

Much has been said here about the original *Combat Company*, and it seems that this account would be deficient were it not included. Reading it now, one is struck by how unemotional, perhaps even clinical, the little book sounds when compared to the first hand accounts and memories that make up the rest of the retelling of the story we have presented. It is invaluable for its delineation of events and chronology, but certainly not for feelings. Reading about what it was like to be there and reading this account are so different from one another—though they refer to the same chain of events—that one can only wonder how people who were there could write so dispassionately about something that was so emotionally involving. It was quite an accomplishment.

For some reason that I don't recall, I did not re-read *Combat Company* when I first wrote *My Good War*. Therefore, one of the striking things that can be noted is that though the same story is being told by both the editors and me, some of the details are different. Some of the differences have to do with chronology. In more than one instance my memory of an event was clear, but my recollection of just when and where it took place was not. And there is a great deal of action in *Combat Company* that I don't seem to have been aware of at all. There are three reasons for this: first, I may have known about it but just decided to leave it out of my account, which was never intended to be a detailed day-by-day record; second, I may have just forgotten it; third, and most likely in many cases, even though the account was of my own platoon, I really was not aware of it. It is the nature of infantry combat that the individual soldier almost never has any idea of what's going on beyond his own range of vision. This may be hard to swallow for one who has not been there, but I can assure you that it is true. The editors of the book had several advantages. The first of these was that they were all eye witnesses, one each from each platoon, who had seen it all, and they were writing of events that had occurred only short months—at the end only weeks—before they wrote. If one hadn't seen or heard of an event, one or more of the others probably had. Also, they no doubt had access to the company morning reports. These were daily written accounts of the previous day's activities that the company commander was required to submit to headquarters, and would have been invaluable to on-the-spot (so to speak) historians, as they were often amazingly detailed.

The original *Combat Company* was "Printed by printeroffice Weixler Kirchheim unter Teck, Germany," to quote from the title page. There also is the message: "This publication has been passed by the censor for mailing home." It is a small paperback book, 5"x6-1/2"; the cover is infantry blue. There are only 58 pages, 12 of them are blank, for one reason or another. Platoon group pictures and rosters take up another 10 pages. Each chapter is headed by a wonderful cartoon drawn by Pfc. Howard A. Hall, who also contributed a cartoon at the end and a fold-out map showing in a highly stylized way the areas we fought through. Although cartoons are so well done that they seem professional, Hall—though he had a career as a high school art teacher—maintains that he never drew a cartoon before the book and has never drawn one since.

We reprinted the book as a continuing project in several issues of the "G" *Company Newsletter*, and here it is again, for perhaps the last time.

COMBAT COMPANY

DEDICATION

To Capt. Millard B. Hayes, who was to everyone a trusted friend as well as a fearless leader, this book is dedicated. He designed task for no one that he himself would not do, his order was "Come" rather than "Go," and his personal courage was a constant inspiration to all who served under him.

BATTLE BOUND

As the U.S.S. George Washington backed away from its moorings on New York's 43rd Street Pier, stopped momentarily, nosed around, and headed out on the Hudson current through the narrows into the grey, fog-bound Atlantic, each of the 193 men of Company G, 399 Infantry, packed below deck in this, the Army's largest troop transport, was aware that he had begun a new and adventurous chapter in his life. It was the beginning of a journey into fear, hardship, courage, and the score of other little things coincident with combat as only the front-line infantryman knows. However, thoughts were elsewhere just then, of home, of family, the old car, the corner drugstore, and all the other familiar things synonymous with the America they were leaving. To those few who slipped up on deck, against orders, the Statue of Liberty, fading away into grey dimness, symbolized this separation, but those below felt the reaction just as keenly.

It took little time for the men to settle down to the daily routine aboard ship. Their resentment for having drawn the police and sanitation details while at sea was short-lived, because it helped break the monotony, meant three meals instead of the usual two, and gave them access to all parts of the ship.

The veteran Merchant marine crew on board agreed that the weather was unusually bad, and the crossing was a rough one. Quite a few made impromptu visits to the rail, but just as many found a love for the sea and decided then and there that they had missed their calling when they joined the Army. Gunnery practice was always interesting to watch, and it was reassuring to know that there was ample protection in case of an attack. There were boxing matches, movies, card games, and books aboard ship, but the days became very monotonous. It was a relief to them all to finally see the coast of North Africa, opposite Gibraltar, appear on the horizon and steadily become clearer on the afternoon of October 19. This was their first sight of land since they had sailed on October 6.

