

# CRACKING Mouterhouse STRONGHOLD



8-9 Dec. '44  
MOUTERHOUSE



6 Dec. '44

Wildenguth

Reipertsviller



397 = 157

Lichtenberg

4 Dec. '44  
HILL 375

Rothbach  
5 Dec. '44

HILL 370

HILL 296

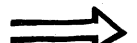
Wimmenau

1 Dec. '44

INGWILLER

## LEGEND

1st Battalion



2nd Battalion



3rd Battalion



SCALE: 1/50,000

*ET Barbieri*

## MOUTERHOUSE



Less than a month ago we had taken positions west of the Meurthe River and now, on December 1st, we were in Weinburg, Sparsbach, Ingwiller and Weiterswiller. With the air of one detached from the entire experience and not really a part of it, we saw a flanking movement which gave us Raon L'Etape and soon added more than ten towns to the list of those liberated. In each we were recipients of French generosity tempered only by the lack of those things which had been taken by the Nazi invaders.

We were greeted with kisses from young girls and old bearded men, with hand clasps and back slaps, while elderly women stood by and gazed wistfully at the youth and vigor of this triumphant army. We were accorded the luxury of wines and champagnes, and in some instances had a new baptism of fire in the form of over-age schnapps. To turn down these tokens of kindness and appreciation would have been rude. We remained gentlemen.

In our recently occupied positions opposing us was the 13th Company, 952 Regiment, 361st VGR Division. Continuing with our attack on December 2nd we took consolidated positions near Ingwiller although the Krauts fought with a suicidal ferocity. They used small arms, automatic weapons, mortars and the now-familiar and feared 88's — but we slugged ahead. When a platoon from Company I became pinned down at the bottom of the hill, another platoon maneuvered around outside of the hot spot and came in from the rear, thus relieving the pressure.

Upon capturing a squad of the enemy and its telephone, a platoon of Company F followed the wire and discovered a lead to another enemy group. Next on the list was Hill 370. The town of Lichtenburg was set ablaze from our constant pounding by artillery and cannon. Kraut troops were northwest and west of the city. Preparing for our big push Company L approached Hill 296 and received a heavy concentration of mortar and artillery fire.

The constant harassing by hostile small arms and automatic weapons as we approached Hill 375 was accompanied by the really serious obstacle of difficult terrain and maintenance of contact and control. Hourly barrages of 120 mm. and 75 mm., varying from 20 to 60 rounds, came in. For the first time we ran across booby traps with trip wires. Our troops took Hill 369, Hill 296, and a motley assortment of prisoners; shoemakers, carpenters, and some in civilian clothes who claimed to be AWOL or on furlough.

In the face of violent resistance we captured Hill 375 on December 4th. Behind this simple declaration there lies the gory details of many heroes, dead and wounded. Our leaders showed gallantry and heroism in selecting positions for us which proved to be the best. A sergeant led a patrol so effectively in a diversionary mission of great hazard that his company was permitted to take its objective with a minimum of casualties. When the company to which an aid man was attached received an intense bombardment there were many casualties. The medic himself suffered lacerations on one leg and a fracture of the other, but he crawled on his back from one wounded man to another, administering first aid and refusing to let litter bearers evacuate him when they came, requesting they take care of the other men. He then dragged himself about 1000 yards to the battalion aid station.

The stubborn defense caused us to back off Hill 375 and call for a TOT of all available artillery. This was an old and well-proved trick. As we edged backward, the enemy, in line with expectations, was quick to follow, and by so doing walked smack into the artillery barrage. Although our barrage did not quite hit in all the right spots, it dazed the Krauts to such an extent that we were able to fall on them before they could get back to their prepared positions. They were well-camouflaged, dug-in 6 by 10 feet, and protected by heavy logs and sandbags. The enemy also utilized road-blocks covered by flak guns and automatic weapons and kept his artillery and mortars going at the maximum pitch, shelling the town of Rothbach all day long. It was tough and rough for hand carrying parties and litter-bearers who operated in defiance of the heaviest mortar and artillery fire the foe could possibly muster. The Kraut abandoned his positions during the night and retreated to the north. The Third Battalion CP had remained in the town throughout the fight for hill 375.

On December 5th the First Battalion, assisted by a platoon of medium tanks from the 14th Armored Division, took Wimmenau. The Second Battalion liberated Reipertswiller. The Third

Battalion was in a position of Regimental reserve at Lichtenberg, ready to move to the hottest spot at a moment's notice. Going cross country, we ran into an abundance of Schu and "S" mines, which caused a few casualties — blowing off men's feet, thus giving what was more expensive than "the million-dollar wound" — the one that sent a fellow home.



