first platoon was attacked from the flank, but drove the enemy back. The third platoon pushed out to the center, engaged continually in small arms fighting, and fought blindly until the Jerrys retreated into the heavy woods. Birchall and his five man squad fought off the flanking attack on the first platoon, then moved out toward the enemy. Birchall, Bailey, Smith and Fuehrer were wounded; Varner and Galegas killed; and "Chuck" Johnson was knocked down by a burp-gun slug which lodged in his gun belt, leaving him the only man in the squad unharmed.

VARNER

Although a quiet, passive guy when we first met him, we found under this solemnity a potential activeness that was let loose many times on the field of game and battle. He seldom seemed overly enthusiastic for any particular activity until it was actually underway. We noticed this in the battle field when he would be aroused and suddenly become a "one man" army. When he died he died fighting; but his efforts were not in vain, for the mission of repulsing a Jerry counter attack was successful.

GALEGAS

Galegas had been with our regimental Service company for a few weeks and returned to Fox company just before we moved up to "Suicide Hill". He was a guy that kept his inner most thoughts to himself but it was not hard for us to see that he felt the same as the rest of us about combat. On January 8th, the day we were called up to assist Item company in repulsing a Jerry counter attack, Galegas, while trying to gain a better firing position, was fatally wounded. Because he showed utter disregard for his own safety, we know that he was not thinking of himself, but of the other fellows in the platoon.



uddenly we found ourselves alone, without any particular objective (except to halt the Germans) so we fell back on line with "I" company. Our orders were to stay in reserve until needed by one of the companys, so now that the enemy had been routed, we expected to return to the village to await another emergency. After two hours of waiting we learned we were to be held here for the night... a night we were not prepared for. We had no bed-rolls or rations and some men even had no parkas.

"The Bacon"

The action was at it's peak. Fioretti and I got in a fox-hole. Much to our surprise, we found a pound of bacon in it. We took our canteen cups and some heat tablets and began cooking the bacon. Suddenly, a barrage of shells hit around us, and the grease went flying all over the hole, but this didn't stop us; we kept right on frying. Then came the order to move back, and we had to quit. Nevertheless we took the bacon with us, and swallowed chunks in between shell bursts! We found out later that the bacon belonged to Steed and he was worried that the Jerries had eaten his bacon, but when we told him it was us, he was greatly relieved.

William Joiner



evesque was sent out with a patrol to set up a strong-point to our left front, in contact with the 36th Division. Here he practically moved into a Jerry hole, surprising eight Krauts. (and also himself!)

Setting Up an O.P.

Burger and myself had just finished digging our two man hole when we were informed we were to go together with Levesque and seven more men to establish a security out-post about four-hundred yards in front of our company's positions. We proceeded cautiously, led by an officer from the 399th who was to show us the location of the out-post. He assured us on our way toward our destination that Jerry had been cleaned out of the immediate vicinity. We reached the outpost, an abandoned Jerry hole which was large enough to put a truck in. We found it was already occupied by men from the 36th Division and thought it would be better to look for some place where we could have an out-post established with out interference from another outfit. When we proceeded from the out-post into territory which Jerry had supposedly been cleaned out, we were in for a great surprise.

Levesque spotted a likely looking hole and saw a figure with a parka over his steel helmet looking toward the enemy positions. He asked if there was room in the hole for a few of his men. "Vas?" was the reply, and thinking it was some character trying to be smart, Levesque asked again while walking toward

the hole this man occupied. "Vas ist?" was the reply and by this time Levesque was up to him and, fed up with the fooling around, lifted up his parka hood and saw the square helmeted Jerry. "Oh my . . . back" exclaimed Levesque and the Kraut thinking he had run up against the craziest or the bravest man in the U.S. Army, quickly threw down his loaded burp gun and put up his hands. His example was quickly followed by his buddy who was near by. Prisoner number 2. By this time we figured we had enough of this "cleared" Jerry territory and proceeded to make our way back to our original position and set up our O.P. with the 36th Division doughs. We were led by our two prisoners and flanked by our men, four on each side of the road. Suddenly to our left front two more German soldiers came into view with their hands up hollering, "Kamarad! Kamarad!" Prisoners numbers 3 and 4. By this time there was quite a bit of noise and commotion which drew a mortar barrage from Jerry and found us all hugging good mother earth, worrying more about ourselves than our prisoners. The barrage lasted about ten minutes, and after things had quieted down, we put our prisoners on the road using them as bait. They drew no fire, so we cautiously made our way out of the ditches to where the prisoners stood. We started off again, and one of our prisoners made us understand two of his "Kamarads" were ten meters to our rear and turning around saw them coming out of their well-concealed positions, one laying down a heavy machine gun and the other a burp gun. They sized up the picture, and seeing everything was in our favor, came double-timing towards us, hands in the air . . . prisoners number 5 and 6. Once again we started towards our destination, restless to get back to the safety of a foxhole. We had gone about fifty yards, and to our left another Kraut was spotted by one of the boys and was made to understand he had better come out and give up or else. He came . . . prisoner number 7. We finally reached the spot we were going to set up our O.P. and turned the prisoners over to a group of our men for questioning. We then obtained the prisoners' weapons to be used in a possible defense of our O.P.

George Noble



"Wire Patrol"

Well, we just had to get communication with the company C.P., so the five of us started out to lay wire from the C.P. to our out-post. It was another one of those cold dreary nights when the wind seemed to go right through you. Another company was dug into the hill at our left, so we didn't worry to much about Jerries. We had gone about 300 yards up the snow covered road, and saw a group of men we took for G.I.'s, hailed them and asked the password. "Was Ist?" was the answer. "Krauts", someone yelled, and two of us took off for the ditch which was partially filled with slushy snow. Two of us lay there waiting for the remainder of the patrol, but the only thing which came our way was what seemed to be a never ending burst from a "burp gun". Finally Bloomberg joined us. We waited for what seemed hours, and finally began working our way back into the woods to our rear area. We heard voices, which I recognized as Lt. Adams with his North Carolinian drawl, and called out to him that we were coming in and for God sakes not to shoot. We made it, and to our surprise and relief found Levesque and the other man had been there sweating us out as we had recently sweated out getting away from the Jerry patrol we had bumped into.

George Noble



s the darkness crept in many men were in open holes. Snow, piled high against the trees and embankments, made camouflage for the men in white parkas.

"The Parkas"

It was the first night at Suicide Hill. Sgt. Orel called for eight volunteers by name. You, you, and you. Our mission was to pick up overcoats that were lying in a jeep about 200 yards down the road. It was pitch black, and I was at the tail end. We reached a fallen tree, and after I climbed over it, there was a group of soldiers in parkas. I went over to them and began talking to them, thinking they were a part of the detail. One of the G.I.'s started talking German, and I didn't know what to think. I just felt silly. Luckily they turned out to be prisoners! I left them and found the men on their way back. I took some of the coats, and again wound up at the end. Just as we got within

fifty yards of the C.P., a machine gun opened fire on us. Then all you could see on the road was a pile of coats!!