Even before sailing, there had been many rumors circulating as to the destination of the convoy. The one that seemed the strongest was that it was headed for Marseilles, therefore, as it passed through the Straits of Gibraltar this rumor was all but confirmed. Just a day later the convoy rounded the Cape de la Garde and entered the harbor of France's finest Mediterranean port. This was the first convoy to land there since the Sixth Army Group's invasion of southern France in August.

Viewed from a distance Marseilles was breathtakingly beautiful, much prettier than they later found it to be when seen from a closer range. The first actual contact with war and the enemy came that night while the ship was being unloaded. Instead of the usual "Chief Electrician, report to the Bridge," the

loudspeaker system blared out the order to black-out the ship, it was an air raid. Those on deck were surprised to see the speed with which the harbor was blacked out and covered with smoke. Everyone was more cautious than scared, for this was their first real air raid. Later it was learned that a German reconnaissance plane had been responsible for the alarm, and that no damage had been done.

On October 21 the company climbed down the cargo nets, packed into LSVP's and started ashore. As they chugged through the maze of sunken ships and went around the long breakwater, they were amazed to see such complete destruction there in the harbor. They realized how glad they were that the French and Americans were there to greet them rather than the Germans. Here they got their first look at the Jerries—long lines of P.W.'s working on the docks.

Marching through the winding streets that afternoon on the way to the staging area, they had their first acquaintance with European culture and climate. It was a new experience to see people dressed differently, speaking an unfamiliar language, and riding bicycles instead of automobiles. The heavy downpour of rain that greeted them and the quagmire of mud it stirred up seemed to stay with them until the rain turned to snow a month later.

They remained in the staging area only long enough to unpack and assemble their equipment. However, they were not too rushed and almost everyone got to visit Marseilles. Everybody saw the city through different eyes, but almost all were impressed by the same thing: the cosmopolitan effect due to the influence of the French Colonials who crowded the city, the Senegalese, Moroccans, Arabs, etc., the filthiness, which may or may not have been due to wartime conditions, the forwardness and apparent shamelessness of the women, and the system of barter which was carried on.

On October 29, after a week of preparation in a mud hole near St. Antoine, the staging area, they rolled in a motor convoy, along with the rest of the 399th Combat Team, up the Rhone River valley towards northeastern France. The rapidity with which events were moving did not impress them so forcefully at the time because they did not as yet fully realize what lay ahead. Few, if any, dreamed that they would be in combat within three days. The first day they rode as far as Valence, where they stopped to spend the night. It was there that they first encountered the cheering crowds of Frenchmen that were to become familiar later on. During the afternoon their convoy had stopped momentarily at a railroad crossing to let a hospital train pass by, and they were then reminded that there was a war up ahead, and not so very far away. The second night was spent in Dijon after a day's ride along with highways cluttered with burned out Jerry vehicles, which the American Air Corps had caught and destroyed. They were impressed by the natural scenic beauty of the countryside and were surprised to find most of the rural population centered in countless villages along the way rather than in outlying farms as in the United States.

On the third afternoon they arrived at Fremi-Fontaine, a small town within artillery range of the front, and unloaded in a bivouac area outside of it for the final preparation before going "on line." There was a great deal of confusion and scurrying around as they made up packs and bedrolls to carry with them and

crammed the rest of their belongings in a duffel bag, which was to be stored in the rear. Officers and non-coms found it necessary to take on new duties, very different from those they had been used to in garrison life. After seeing their first dead Germans at Fremi-Fontaine, they began to wonder if they really belonged in this strange, new environment. No one could deny that the game was for keeps now, and that Company G would soon take its place "*Up Front*."