We were now veterans. We knew the full content of war and we had become more cautious in our association with it. We had seen what it had done and could do. We were now more careful to feel out the way ahead, rather than advance unknowing toward the enemy. We waited for the support of our artillery. We now instinctively took cover. When replacements, just renamed "reinforcements," took their places among us, we talked with more assurance in answer to their hesitating questions as to what to expect. We were rather proud of our experiences, and appreciated this opportunity to display our hard-won knowledge.

Our attack went on unabated and we scored some notable gains December 6th when we took Wildenguth and Melch. Our immediate objective now was Mouterhouse. Most of us didn't realize at the time that the Division ultimate objective was the fortress city of Bitche on the Maginot Line and for that reason we could not appreciate the importance of Mouterhouse as the gateway to such objective. We had been in the Army long enough now to know better than to ask. We were oriented for our mission, and off we'd go, content in the supposed belief that someone higher up knew what the score was.

So it was with Mouterhouse. We knew only that there was a town ahead that was occupied

by the enemy and that our mission was to drive him out and occupy it ourselves. It was that simple. No maps and overlays to show the entire front. Some of us had little overlays showing the few hundred feet in which we were to operate. Ahead was a bush or a small clump of trees to which we would advance, and beyond that still another form of cover. This was our "big picture". This was our plan of operation.

In the previous actions we had smashed right through the most difficult of positions and terrain. The weather too had been against us, but we even became part of that. Our advances had caught the Kraut off balance and for a day or two he was reeling like a punch-drunk fighter. We incurred relatively slight casualties, and began to feel a new sort of confidence in our ability. There was considerable resistance in the taking of Wildenguth and Wimmenau in the form of snipers and unobserved artillery fire. However, the tough obstacles had been road blocks and mines. The enemy had a trick of felling trees across the roads and then fixing charges with pull ignites and booby traps, stretching the wires to other trees.

On December 6th orders came to take Mouterhouse. The Second Battalion left Reipertswiller, moving northeast in the direction of Mouterhouse for a distance of about three miles, finally assuming positions 800 yards from the town itself. Company H dug in on Hill 335 and





set up its 81 mm. mortars and heavy machine guns to support the remainder of the Battalion. During this move no main roads had been used as we were wary of the good observation the enemy had on all approaches. We could see that the goings would be rough. If the Kraut had been unaggressive for the past few days, his tactics were soon to undergo a vast change in a determined effort to stem the advance.

We occupied Melch on December 6th after a six mile unimpeded march. Despite all the mines and blocks which had been strewn in our path, we managed to accomplish our mission with minor incidents. The "slight casualties" and "minor incidents" appeared in just that light except to us who suffered them. They were far from "slight" and "minor" to an individual. A slight casualty from a booby trap meant a blown off hand with hope for a normal life thereafter gone forever. It might mean the necessity of building a complete new future. However, we all were happy to be alive.

Our first big project was to establish an observation post for the mortars so as to gain accurate data for firing supporting missions for the rifle troops. To accomplish this end an observation party assembled near the town and made their way stealthily toward the enemy during the hours of darkness, carrying with them weapons and a radio. They came to a house on a high hill overlooking the town and went down into the cellar, the only American troops in the town. Throughout the night they could hear the hob-nailed boots above them in the same building. By some stroke of fortune they remained undetected and gained vital information. Although they did not have rations they remained "on the spot" all through the night and the next day, transmitting enough accurate data to bring about such effective mortar fire as to spell out the difference between success and failure to the Battalion at this particular point.

The Second Battalion, with Companies E and G in the lead, and F in reserve, jumped off at 0915 Dec 7th with Mouterhouse as its objective. Forty-five minutes later the leading elements moved into the city, drawing enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire. Meanwhile the

First Battalion moved to the northwest of the town in order to block the road running out and capture any enemy who might try to retreat. The Krauts, however, had no such intention. They were there to stay until they had been taken prisoner or killed. The two Battalions succeeded in almost completely surrounding the town.

We stepped forward with sweaty cold hands, firmly yet hesitantly, watching our leaders for signals and trying to spot the buildings in the distance for some sign of what was waiting. Step by step we came nearer and nearer to the town, and all continued quiet. To our left and to our right we hazarded glances and saw the dirty, bearded, strained faces of our buddies as their thoughts paralleled ours. It is indeed an eerie or, at least, queer feeling to be attacking like that. It is more like walking through a swamp where you know that there is quick-sand. You keep going, and maybe you will hit the quick-sand and maybe you won't, depending on your

luck, and to a certain extent your skill. Some get to other side, but others don't. It's the law of averages, some say, and others say no, it's all luck.