When the machine gun stopped firing, we reached the C.P. and practically had to set off a satchel charge to wake them up! Finally some bleary-eyed soldier answered, "Whadda ya want?" We dropped all the coats and departed for our holes to get a good night's sleep, which in all was one hour!

Bernard Freid



he first platoon was still out on the right front, exposed on three sides. Several times Jerries worked there way up within ten yards of their holes but were driven away by hand-grenades.

"Quick on the Trigger"

One act that we won't over look is the action of Claude King. He and Castillio were in a hole together. Castillio was on guard with a BAR when two Jerries worked their way up to the hole. The BAR was taken from Castillio's hands by one of the Germans, but King was fast enough to open fire with his M-1 before the Jerries' burp-gun could go into action. Two more Jerries followed up the shots, and they too faced King's fire. When the firing ceased, two German soldiers lay dead on the edge of the hole, and two lay wounded. Neither King nor Castillio was scratched.

From the notes of Lt. Adams



inally the enemy patrols ceased, but then came the enemy artillery and heavy mortar fire. Communications were knocked out and the runners were out searching and splicing the wires. Pitman was hit by a shell fragment in the leg and shoulder; Schmidt, giving first-aid to him, was hit in the foot. La Pietra was killed by concussion and Annunziato was left deaf by the same shell. Stimson lay all night in his fox-hole with only simple first-aid treatment. We were unable to evacuate him.

San Antonio's Own

He was the sort of fellow everyone would immediately like; the quiet type who always had a good word for everybody. Joe Pitman never complained of hardships, no matter how miserable he was. Always the same, his attitude was, "Oh well, fellows maybe tomorrow will be better." Regardless of the difficulties, he took life as it came and made the best of it.

After "Sheep Hill", Fox company moved to Glassenburg to support the third battalion of the 399th. Word came down on the third day of the company's stay there that Item company was being counter-attacked, and for us to move up immediately to help them.

Pitman picked up his two ammo boxes and as usual, was ready to go. On the long trudge up to what was to become known as "Suicide Hill", he carried these as he had done for so many months before. Because he was so small, his ammo load nearly touched the ground. Yet, he seemed never to tire and kept going when bigger and stronger men slowed down.

We reached our positions about mid-afternoon and took cover in holes that Jerries had once occupied. Things were fairly quiet for a half hour or so, and then, in came mortar, artillery, and small arms fire. Jerrie knew exactly where we were and was certainly giving us a going-over. A burp gun opened up close by. Not wanting the men to get trapped in their holes, Wortman shouted, "Someone try and find out where that bastard is." Someone tried and that "someone" was Joe Pitman. But, just as he crawled from his hole, the air was filled with a blinding flash and schrapnel cut the ground around us.

No one was killed, but Pitman was severely wounded in four different places, and I was hit in the foot. As Pitman fell back in his hole, the only words he uttered were. "God Almighty, I think I'm hit!"

Undoubtedly, he was one of the bravest and most likeable fellows the fourth platoon has yet known. Whenever the song, "Home in San Antonio", is heard, everyone's thoughts still flash to Joe Pitman, the soldier who didn't know there was a limit to bravery or endurance.

Albert Schmidt

La Pietra

Anthony, one of our many representatives of Louisiana, was a friendly fellow. A good mixer, he could always be depended on for a card game or just a plain "bull session". La Pietra made many friends in the company in whose memory he will always live.



he weapons platoon went out on a combat patrol in a search for "K" company of the 399th. They returned without any trouble, but were sent out again and ran into a Jerry patrol. After a short fierce fire-fight both patrols withdrew.

"Hello"

The night of the 8th, the fourth platoon made three contact patrols and only ran into trouble one time. We had gone only about 75 yards from our company C.P. when we were halted by some Jerries. They called out "hello" three times and then cut loose with a burp gun. But, by the time the third hello came, we all had a tree in front of us. We fired several shots in exchange although we couldn't see who we were shooting at. We lay there several minutes trying to find out where the Jerry was but were unable to spot him. The patrol decided to draw back and reorganize, but Beckman and myself never got the word that we were pulling out so we lay there still looking for something to shoot at when it suddenly dawned on us that we were alone so we pulled out of there pretty fast and found the rest of our patrol.

James Chaney

Patrols on "Suicide Hill"

When the fourth platoon came overseas, we had to take a lot of ribbing from the riflemen about our supposedly "rear echelon" status in combat. "You lucky bastards," they'd tell us, "You never have to pull patrols. What a racket the weapons platoon has." To which; looking back on "Suicide Hill", an ol' mortarman's reply is "BUSHWAH!"

"Suicide Hill" was a "bitch" for patrols. Some of the mortar

and machine gunners pulled six during the short time we were there.

The company was in a bad hole from the beginning, rifle platoons stretched to the breaking point, big gaps in the company line; the first, second and third platoons had no men to spare for any sort of patrols. Naturally, all that came up were passed on to the weapon's platoon.

It was a pitch black night, that first night on "Suicide Hill", icy, and with a foot of snow on the ground. Wortman, then acting platoon sergeant, took the whole platoon out, machine guns at port arms, on a patrol to contact the second platoon. From the first, it was pretty well messed up, because we didn't know the terrain, and had only the vaguest idea of where the second platoon was. Through the snow, over fences, across the tops of abandoned dug-outs we went, until a halt was called in a ravine beside the road that bisected the company area. After an hour's delay, in which efforts to contact the second platoon failed, we returned to our holes, only to be called out in less than an hour, this time to attempt the same mission with a smaller group. Ten from the platoon were picked.

The second patrol followed the same route the first had taken for a short distance. We crossed the road and clambered up the bank on the far side. As we entered the wooded strip above the road, a voice ahead gave the challenge. "Halt." Every man hit the ground and crawled to cover. None of our men were in here!

We had just taken cover when there was the tell-tale RURRRRRPT of a burp gun in front of us, and a red line of tracers flicked overhead. To our credit, not a man returned fire. This was a reconnaissance mission, and a fire fight would have accomplished nothing. Quickly and silently we worked our way back to the road to regroup, then back to the company C.P. to report.

As our line faced the Germans, elements of the 36th Division were on our right flank. Late in the afternoon of the day following the night contact patrols, the order came down for a group of men to be picked from the platoon to make a series of patrols to their left flank outposts. Between midnight, and dawn the next morning, which was the scheduled time of our attack.