BAPTISM OF FIRE

On Nov. 1, just twenty-six short days after leaving New York, CT 9, the first organization of the 100th Division to be committed, was ordered to relieve the weary, battle-wise 179th Regt. Of the 45th, "Thunderbird" Division, veterans of Anzio and the invasion of Southern France, which was located then in a mountainous, heavily wooded sector of the front near St. Remy, France. The transition from the training areas of Fort Bragg, N.C., to the front line in France had been so rapid that it was hard for the men of the company to realize that they were not just starting out on another problem, with blank ammunition and simulated enemy, to be called off in time to get back to camp for chow. The 2nd Bn. was the reserve battalion when the relief was effected, so they had opportunity to acclimate themselves to battle conditions more gradually than the other two battalions did. During the company's first week in combat, they occupied a series of reserve positions and got their first taste of artillery. At first they could not distinguish between Jerry's guns and their own and they jumped every time a gun went off, but they soon got so they could tell whether the shells were going out or coming in. The old training period habit of scratching the outline of a foxhole on the surface of the ground was soon forgotten. "Digging in" was SOP after the first barrage. On Nov. 8, the company was ordered into the line and as they met the straggling group of unshaven, dreary-eyed, bone-weary veterans that Bill Mauldin has made famous, coming down the muddy trail, they got their first good glimpse at the Combat Infantryman and wondered how long it would be before they looked that way. The 2nd Platoon went on outpost line, in pitch blackness over a trail that was knee deep in mud, and those who carried ammunition and laid a communication line up the mountain will never forget the exasperation and confusion of that first night. On the next night, during the first snowstorm of the winter, the company pulled back to an assembly area from which they moved by foot and truck to a new sector near Baccarat on Armistice Day. This had been more or less the prelude, a time of orientation to battle condition, while waiting for the remainder of the 100th Division to make the long trip up through France and to come on line. Now the curtain was about to rise on the real show.

On Sunday morning, Nov. 12, amidst another snowstorm, Company G jumped off in the attack, a part of the division's drive against the Meurthe River Line, which the Germans hoped to establish and hold for the winter. Loaded down as they were with equipment and ammunition, it was difficult climbing those hills, and the sniper fire they encountered soon after the jump-off didn't help matters any, but it wasn't heavy enough to stop them. Early in the afternoon they received quite a few artillery shells and suffered their first casualty, due to

shrapnel, but they moved ahead and stopped only after a heavy darkness had set in.

The token resistance they received that day did [not] prepare them for the 13th, the most dismal day of their campaign in the ETO. If there were any among them superstitious, their worst fears were realized that unlucky day. Resuming the attack through the heavy snow Monday morning, they had not gone far before scouts of the 1st Platoon took three prisoners, their first. Sending them to the rear, the company continued towards the crossroad on the Baccarat-Neufmaisons road that was their initial objective. Approaching the crossroad, the scouts of the leading 1st and 3rd Platoons halted the company in the edge of the woods and cutting their way through a barbed wire entanglement, went forward to reconnoiter a lone house beyond the crossroad. Three Germans were observed leaving the house and entering the thick woods to the right rear of the building. Word was passed back that the house was cleared, and the company moved out into the clearing to organize the position. When two or three artillery shells landed near the crossroad, they still did not realize the gravity of their situation, but when a murderous volley of automatic and small arms fire opened up from an unexpected quarter on their left flank, and the Kraut mortarmen, using the crossroad as a wonderful reference point started dropping shells right on top of them in a seemingly endless barrage, they realized that they had been neatly "mousetrapped."

Within an hour, they managed to pull back into the woods, re-organize, and evacuate most of their casualties. Among them had been three platoon leaders, and the company commander, Capt. Melvin D. Clark. Four scouts of the first platoon were captured when the Jerries re-entered the house, and five men were killed outright. Later that afternoon and night, desultory artillery fire on their positions accounted for several other casualties, among them the acting Company Commander. Next morning, the company pulled back two or three hundred yards to get out of the way of a barrage fired by Corps Artillery, who were trying to neutralize the enemy position. A patrol went back up to their forward positions to determine the results of the artillery and to observe for mortar fire, but after receiving enemy mortar fire, they returned. Meanwhile, the company had prepared positions for the night. Capt. Millard B. Hayes, formerly Regimental Special Service Officer, took command at this disheartening time, when morale was at an extremely low ebb and most of the men were suffering from exposure in the snow of the previous two nights. Quickly grasping the situation, by efficient and intelligent measures, he began to instill a re-determination and aggressive spirit in the men that increased perceptibly day by day thereafter. On Nov. 16, they moved forward by their former positions at "Purple Heart Lane," for so it had been named, and occupied positions overlooking Neufmaisons, which the Germans had evacuated, with the mission of protecting the division's left flank while storming Raon L'Etape. While there, four patrols were sent out to whom credit goes for killing several Germans.