And so we moved forward, keeping time with our quickened heart beats, forgetting the cold weather. In that first day of fighting for Mouterhouse we had taken all but five houses and taken them the hard way, one at a time, each a separate fortress which had to be destroyed and the enemy flushed from within. The Second Battalion was in the town and was going to stay there. The First Battalion moved around to the west encountering heavy automatic weapons and small arms fire from the dug-in positions on Hill 285,



but nevertheless kept up its end of the pincer movement which would either squeeze every Jerry out or leave him in to die. Some of the Heinies had taken off into the woods and hills north of the town, only to run into First Battalion men.

Looking back over the operation as we are doing now, certain details are brought to mind. We recall how on that first day we moved on trails west of Melch for a distance of 1500 yards to Hill 335, and the trouble that the heavy weapons' company had in getting its heavy machine guns and mortars over the terrain. A reconnaissance patrol reported that there were enemy troops in the vicinity and on the northeast trails. We were ordered to conduct vigorous patrolling and to establish temporary road blocks thus bottling the town up and prohibiting the enemy from any movement.

Before dawn of the day of the scheduled attack all patrols and road blocks were called in. The fighting of the previous weeks had sapped our ranks of seasoned troops. The reinforcements, although well trained, were untried. At 0800 the company commanders of the Second Battalion were assembled at the Battalion Command Post where they received the battalion attack order: "Enemy is known to occupy Moutherhouse and the high ground north, strength unknown. The attack, at 0915, the mission, seize Moutherhouse and the high ground to the north. Any questions? Move out."

The first and second platoons of Company E were in the lead, the third in support. The light machine gun section, augmented by Company H heavy machine guns, were disposed with one weapon for each platoon and the heavies in the center behind them. A crew of four men loaded with wire, phones, and switchboard followed directly behind the attackers.



Working through the dense timber they took a course north northeast from the Hill 335 positions for about 400 yards. The wooded area ended and then suddenly we saw a church and cemetery about 75 yards ahead. We were fired on by Krauts hidden in the church. A group sent to determine the strength of the enemy in the church was observed and became targets for a barrage of 88's, heavy machine guns and 20 mm. flak guns. Although the barrage only lasted for twenty minutes, ten men were wounded. During a lull the patrol leader again tried to reach the church. The entrance was under sniper fire on the north side and any thought of getting in that way had to be abandoned. In the meantime his squad had infiltrated across the open space, and two men boosted him through the window and gave him a position from which he was able to direct the rest of the platoon across the open area. Soon there were three platoons in the church. Those of us remaining at the edge of the woods had watched with bated breath. We were subjected to a fierce barrage of flak and mortar fire while enemy heavy machine guns from a hill on the other side of town fired at us. There were several more casualties before our machine guns were able to silence the foe.

Remaining in the church until after it became dark, we then crossed the road and cleared the schoolhouse. From this building we were able to gain observation of the road through the center of the town. Almost immediately the wire crew crossed to the schoolhouse and put in a switchboard, always vital to operations. Two platoons crossed north of the school later and down an open slope to the main road where they worked westward separating into a "Y" at the second road junction. One platoon took the houses at the base of the hill and the edge of the town while the other cleared a building fifty yards to the west. The reserve platoons and forward CP moved into the church and stayed in these positions for the night.

Companies E & G launched an all-out attack, with Company F in reserve, on December 7th. Finding the resistance on the hills of the town more than had been expected, we had to commit Company F at 1600 and it approached the town from the east. The men moved out in a column of platoons down a trail leading northwest to the main road. The heavy machine guns attached to the company commenced an harassing fire on the doors and steeple of another church. We spent the day cleaning out the different buildings, the factory district, and in so doing found that we had again broken the best that the enemy had to offer by way of defense. Sometimes there wasn't any resistance to our push. As was his custom, however, the Kraut decided to

defend with a vengeance in some isolated sectors. It was these small groups of enemy that gave us the most trouble, and we used everything from hand grenades to bazookas before achieving their complete extinction.

The supporting platoons joined the others and we were ready for a large scale attack on the town on December 8th. Although the day's objective was to clear only the western third of the town, we were determined to do all we could and finish the job as soon as possible. A concentration of fire was laid down by our supporting heavy weapons and forced the withdrawal of the enemy on Hill 275. A platoon had entered the cemetery near the church on the initial assault. These men were observed and a fierce barrage of flak, 88's and machine guns halted further entry into the area. Casualties were sustained as the shells shattered the tombstones behind which the platoon took cover. Counter-battery fire finally silenced the Krauts, but not without their first adding to our death toll.