The first of the patrols was made by Tuttle and a guide, through intermittent artillery fire that continued all night. The second, by Tuttle and Freid, was uneventful as they made the

first leg of the trip, fifteen-hundred yards down a shallow wooded valley, over a narrow, ill-defined trail. They were half-way back when they saw two figures, black against the snow, approaching down the same trail. The others saw them at the same time, and both pairs took cover. No one said a word for a space of minutes, then one mentioned a pass-word, it was answered, and both patrols continued.

Nichols and Freid made the next trip down the long valley, the dark path occasionally being lightened as a shell burst. As they climbed the hill toward the 36th Division outpost, they wondered why there was no challenge. They reached the dugout, without seeing a sign of life. Pounding on the log above the entrance, they yelled, "Hey, in there."

"What do you want?"

"We're a contact patrol from the 100th Division."

"Okay, you've contacted us."

"Right," and they took off down the icy hill, hell for leather in their pell mell descent.

Nichols and Howell made the last patrol of the night. The rest were unnecessary in the early morning, as the company began to prepare to move out, into the attack.

James Nichols



about 6:30 the next morning "Bo" and Armstrong, after a long search, brought hot sandwiches and coffee up to our area.

Around 1 o'clock we got a terrific pounding with shells continually screaming and bursting. The snow was blown back leaving dark black splotches on the sides of the hills... the air smelled of gun powder. Claude King was found dead in his fox-hole; MacDonald and Pozner were seriously wounded. Soon after Mac Donald died. Manning "cracked-up" under the mental strain and Blutter was wounded in the leg.

King

Claude, who was unsurpassable with Castillo, was a short, good natured jolly little fellow. He always wore a friendly smile and never spoke an unkind word about anybody... King and Castillo, for one thinks of them together more than as individuals, are thought of often till this day...

Mac Donald

Whenever we think of Mac, we remember his sense of humor, his friendliness, and his good fellowship. Mac was always willing to string along with the rest of the boys and do whatever the crowd wanted. Like the rest of us, he did not like the job he had to do, but, nevertheless, he did it with a zestful spirit that gave inspiration to his buddies. Because of his effervescent personality, Mac will hold forever a place in our memories.

Pozner

Irving, or better known to his friends as "Jaggy", is best known for having led the first American patrol into the fortress city of Bitch, "Jg", who was enthusiastic in what ever he undertook, always had something to say to everybody... A good natured boy, he was proud to be in the Infantry and would argue it's right with anyone....



During the day we attempted organizing a defense... our feeling toward the regiment we were supporting was more bitter. Our losses were heavy, but we had taken sixty-three Kraut prisoners in the last twenty-four hours.

Around 10 o'clock Capt. Smith was called back to battalion headquarters for orders. Those that knew about this trip were hoping the orders would be to move back under our own regiment's control.

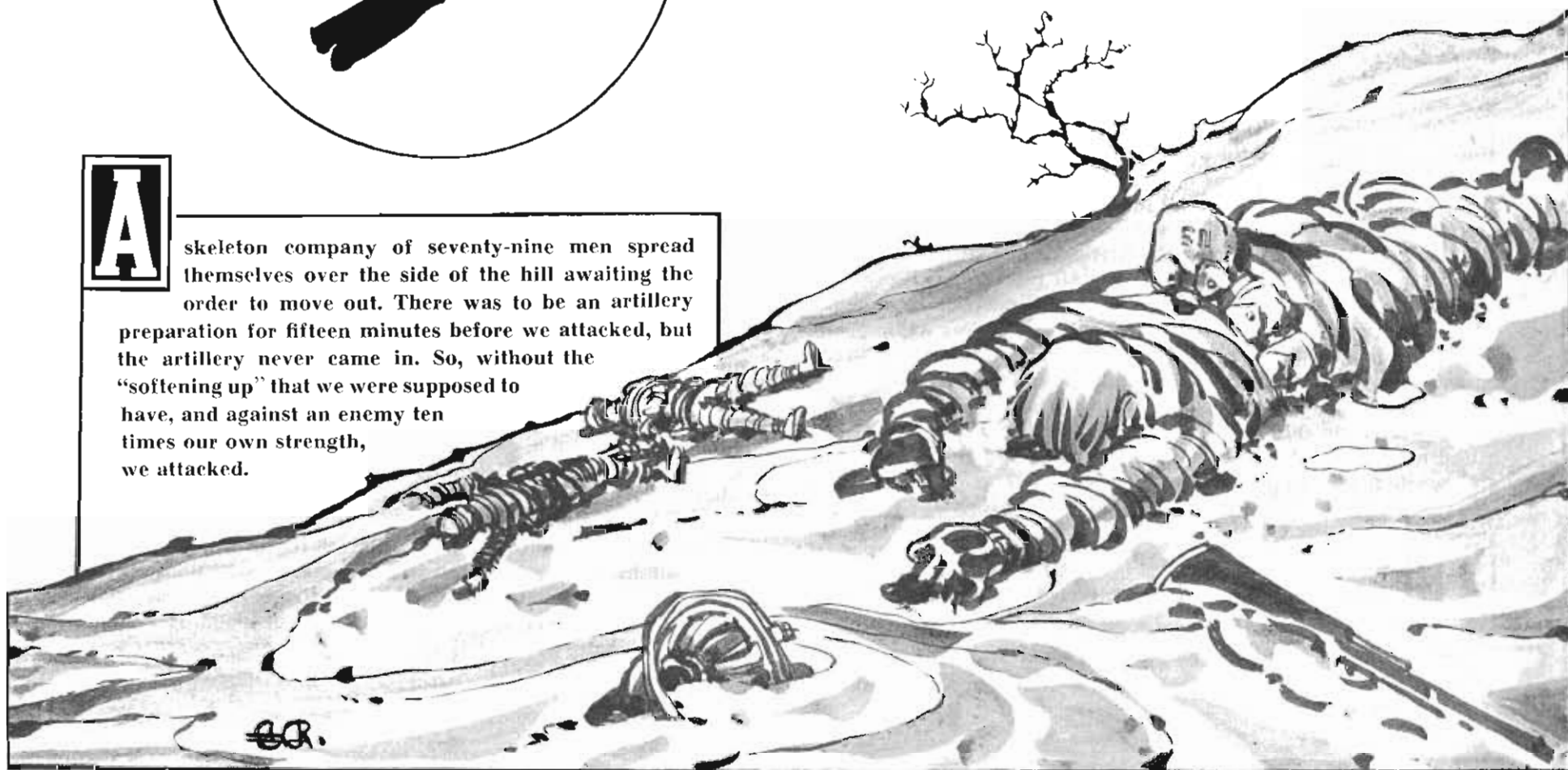
Capt. Smith called his platoon leaders together at his C.P. as soon as he returned, which was 1:30 o'clock in the morning. The Captain said before he started the details that he had tried every earthly means of getting the orders changed but that we could do nothing now but carry them out.