On Thanksgiving Day the cooks, who had been in a rear area since Nov. 1, prepared a wonderful dinner that tasted marvelous even though their stomachs, after two weeks of emergency rations, were unable to take it and

almost everyone got diarrhea. The company moved that day to take part in the new drive that was forming on Strasbourg. Everyone was glad to get away from this sector with its unpleasant memories. A veteran outfit would have made out better, but every company must have its baptism of fire—"Purple Heart Lane" was Company G's. However, they really had something to be thankful for on Thanksgiving. Moving to La Petite Raon that afternoon, they were billeted temporarily in French homes for the first time. Most of the people were poor, but they put forth their best effort to be hospitable, and at least the men were able to get dry for once and get a short night's sleep.

Leaving early the next morning, they traveled on trucks to an assembly area from which they jumped off in attack on Wackenbach, in the heart of Alsace. They climbed a couple of rugged mountains that day but didn't run into opposition until they got to the outskirts of Les Querelles, where the only passage was a narrow defile cut by a mountain stream. There they ran into considerable small arms fire, and, as darkness was falling fast, they were ordered to dig in for the night. Few of them will forget that miserable night in a steady downpour of rain, huddled under inadequate ponchos that just strained the water as it poured down. Next morning, they resumed the attack, took Les Querelles, and started over the mountains to Wackenbach, which they reached just in time to attack simultaneously with a task force from the 14th Armored Division. Here they stayed in houses again and were able to dry off once more. They did not know it then but the French 2nd Armored Division had entered nearby Strasbourg and had liberated, among others, the four men from the company taken prisoner on the 13th, who later rejoined the outfit.

On Nov. 26, the company transferred from the 6th Corps to the 15th Corps, and they traveled on trucks to a battalion assembly area at Moyenvic. While there, they billeted in a woolen factory, which they entirely filled with smoke from their "small, controlled" fires, but the warmth felt so good they didn't mind the smoke. They received a big supply of Christmas packages, which were coming in an ever increasing stream. On Nov. 28, they moved through Sarrebourg to Plaine de Walsch, where they got to catch their first real breath and to relax for the first time since entering combat. The kitchen moved up with them there, and they had good hot chow three times a day for a change. They were paid for the first time in Liberation Francs and a few got their first shower since the salty ones aboard the George Washington. Here they began to notice German influence on local customs and habits as well as French, because this part of the country has in its history at times been part of Germany. The subsequent moves through Vexervillers, La Petite Pierre, Puberg, Wingen, and Goetzenbruck were, in the main, merely following up operations behind the Germans retreating up the Ingwiller Pass to the Maginot Line.

On Dec. 8, in the early morning dawn, the company jumped off from Goetzenbruck in an attack on well-entrenched positions on the high ground outside Lemberg, where the Germans had elected to make a stand. They met enemy sniper fire before they crossed the line of departure and soon came under artillery fire as well. But, knowing a few tricks now, they pressed the attack rather than stop and made good progress until they ran into a force of Germans well

dug in on high ground, with several machine guns strategically placed and other automatic weapons. Electing to by-pass this strong point, they advanced in a flanking movement until they received direct fire from two flak wagons on the high ground across the Lemberg-Bitche railroad. Unable to continue the attack at night, they organized the position. The next morning was spent in working their way to a position from which they could launch an attack on their objective outside Lemberg. Preceding the attack was a Corps Artillery preparation, which consisted of white phosphorous and high explosive shells and which lasted for twenty-five minutes. This barrage, one of the heaviest they ever witnessed, paved the way for them, but there was still the job of climbing two precipitous hills and neutralizing the enemy positions. By nightfall, they had overrun strong bunker positions, captured a force of about 20 Germans, including the crews of two flak-wagons which they had found blazing, and had captured and organized a position cutting off the German retreat route from Lemberg itself along the Bitche highway. On Dec. 14, when they reverted into reserve and moved back to Goetzenbruck, morale was high—they had really won that fight. The company moved back to Lemberg on Dec. 11, still in reserve, as the division prepared to launch an all out attack on the fortress city of Bitche, the city on which the whole Maginot Line hinged. German troops there were determined that the city they were unable to capture from the French until after the armistice, the city that had never been taken by assault in any war, should not be wrested from them. The men of the Century Division were more determined to prove that they were just the guys who could do it. Doughboys maneuvered into position, artillerymen began a ceaseless preliminary pounding to soften things up; the men of the 3rd Bn., 398th Regt. stormed and captured Forts Schiesseck and Otterbiel, powerful Maginot Line positions west of the city, winning themselves the coveted Presidential Citation, "Powderhorn" men of the 399th Regt. Prepared to storm the city and its invulnerable Citadel.