The situation was this. To our front a dense woods sheltered five companies of Jerries. There exact defense set-up we knew nothing about but at dawn we were to attack into the woods, take the high ground, and wait for "L" company to take the ground to our right front. Once this was done we would return to Glassenberg.

Suicide Hill.

A

skeleton company of seventy-nine men spread themselves over the side of the hill awaiting the order to move out. There was to be an artillery preparation for fifteen minutes before we attacked, but the artillery never came in. So, without the "softening up" that we were supposed to have, and against an enemy ten times our own strength, we attacked.



"The Attack"

It was on the morning of January 10, 1945, that "F" company was issued one of the most tragic orders in their combat experience. The order which was issued by their regimental commander, was that they'd attack the enemy's strong and well fortified positions on the outskirts of Lambach and Bitche, France.

The Captain oriented the platoon leaders and sergeants on how and when the attack was to take place and in return they oriented the men.

At 7:15 every man was heavily equipped with ammunition and other paraphernalia for a hard battle. Everyone was fully aware of what might possibly happen.

At daybreak the jump-off signal was given by the C.O. and the company started off quietly toward the enemy lines. The attack had been on for 15 minutes and we had gone about two-hundred yards when an enemy sniper started firing on the left front. A few minutes later some men from the company opened fire while running up on the enemy but there was no counter fire until several minutes later. A lot of commotion was heard from the enemy line, like one man hollering to another. During this time our C.O. called the artillery for a stiff concentration. For a little while everything was quiet until our artillery commenced firing effective fire on the enemy line. Immediately enemy bullets, grenades, mortars, and artillery were coming into our lines which started the real battle. During the firefight our artillery concentration was no longer effective. During all this our medics were running all over the battle-field taking care of our wounded men. After a while all our reserves were used and it was an impossibility to fight any longer, for the enemy had superiority of fire. A deadly cross fire on our left, we later found out caused a full platoon to be completely wiped out. Our C.O. was hit bad by artillery fire and our executive officer took over. The order to withdraw was given, and then the company reorganized a defensive position a few hundred yards back.

Bill Levesque



he second platoon led in a inverted "U" formation. The scouts from each squad were on line, Bloomberg, Johnson, and Mace. The middle squad was spread in a skirmish line and along with this front squad went Capt. Smith.

Everyone said that the "Ol' Man" must have thought this one was going to be tough because he was up with the point squad.

The third and first platoons followed the second and each platoon had a light machine-gun team assigned to them. Following the rifle platoons were the mortar men who were to be used as riflemen for flank protection. The last was company headquarters, giving additional fire support.

The push-off came at 8:45 o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, January 10th. The sky was still hazy and we wanted to catch the Jerries napping...but no such luck!

About in the same area that Birchall's squad had been so badly shot-up, we hit sniper fire. Suddenly, all the Jerry strength was thrown at us. Bloomberg spotted the first Kraut and fired the first shot ... the shot that brought with it a torrent of enemy answering fire.

Twice in the Same Place

It was just breaking day when we started out. Everyone had an uneasy feeling that something was going to happen.

Our platoon moved out in the inverted "U" formation, on the right flank of the company. I was first scout of the third squad. We had gotten about 150 yards, I guess, when Bloomberg fired his rifle at a German. Things began to happen fast then. I saw a mound in front of me and jumped over a fallen tree and got down behind it to take cover. Whitey was right behind me and got behind the mound with me. About the time we got there, artillery started coming in.

A German burp gunner was about 25 yards out in front of Whitey and I fired a shot at him. I heard Whitey say something and looked at him. He didn't have his helmet on. I asked him what had happened and he said, "Get me my helmet, it's behind you." I reached behind with my foot and got the helmet. There was a bullet hole through both sides of it. He said it felt like some one hit him in the head with a board. Again White raised up to shoot and again a bullet went through his helmet. This time it cut his fatigue cap and drew a drop of blood. His helmet didn't even jump off that time.

Earnest Johnson



We had advanced a few more yards when Capt. Smith called back for the third platoon to work their way up on the left. Suddenly, Jerry "50's" burst on the ground and in the air above the Captain. He was hit in both legs and his right arm was badly severed. Snowden who was hit by the same shells, limped to the Captain and started giving him first-aid. A wireman from battalion was also hit and was treated and carried back soon after the Captain.

"Supporting the Third"

We were in the attack. Sgt. Wortman, Hart and myself were trying to support the 3rd platoon when a Jerry machine gun opened up on us. We lay behind the nearest trees while the bullets splattered around us. Tracer bullets were flying all over. Breathlessly we lay in the cold snow, and then the worst happened. Mortars, and artillery fire came in. We were in a hell of a fix. We crept and crawled until we reached some abandoned fox-holes where, at last, we found comparative safety.

John Miller

"Carrying the Wounded"

"The Captain's been hit!"

The speaker was Lt. Harry Smith, then a Sergeant, rushing back to get a litter. It came as shocking and depressing news to all of us, crouched there on that fateful morning of the "suicide attack". I joined Lt. Smith, Pykonen, Braman, "Slim" (the medic), and some others to help carry the Captain back on the litter.

It took about six men to carry him out. Captain Smith is a big man. Although seriously wounded, his display of courage was something to admire.

It was rough going for a while. We had to hit the ground twice, with the Captain on the litter, when a Jerry machine gun

opened up on us. I could see the tracers going right over our heads. The rough, hilly, and snowy terrain didn't help matters any.

We finally succeeded in getting the Captain back part of the way. We were joined by Johnson and Lippart. "Slim" administered morphine to the Captain. Then we continued on our way, finally putting Captain Smith on a jeep to be taken back to the Medics. We had lost our leader in battle and all of us felt the loss deeply.

We went back for the wireman, who had been wounded with the Captain when that first barrage came in. He was in great pain and kept crying out and praying to God.

"Just as long as he keeps yelling, he'll be O.K. I hope he doesn't stop talking," said Pykonen.

"That's O.K. soldier, yell your head off if you want! We're almost there."

There were many more casualties that day. It had been a "suicide attack", as we had predicted beforehand.

The company was relieved the following night. Approximately sixty men, led by Lt. Adams, who had taken over command of the company, came down off that fateful "Suicide Hill". Fox company men still talk about it. How could we ever forget it?

Bert Bless

Captain Smith

A soldier's soldier: courageous, enthusiastic, capable, and kind. Outwardly rugged, determined, and forceful. Within playful, sentimental, and thoughtful.