HOLDING THE LINE

At this almost climactical point, the unexpected took place —breakthrough in Belgium! This bold move on the part of Von Rundstedt made its effects felt along the entire front. In order to relieve units of the Third Army for a counter thrust, it was necessary for the 6th Army Group to extend its front to include about half of the entire Allied battle line. This change in strategy necessitated, of course, the discontinuance of the division's drive on Bitche and the establishment of a defense system running generally north and south of the Maginot Line.

Action during the next three months consisted mainly of artillery and mortar duels, with each side trying to dislodge its opponent and cause as many casualties as possible. Old man winter proved to be a more formidable foe than the Germans, there was almost continual snow, rain, and bitter cold, which made life in the foxholes miserable. The number of men lost because of sickness, especially yellow jaundice, was very high. Another aspect which characterized this period was the constant patrolling, which was carried on day and night. G Company men had their share of these patrols, and many of them proved themselves to be outstanding patrol leaders.

When G Company went back on line, December 22, its men were dispersed to cover almost a battalion front. Christmas found them dug in on high ground between Lemberg and Bitche, overlooking the highway. It wasn't the way they were accustomed to celebrating the holiday, but they made the best of it and enjoyed their packages from home. After spending several days in Enchenberg, they moved to Hotviller, a "ghost town." The CP was established in a small pillbox on the high ground outside of town, the 2nd Platoon was in Simserhof Fort, the 1st and 3rd Platoons were dug in on outpost line, and the mortars were set up on the edge of town. This was to be the scene of one of their most bitter fights.

On the night of December 31 increased activity was reported by all the outposts along the front, and early in the morning of January 1 they were hit by the full force of the Germans' New Year's offensive against the Seventh Army. First to feel the German attack was an outpost of the 1st Platoon which was well out in front of the rest of the company—all four occupants were captured as the position was overrun. By this time the other outposts, together with the rest of the 1st Platoon near Simserhof Farm were pouring a deadly crossfire into the German ranks. One of the squad leaders in command of an outpost devised a new infantry tactic on the spot—"skip bombing" with rifle grenades. This new method was used successfully to destroy two enemy machine gun crews. Driven by the intensity of this fire to the shelter of a nearby woods, the German force, now gathered in a relatively small area, was especially vulnerable to mortar and artillery fire. The H Company 81's set up in Hottviller and the guns of Battery B of the 925 FA Bn. furnished this supporting fire. Few of the Germans in those woods escaped. When a patrol from the 1st Platoon went out, twenty dazed survivors were taken captive.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Platoon had had a fight on its hands. Another German force had attacked on the left flank, attempting to get into the draw that the 3rd Platoon was protecting. Most of the enemy was pinned down by rifle fire, but some succeeded in getting into the draw. The 60mm mortar section, which as yet had seen practically no action because of the heavily wooded area they had operated in previously, was called into action. The mortarmen proved to be one of the most efficient teams in the company and by accurate fire destroyed part of this enemy force and chased the rest out of the draw into an unoccupied pillbox to the platoon's front. During the afternoon, when it was seen that mortar and artillery fire was having little effect on the pillbox, two patrols were sent out from the 3rd Platoon to neutralize it. As the only approach lay over open terrain, neither patrol was able to reach the fortification, so after firing several well-placed bazooka rounds at the firing apertures, they pulled back under cover of a smoke screen. Later that evening the Krauts decided it was "too hot" there in the pillbox, and withdrew over the hill toward Bitche.

The company's faith in its ability to carry out any assigned mission under favorable or unfavorable conditions, which had faded at Neufmaisons, been recovered at Wackenbach, increased at Lemberg, came to full flower at Hottviller that day. During an all-day battle in which they had effectively employed every weapon at their disposal, they had thrown back and largely destroyed an enemy

force numerically superior and found themselves to be the only company in the regiment to stand its ground during the counter-attack.