A rich endowment of spiritual beauty, the landscape, and reveries of his wife, contributed much to his pleasurable moments.

His abounding pride in his outfit was continuous, even after he was seriously wounded, his main concern was for the men with whom he had fought.

Yes, Captain Smith, you may have left us far behind many times with your long legged jaunts over road and mountain, but today we are with you, closer than ever wishing for your happiness and contentment.

"As I lay in the Snow"

Bullets flying, shells bursting, shrapnel whining, branches cracking, the rifle squads were in conflict. The fourth platoon was called to push up and hold the right flank with small arms. We made our way through the soft snow. As we approached the crest of the hill, an appalling sight befell us. Our Captain, always in our mind as being invulnerable, lay badly wounded in a stretcher and was being hurried back by litter bearers. Words were insignificant, and emotion and feeling played havoc with our minds.

But in battle you're not supposed to take time out to feel anything, I guess. We took our positions. Shells were exploding wildly in that indescribable cracking sound. We pressed our bodies close to the cold snow, and kept a tree in front of us for protection. One shell hit the tree I was behind. There was a deafening high-pitched burst that penetrated the woods and pierced my ear drums. I could feel the force of the disturbed air as it pushed past me. I looked about me, and there before my unbelieving eyes in the bright white snow, a ring of black powder encircled me. That to me will always be remembered as something directed by the hand of God.

Aldo Rubano



he second platoon worked it's way to the right as the third worked left; but neither could do much moving. The first tried to move forward but it was impossible; they simply held and fired.

"Two that Time"

Our squad was at the ridge of the hill on the left flank. We moved forward amidst small arms fire. Our squad was to take the high ground. We moved the squad in two's and three's, in leaps and bounds. I was at the front of the squad then, and I sighted the Jerries. The first I saw was about fifty yards away from me. I wasn't sure whether he was Jerry or not, so I kept an eye on him. Then he rose and started infiltrating towards me. He stopped inbetween two trees and began looking around. I was just at the top of the hill behind foliage; I aimed and fired. I gave him a whole clip just to make sure. He was my first

Jerry. After that there was a quick return, and a bullet whizzed by me. I looked off to my right and saw a Jerry duck behind some bushes. I couldn't see him, but knowing he was there, I fired rapidly into the shrubbery. He took off damn quick. Seeing him, I let him have another clip, he didn't get far!

Calvin Lester



n the meantime casualties were running high. Lt. Adams had taken charge of the company and had called back for "81" support which never came.

For an endless hour we were pounded, and each man wondered when his turn was coming. The medics worked speedily and bravely to help the wounded. Medvin, after being wounded himself gave first-aid to one of the men. He was running to another man when he was hit again. He treated this man, struggled to his feet and was downed by burp-gun fire. The red cross on his arm stood out brightly against the snow; yet the Germans cared nothing for what it stood for. And many men remember seeing Reilly lying there in the snow painfully thumbing through his bullet riddled Bible.

Barney had been shot by a burp-gunner early in the battle and Bloomberg in an effort to get back to him was also hit. Lt. Hannigan, attempting to let his men fall back under his own covering fire, was hit; turning and looking back at Pondo, Hannigan shook his head and slid into the snow.

"The Serenade"

We were in the attack, and I was trying to get to the machine gun with two boxes of ammo. We got pinned down. All I had was a "45" pistol, and couldn't even get that out of my holster. I lay behind a little-bitty tree about six inches thick, and a burp gun was playing a merry tune on the tree trunk. It sounded like "The Woodpecker's Serenade", but I was too scared to sing! The order came to withdraw and I and Wortman were the last to go. We ran between mortar shells and burp gun fire, and finally joined up with the 4th platoon. We were mighty happy to pull through!

Robert Hart

Medvin

Late in November, when Fox Company received its first group of replacements, Medvin joined us. Seemingly rather quiet at first, he soon dropped this reserve and became more talkative. His favorite topic of conversation was his Mother and Father and home in general. Medvin was a medic, which seemed only natural, as he had been interested in medicine for quite some time. To him, his job was more than a mere assignment. He made this quite clear by his gallant actions on "Suicide Hill", for it was there that he, after having been wounded himself, continued to give first aid to the other wounded until he was finally stopped by enemy fire.

Barney

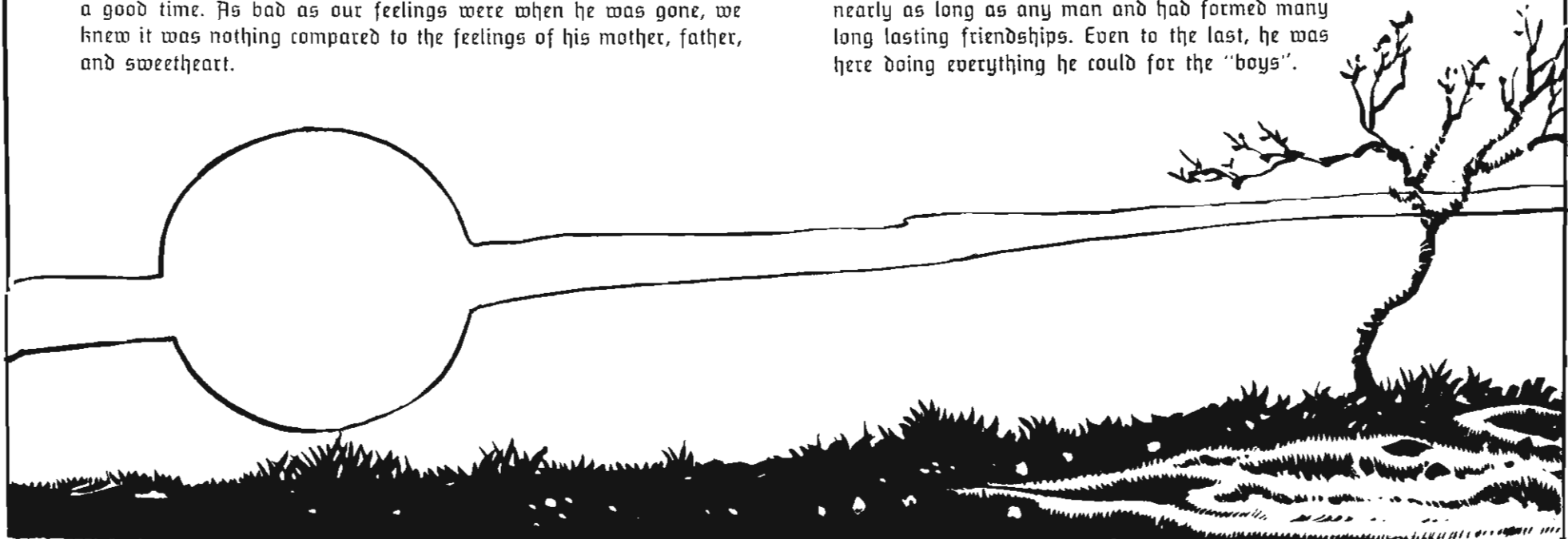
Back in New Foundland where Barney had been stationed so long, "Dot" waited for him. Everyone that knew Barney, had heard of "Dot" and had heard of the Mother and Dad back home... who seemed to be the most perfect folks in the world. To say that he did everything that could be done for the boys in his squad isn't enough; he argued for them, complained for them, and in the end he died for them. Barney didn't care if the whole world was against him as long as his squad wanted him and liked him... and they did, every last man in it. He laughed, joked and knew how to have a good time. As bad as our feelings were when he was gone, we knew it was nothing compared to the feelings of his mother, father, and sweetheart.

Bloomberg

He didn't go out of his way to impress you but gradually as you knew him, you liked him. Back in South Dakota was a dry-cleaning establishment, that he wanted to go back and help his Dad and Mother with. Most of all, he wanted to play baseball... and he was exceptionally good at it. For all his ability it never occurred to him to feel superior. He was just one of the boys. He could sing, and he liked it; most of the time the song-fests of the second platoon were instigated by him. When earnest straight-forward fellows like Bloomberg are lost... and the world in so much need for them... the futility of wars is impressed upon our minds for a long, long time.

Lt. Hannigan

Hannigan was a tough masterfull sergeant whose fairness and love for his men was almost idealistic. He didn't mince words, but when you were dressed-down by Hannigan you sort of felt you deserved it. As platoon sergeant he saw service with the first and second platoons, and when his commission came was made the platoon leader of the third. Every man that has ever served under him, has liked him. He had been in the company nearly as long as any man and had formed many long lasting friendships. Even to the last, he was here doing everything he could for the "boys".





huck" Johnson ran back and forth giving covering fire to the second platoon as they fell back...but many of the second were still out there.

"Withdraw"

The attack had started, Captain Smith had been wounded, and most of the company was already pinned down when word was sent back for the first platoon to move up on the line. Church and I were together, and we soon found ourselves up near the left flank of the second platoon with Curbo and Ripper. Though the bullets were kicking up the snow all around me, I couldn't see a single Jerry, but that didn't keep me from throwing as much lead as I could in their direction. The mortar shells were coming in in groups of threes and it seemed as if they were landing right on top of us. Each time we would look up expecting to find that the last shells had gotten the others and were relieved to see them look at us, knowing that the same thing was in their minds. Then came the order to pull back, and you could see the relief on everyone's face, but you knew at the same time that they were not only happy that they had come through all right, but that they were feeling bad about having to leave their dying buddies.

Vernon Sherman



he first count of the company showed ten wounded, twenty-one missing. But things were happening so fast that this check could not be certain.

Van Duren climbed into the C.P. dugout with the news that nine men of the second were pinned down in a big hole to the front and couldn't leave because Sgt. Smith, who was with them, was wounded and couldn't walk. There had to be a litter taken to them, so "Van" and "Phillips, the Medic" volunteered. Under cover of smoke they made the daring rescue.

Nine Men in a Hole

When the order for retreat was given on "Suicide Hill", Whitey and I started back and passed a big hole without a cover over it. It was pretty long and about four feet wide. In the hole we discovered there were more of our guys. Sgt. Smith was wounded and there were four others with him.

The mortars were still coming in and some shooting was still going on. As it was good cover, we got in the hole. It was about twenty five yards from a Jerry machine-gun that Lt. Lonsberg had knocked out with hand grenades. Jack Van Duren went back with the medic to get a stretcher. The firing ceased, but the medic and Van couldn't get back because of the sniper and machine guns that fired whenever anything moved. It was quiet and we couldn't move around, except while down in the hole; we couldn't expose ourselves for fear of the Jerries crawling up and putting grenades in the hole. They evidently didn't know we had stayed there. We counted up, and there were nine of us, not including the medic and Van.

Everything was quiet with only an occasional mortar shell or artillery. We had two men on guard all the time at each end of the hole. Then the guys began smoking! They smoked all the cigarettes they could find and then smoked butts. The quietness was terrible, for at any minute we expected a German to discover we were there. White was on guard at one end of the hole, when some German got out of his hole and started talking and chopping wood. He looked directly at White, but White wasn't sure if the guy had seen him or not. He just froze there, not moving. If he had, we would have been all killed or had to fight it out. Finally, the Jerry looked away; White ducked down and still no one had discovered us.

We were waiting for the cover of darkness before going back to our own lines. Lt. Lonsberg and some of the guys started fixing a make-shift stretcher to carry Smitty on. By taking the slings off the rifles and strapping them together we hoped to carry him in. I was on guard at the other end of the hole, when I saw a German coming up the road leading past the hole. I slid down in the hole and just froze there...afraid he would see me and give the alarm. He looked right in the hole at me and I thought he had seen me. To this day, I can't figure out why he didn't see

me. He walked away, toward our lines, until some one shot at him. He crawled back past me but I didn't dare shoot him, for it would have given our position away.

For a couple of hours we sweated there and then someone started dropping smoke in front of us. We didn't know who was responsible, but it turned out it was our mortars, trying to help us out. The medic was directing their fire and the smoke was landing perfect. Some of the rounds hit 15 yards in front of us.

Soon Van and the medic emerged from the mist with a stretcher and they got Smitty tied to it. We all took off. We were very happy to be alive. The gang thought we were killed because we hadn't come back when the company withdrew.

Ernest Johnson and Jack Van Duren

When the rest of the boys from the second saw their buddies alive and well, some bursted out crying and others said short prayers under their breath. From these men we learned that Lt. Lonsberg, Mace and Kofod had knocked out a Jerry machine-gun nest, which undoubtedly saved many men that would have been caught under it's fire.

At 4 o'clock "I" company's C.O. ordered Lt. Adams to put one of our machine guns to their front and center. This spot was covered by enemy sniper fire and Murray was shot through the neck while moving the gun into position.

"Get that Machine gun!"

Murray and myself where setting up our machine gun in front of "I" company's left flank. Sniper fire was heavy, and Murray was the victim of a well aimed round. He was hit in the neck. We both left the gun. Sometime later, I was called to retrieve the abandoned machine gun, but sniper fire was too much, and I at first couldn't make it. Soon it became urgent to use the weapon in a defensive position, so I was called on to bring the gun back at all costs. Despite the sniper fire, Hart and myself ran like hell towards the gun. Many times we hit the ground, as bullets whined past us. I made a dash for the gun, grabbed it, plus a box

of ammo, and took off with the load as if it was a water pistol! I stopped along side of Hart, and he snatched the ammo and took off like a ruptured duck! I started off behind him, but my foot hooked up in a fallen tree. I struggled fiercely to get loose. Meanwhile my pants were getting damp! Then mortar shells began pouring in. Greetings! With this inducement I broke loose from my bonds, and like a "bat out of hell", I passed Hart as if he was standing still! We finally made it to a slit trench, rested awhile, and then made our way back to Wortman.