Three days later they were relieved and moved to Holbach, where they stayed in reserve for several days. The 3rd Platoon which had been in the French Garrison, temporarily attached to E Company, rejoined them there a day later. On the night of January 8, the 3rd Platoon under the leadership of Lt. Alphonse "Smokey" Siemasko, former platoon sergeant, left on a combat mission to the town of Schorbach. Unable to reach the town because of strong German defenses, the platoon returned after having a stiff fire fight. The next night two patrols from the 1st Platoon raided German positions near Sussell's Farm.

The kitchen and supply installations, which had remained in Goetzenbruck, were threatened from the flank and rear on January 1, as the Germans succeeded in recapturing Wingen. Moving to Bining, they were strafed by German aircraft, but luckily no damage was done. The company moved up to the French Garrison which, as the name implies, was formerly a garrison for soldiers of the nearby Maginot Line. The rifle platoons took up positions outside of the garrison with the 1st Platoon and a squad from the 2nd Platoon at "Little Anzio." This position was so named because it was only a few hundred yards from the Germans in the Freudenberg Farm pillboxes and received a barrage from the Germans at the slightest indication of any activity. It was almost impossible to enter or leave the area except under the cover of darkness. Freudenberg Farm was a system of pillboxes, which had been camouflaged as a cluster of farm buildings. Another place which acquired a name was "Shrapnel Bend," a curve in the road directly under observation from Freudenberg. Almost every evening the chow jeep had to run a gauntlet of mortar shells when it approached this curve. After a week here they moved back to Lambach in reserve for several days. The rest they had in Lambach or Sierstal every few weeks was certainly appreciated during the cold winter. They didn't have all the conveniences of home, but at least they were able to get under a roof and keep themselves dry.

From January 22 to February 6 they were in defensive positions near Signalberg and Spitzberg Hills, and occupied the biggest sector they had ever been assigned. The company was split up into two sections in these positions. Here, as in all the other defensive positions, communications took on a new importance. Instead of the two telephones allotted a rifle company, they were using eighteen phones with miles of wire lines. While in these positions each of the three rifle platoons sent out patrols which determined exact enemy positions, captured prisoners, and reflected credit to the courage and ability of those participating. They were happy to leave this sector, because there had been a big thaw and most of the snow which had covered the ground for so long melted away and caused many of their foxholes to cave in.

After six days reserve in Lambach, they went back up to the positions near the French Garrison which they had occupied before. This time the 2nd Platoon held down "Little Anzio" and patrolled the approach to Sussell's Farm. While here, the communications section constructed a switchboard from parts salvaged down in an "underground city" of the Maginot Line, which several of the men had

explored. The entrance was through an elevator shaft and the underground fortifications were complete with railroad, kitchens, Diesel power plants, and machine shops.

On February 23, the Company moved out along the firebreak between "Little Anzio" and the Reyersviller-Sierstal highway. The 2nd Platoon, located down in the "Splinter Factory," got a good look at Reyersviller. When the company moved back to Sierstal on Feb. 27, the 3rd Platoon went out on another raiding party, this time attacking the first house of Reyersviller, which the Germans were using for a CP. After a stiff fight, the platoon returned without any casualties. While the company stayed in Sierstal, a house full of ammunition caught fire during the night. Men from the 1st Platoon were instrumental in saving much of the ammunition as well as the occupants of the house. For this action three of them were awarded the Soldier's Medal.

On March 6, G Company moved into positions opposite the infamous Steinkopf Hill, which proved to be their last defensive action in France. While there, 1st Platoon sent a daylight patrol to Steinkopf. The patrol had almost reached the crest of the hill when the leader stepped on a shu mine, which blew off his foot. Trying to reach the wounded man, the assistant patrol leader also set off a mine, as did another member of the patrol. When the company was relieved by the 71st Division and moved back to Sierstal on March 14, the rumor was that the division was going back to a rest area, but later that afternoon they learned that they had been relieved for an entirely different reason.