Roy Petrell



t sun-down fifty-six men were left out of the seventy-nine that started the attack. Only four men now composed the third platoon; Pondo, Walsh, Skiba and Easton. It seemed only a matter of time until all of us would be wounded or killed. Of the original company of one-hundred and ninety-three men, there were only fifty-six still on line...and we had been fighting for only two months!

"After the Fighting"

After the fighting had died down, we dug in against the expected counter-attack and waited. Nothing had happened by sunset, so Rebolledo and I moved to other holes for the night. I was squeezed in with two headquarters men who were sent up as reinforcements. A dead G.I. had just been removed from our hole and was lying beside the entrance, it was hell to see that poor boy lying there.

All through the evening and night wounded men who had been cut off between the lines would cry out, "Medic" or some buddy's name. It was rough to recognize a friend's voice and be able to do nothing except yell encouragement and directions.

Suicide Hill was without a doubt "F" company's bloodiest battle, and will always be remembered by those who went through it. Nor will we ever forget the heroic acts of the boys who didn't come back to Glassenberg with us the next night.

Gail L. Tuttle

Suddenly, from across "No Man's Land" came the wailing voice of a man in distress. We were tense with excitement and hope. Every five minutes or so we'd hear his voice... nearer and nearer. We couldn't go out and get him, for such an action would surely bring mortar fire and machine-gun fire on him. So we waited... waited... and waited. Then like a bolt from Heaven we heard him only a few yards in front of us yell, "Capt. Smith, Lt. Lonsberg, Lt. Hannigan!" At this, a couple of the boys dashed out and assisted the wounded man up the hill... Stebing!

He was as happy to see us as we were him, but he was stiff with pain and utter fatigue. But he controlled himself long enough to tell his story.

He had seen five machine gun emplacements while lying wounded on the field, and the woods were thick with Krauts. Not knowing what to do or to expect he laid there while a Jerry

came out of the woods, bent over him, and fired a pistol directly at his heart. The Kraut had missed the heart in this case, but Stebing had watched him go from one wounded to another committing the same horrible crime on each of them. But, for some unknown reason, he halted at one man, called out a Jerry litter team and carried one of our boys off the field. Who this was Stebing didn't know.

The day ended with the following men wounded in action; Herman, Auten, Ference, Murray, Faw, McClenahan, Thomas, Snowden, Capt. Smith, T/Sgt Smith, and Stebing. Those missing in action were; Lt. Hannigan, Zarabet, Reilly, Stubrick, Castillo, Medvin, Barney, Bloomberg, and Kidd. These were our buddies; we had shared their dreams, their ideals. At first we couldn't realize they were really gone, but slowly the pangs of loneliness reminded us that these close friends could never fulfill their dreams or live to their ideals. Some of us tried to write letters to the parents and wives of our closer buddies, but couldn't because the hurt was too deep.

Zarabet

A tense serious minded fellow was left out on the field in front of our positions, when we withdrew from "Suicide Hill". He was Joe Zarabet and everyone remembers him sticking to his job, no matter how hard it became. When he was called on to do something, he complained from the first but stuck to the job until it was finished. Now he has an obstacle to overcome, he might complain a little, but will come through we know he will.

Kidd

Being one of a group of boys in the company that made it his business to see that everyone was getting plenty of fun out of life, Kidd held his own when it came to the joke making. He could see the funny side of a miserable situation and soon have all around him feeling better. His casual cheerfulness won the friendship of everyone from the "Ol' Man" down to the last replacement on line. Sometimes, we think of Kidd and of his easygoing, friendly ways and a faint smile will cross our lips, but then we'll remember why he isn't with us anymore and our disgust for war will be redoubled.

Castillo

Ramon, on the reserved side, was rather hard to get to know. He was a quiet, serious minded boy, but nevertheless, enjoyed a good laugh... He followed death of his best buddy, Claude King by a couple of days...

Stubrick

Stubrick joined the company overseas, and to the fellows of his own platoon he appeared to be somewhat hard to make friends with. This cloak of reserve prevented anyone from really knowing Stubrick well, since he was with us only a short while. But his actions on January 10th proved to us what a gallant soldier he was. When we went into the attack, Stubrick, with his B.A.R., was on the left flank. He fought courageously that day, but when we were forced to withdraw from the attack he was "missing in action".



R

ifles, ammunition, and hot chow were brought up Thursday morning. Before noon we had orders to move back... we had been replaced by "A" company of the 399th. At dusk the change was to take place.

In Glassenberg that evening we picked up our packs and

bedrolls. The men laughed and talked loudly attempting to conceal the deep feeling in each one's heart.

Finally, by truck we rolled into Petit-Redersching. We stayed in an old school house, ate a delicious supper and spent hours talking and just being friendly to one another. The company seemed closer that night than any other because we had come through a terrible thing together.



And then We Slept Warm

It was well after dark when they finally came in. There wasn't much I could say, but I managed a, "Glad to see ya, fellows". A couple of them nodded, but nobody said much. They still were looking back to see if they could see anything, and had their heads cocked as one does when listening for artillery. They had moved fast two days ago when they went up to the hill leaving their packs, and bed rolls behind. Now as they picked their equipment up, you could see them relax a bit.

After marching for about an hour, we loaded on trucks headed for the rear. We were all safe now, but still no one spoke. About an hour later, we entered an old school house. The kitchen personnel had fixed up a room with a couple of stoves in it. The whole company got into that room and even had space to spare. Hot chow would come in about an hour's time.

As we lay there on the straw, I began thinking over the last two days and how I, by the grace of God, had been chosen to

stay back to guard our supplies. At the time I was thankful, for it was my first rest, but later, when the casualties started coming in, I felt sort of guilty. I sat in the corner and listened to the M.I.A. reports being read. I found out some of my best buddies had been killed.

I had seen friends get killed before, but to sit down and hear reports come in, is something different. You feel so helpless, there is nothing you can do but think, and remember.

The kitchen crew brought chow up for a full strength company, but in the two days, we had lost half of our men. So everybody had more than enough to eat. Now everyone was talking, and some even, laughing at how scared they were. We all felt warm, when we went to bed that night. Yes, Fox company was warm when they went to sleep in a one room school-house, somewhere in Alsace.