RACING THRU THE REICH

On March 15, the 7th Army took up the offensive again, which was not to stop short of complete victory. As a part of the drive, the 100th Division was to pass through the 71st Division and launch its attack on Bitche, which had been postponed for three months. In this, the division's most brilliantly executed maneuver of the war, Company G was ordered to attack and capture formidable Signalberg, Little Steinkopf, and Steinkopf Hills, which protected the southern approaches to the city. After E and F Companies had teamed up to take Spitzberg Hill during a morning of bitter fighting, G Company went into action and jumped off without benefit of artillery that afternoon in their attack on Signalberg. Working their way up the most precipitous part of the hill to avoid the minefields that covered almost every approach, they reached and engaged the Germans entrenched on top. Those who resisted were promptly destroyed, and twenty-five prisoners were taken here and on Steinkopf, which was also quickly cleared. Within 36 hours of the jump-off, the division had captured Bitche and nearby Camp de Bitche for the first time in history, recaptured the Schiesseck and Otterbiel Forts and were racing towards the German border. As little resistance was encountered, the next three day's action consisted mainly of moving up behind the retreating enemy. Just after midnight on March 20, the company moved to the left flank of the division at Dietrichingen, Germany, to fill a gap between the 100th and the flank of the famed 3rd Division, which was hammering at the Siegfried Line, and awaited an expected counter-attack. None materialized, however, although they took a terrific pounding from artillery and

direct fire from the Siegfried pillboxes. Next day, they pulled back into France to an assembly area, relieved again by the 71st Division. This was their first look at Germany, but one had only to cross the border to notice the difference. The towns seemed to be generally cleaner, the homes better constructed and containing more conveniences, and the farms better-tended and more business-like than in France.

By March 22, the 3rd Division had battered a hole in the Siegfried, and the 100th, completely motorized, was ready to carry the ball on off-tackle play through the hole. Loading on tanks, T.D.'s, and half-tracks, they re-entered Germany, passed through the Siegfried east of Zweibrücken and began a dash through the Saarland. Taking a look at the Siegfried while passing through, it looked plenty rough and they were glad that they had not had to buck it. It was not uncommon to see groups of disconcerted Germans wandering aimlessly around, looking for someone to give themselves up to. And the roads were lined with refugees and D.P.'s eternally heading west. They were impressed by the peacefulness and lack of destruction in the little towns of the Saarland as they roared by, and they wished that the German civilians had been made to feel some of the horrors of war. But it seemed that no object of direct military value had been overlooked by the Air Corps in their preliminary bombings and strafing. Long lines of rolling stock lay twisted and burned out along highways and railroads, the larger towns had been thoroughly plastered. Passing quickly through Sweix, Kaiserslautern, and Neustadt, they reached the Rhine Valley the next day. They attacked Shifferstadt and Waldsee on foot, but met no opposition as they marched to the banks of the Rhine. Finding all bridges across the Rhine blown, they moved to Waldsee and later to Mutterstadt, while the engineers worked to bridge the river. Hundreds of Germans that had failed to get across the river were rounded up.

During the long winter months they had often thought of "Crossing the Rhine," and almost everyone had pictured fanatic German resistance at the great natural barrier. But on the last day of March, when they crossed in motor convoy over a hastily constructed pontoon bridge, they were quite unopposed. With the Rhine behind them now, they began to knife into the heart of the Reich. Easter morning found them attacking Hockenheim, where they met only token resistance. After a quick succession of moves through Swaigern, Sluctern, and Grossgartach, it looked as though the Germans were really on the run. But when advance elements of the division approached Heilbronn, a large supply and communications center astride the Neckar River, it became apparent that the Krauts meant to fight for the city with all the resources and ferocity at their command. Reinforcements were observed streaming into the city, and fleeing D.P.'s reported that Nazi troops there were SS men of the highest fighting caliber. The company went into Bockingen, the southwestern section of Heilbronn, and engaged the Germans across the river in sniper and mortar duels, as the battle raged throughout the city.

FINISHING THE JOB

After outposting the river bank at Bockingen for several days, they were still waiting for engineers to complete a bridge over the Neckar. Even under a

heavy pall of smoke, the pontoons laid down on the water were blown up by the German artillery as fast as they were laid down. Finally, it was decided to cross on assault boats. Therefore, on the morning of April 12, following the 1st Bn., they paddled across the canal-like river amidst a heavy smoke screen. Most of the day, the Germans poured an abundance of artillery and rocket fire in trying to destroy their bridgehead. By nightfall, the 1st Bn. had cleared most of the houses and the 2nd Bn. set out down the bank of the river with the mission of securing the city. That night, E Company and F Company took Sontheim. The next day G Company moved through to Horkheim and jumped off in attack on Talheim. First indication of what lay ahead that afternoon was picked up from a Polish refugee as they moved through Horkheim. According to him, there were pillboxes ahead, something neither they nor the S-2 had anticipated.

They moved down the road with the 1st Platoon on the right, 3rd Platoon on the left, 2nd Platoon in reserve, plus a platoon of tanks from the 781st Tank Bn. Before they had moved very far, heavy small and automatic arms fire came from across the table-like valley. Quickly deploying, both platoons advanced in rushes, covered by overhead fire from the tanks. Soon they were able to spot two pillboxes, the last two remaining of the Siegfried Line, and supporting bunker positions. Calling for fire from the tanks' 76mm guns to keep the pillboxes buttoned up, men from both platoons were able to move up within distance to first grenade the boxes and then finish the job with Tommy-guns and M1's. For this action, three men of the company were recommended for the DSC. At this time, the 3rd Platoon on the left began to receive fire from an orchard on the high ground across a deep cut to their flank. The 2nd Platoon was ordered around to give them assistance but were unable to move to a position from which they could neutralize this resistance.

Having been supplied with ammunition, the company moved out again to attack the town itself, which lay just ahead. As they approached, the Germans resorted to a stratagem. Lining up on the road to the edge of town as if to surrender, the Germans sought to draw them in as far as possible. Seeing this, the company commander halted the company and sent an interpreter forward to shout at the Krauts. At the first "Kommen sie hier," the Krauts bolted to the houses on either side of the road and opened up with small arms and panzerfausts. To avoid the confusion of a house-to-house battle at night, the company pulled back slightly and dug in at the outskirts of town. Few slept that night, as they expected a counter-attack, but none came.

Next morning, they resumed the attack into town and met only sniper fire as they cleaned out the houses. Several Germans were observed retreating over the hills behind the town, and the mortar section did not take long in pouring a deadly barrage at them in addition to artillery and heavy machine gun fire. No sooner had the Germans evacuated the town than they began a heavy mortar barrage which kept up the better part of the day and night. In the afternoon, the 1st Platoon went out to outpost the highway to Lauffen am Neckar but were unable to withstand the barrage long enough to dig in without prohibitive casualties, so they withdrew back to the town. Next day, the 3rd Platoon sent out a patrol on T.D.'s to contact the Germans and found that they had moved to

Schozach. The 2nd Platoon then sent out men with the Regimental I and R Platoon to contact the enemy on the Lauffen am Neckar road. In the evening, the whole company moved out and dug in on the high ground outside of Schozach in preparation for an attack the next day.

The attack on Schozach got under way about noon of April 16. The machine guns were set up on the ridge looking down into the town, and the mortars were just behind. The 2nd Platoon was to make a wide encircling movement on the tanks from the left rear, cutting off any route of escape from the town. The 1st and 3rd Platoons were to assault the town frontally. As they jumped off, the 1st and 2nd Platoons got into town without much difficulty, but the 3rd and Weapons Platoons caught a murderous mortar barrage from the German guns set up on the high ground beyond the town. They had to pull back until darkness, at which time they joined the group in town. All night the artillery and mortar fire rained down on the town, and they expected the Krauts to launch a counter-attack, but again none came. During the next day, the artillery continued at intervals, and in the afternoon, they were ordered to withdraw as the regiment changed its direction of attack. After dark, they withdrew from the town, a platoon at a time, and moved to Unter Gruppenbach, where they spent the night.

The next two days found them moving to Unter Henriet and Prevorst, where they were when the final breakthrough came. A task force of the 10th Armored Division and the 398th Regiment had achieved a breakthrough near Backnang, and the 2nd Bn. was again assembled and loaded on tanks and T.D.'s for a race southward to exploit the breakthrough into the Nazis' publicized Southern Redoubt. The first afternoon found them roaring through Backnang to Waldrens. Next day, they moved to Waiblingen, and then to Stetten in the drive to cut off the major city of Stuttgart, which the French 1st Army was attacking frontally.

On April 22, they cleaned off a series of ridges between Stetten and the Neckar River, capturing several Germans trying to escape from Stuttgart, and in the evening entered Ober-Turkheim. This was the last action for Company G against the Germans in the ETO.

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