John Chynoweth

A

march to Betteviller on Friday brought us to the last town before we entered Goetzenbruck. In Betteviller we ate "ten-in-one" rations and lived like kings. Showers, shaves and haircuts were just a few of the luxuries every man had in this village.

On Saturday Lt. Horler, Marcum and Cleland were called to the regiment to be decorated with the Bronze Star...our first citations.

At first some of the men were out in holes but on Sunday Lt. Haight, our new C.O., obtained permission to let the second platoon come back into town. Immediately "Ski" was at the stoves cooking up wonderful meals.

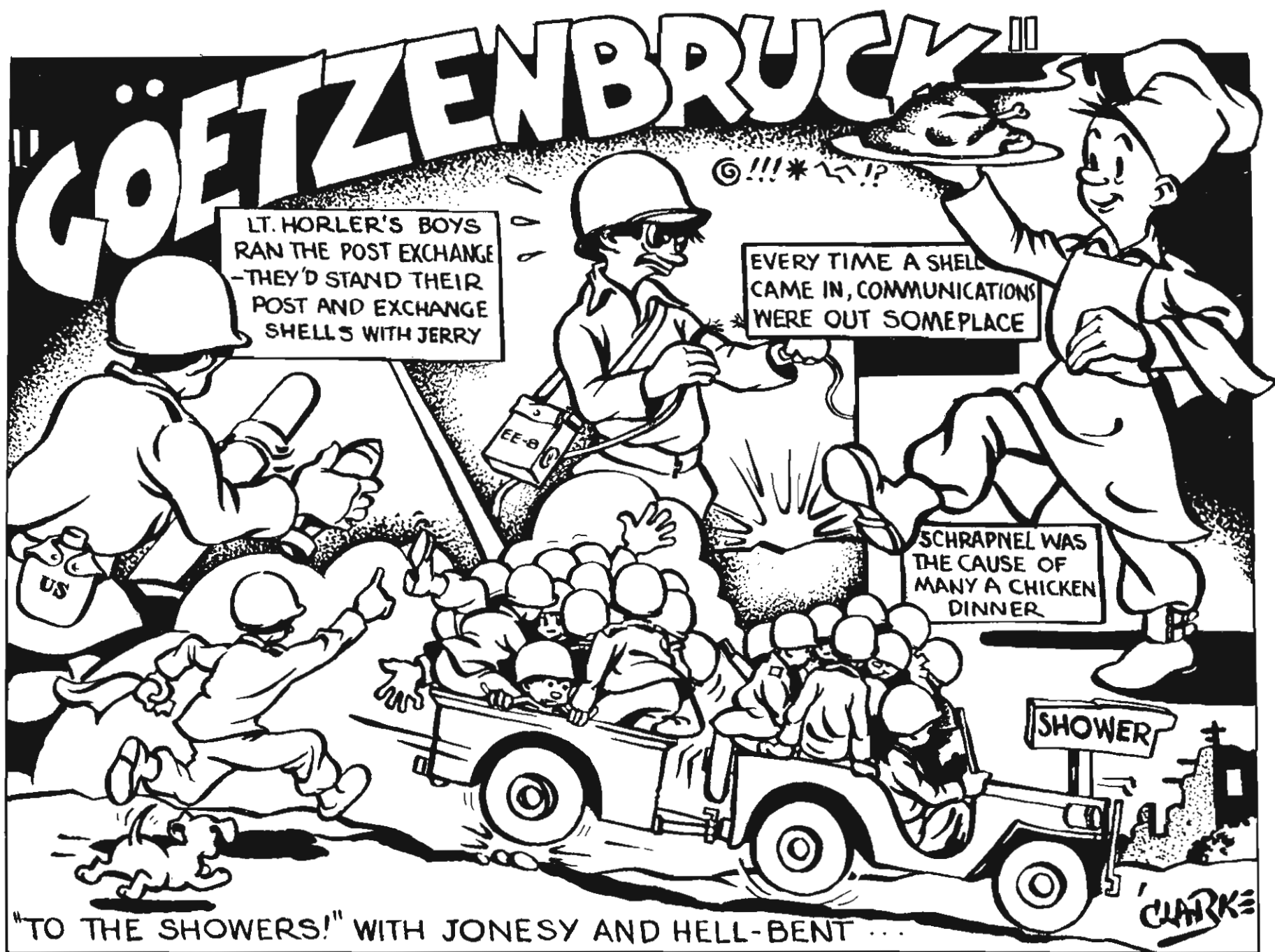
St. Laurent took out the first night patrol...reported all was quiet. Curbo took out the second patrol...still all was quiet. Lt.

Kanter lead a third patrol and Kirchman, a fourth. On Kirchman's patrol an enemy patrol was spotted and were dispersed by Easy company's mortars. Lt. Lonsberg took the last patrol out, stayed all night, had a small fire fight with the enemy, and returned safely.

We stayed in Betteviller until Friday, January 19th. While there we were paid, given our Combat Infantry Badges, and also a chance to rest up. But when we left we were one man short for Nichols had been wounded and carried back to the aid-station.

We moved back to Petit-Rederching and the first night, slept in the same school house. A B-17 was forced down while we were there and the bombardier parachuted into our area. Here we saw our first movie in Europe, "Follow the Boys". We left Monday, our destination Goetzenbruck.







The Awakening

Ernie Pyle, in tribute to the American Doughboy, wrote, "There is nothing I know in civilian life that can compare with the life, suffering and death of the Combat Infantryman." Truer words were never spoken, yet, on that glorious day when the last shot has been fired and right will have triumphed over might, I'm sure every Infantryman will feel that he would not take a million for his experiences, although he would not go through it again for a million!

As civilians, living in a complex and materialistic world with our minds in moral fogs, occupied with values that filled our stomachs and starved our souls, we gave little or no thought to the real purpose of life. Suddenly we were selected and before we could catch our breath, we were on our way across the Pond; tears shed when you said "Good-bye" had hardly dried when you realized that now only memories remained. Yes, it all happened so fast and furious that it was difficult to believe you were now at the front and in the Infantry.

That first tight spot you were in, you'll never forget the expression in your buddy's face and the feeling inside, you prayed like everyone else and managed to sweat it out. You were more fortunate than others and came out of it all right ... but a changed man. You realized how life ... the most precious thing on earth ... could easily and quickly be taken away.

You loved this green earth with the sun and sky. You thought of home and loved ones, of summer vacations and Sunday afternoon drives, of friends and fireside chats, of sweet music and the warmth of a woman's smile ... your heart was lifted. You felt a new bond of friendship toward your buddies, you had found a new source of courage and inspiration. Yes, through your suffering and sacrifice, the selfishness within you was consumed and the greatness of the human soul set free.

C. F. Cinquegrana