Throughout the whole operation, the constant enemy fire kept disrupting our wire communications, and our wiremen proved their invaluable worth in the furthering of our mission. There were many individual acts of gallantry which summed up the important fact that we could rely on telephones for communication.

We crossed the street from the church cemetery although snipers were still active in the parsonage northeast of the church, and the entire area was zeroed-in by artillery. We trained our light machine guns on areas which furnished asylum for Nazi infantry. One of our main targets was Hill 275 where we were sure the foe was entrenched. We made the crossing as darkness began to fall and when it was totally dark all the combat elements of the Second Battalion were in the town, either in the church or the schoolhouse.

The experience at Mouterhouse gave us several indications of things to come. We gained information regarding the way the foe could and would defend in house to house combat. We learned several tricks about getting him out of the house. We now were aware of the tenacity with which a sector would be defended, and how an innocent looking manufacturing village might be converted into a bastion of defense. We had not yet experienced sticking it out in a position at all costs. We knew by the nature of the defense just how it must be. All of our missions had been completed, objectives taken, and we were a smooth-functioning machine.

The actual battle for Mouterhouse was over on the 8th, but things were yet popping in and

around the town until the 19th. It was in our hands, but there was the surrounding terrain and other vital nearby points of resistance. We continued making gains on the 8th, but they were not easily won. The opposition had gotten its second wind and inflicted many casualties. The First Battalion moved to the northeast to secure the cross-road near the town. Company B was caught on a hill near the point of the cross-roads by artillery and mortar fire, but succeeded in getting to the road by infiltration. There were heavy casualties many of whom could not readily be evacuated before dark.

Night evacuations were made even harder because the road to the battalion aid station was heavily mined. Everyone from the Battalion Commander to the litter bearer put out unreservedly. All wounded were cared for and evacuated by midnight with the resultant saving of many lives.

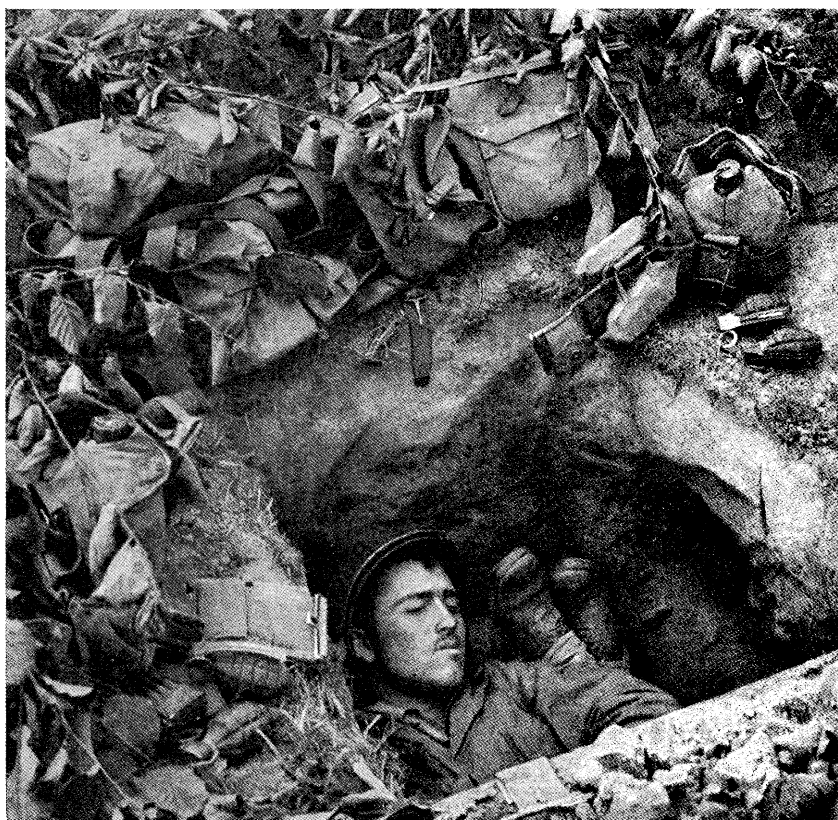
The Second Battalion had fought for and captured Hill 415, finding, as their greatest foe, large concentrations of artillery which would whistle-in regularly every few minutes. The Regiment had come upon a variety of combat techniques. We had everything from house to house fighting, to unresisted taking of hills and factory districts. We had struggled up fiercely-defended slopes and we had walked unmolested down the main road of the town. Troops had stepped gingerly over mines and booby traps and cut around road blocks. The men had conducted mopping-up operations and initiated entirely new attacks.

The enemy made desperate attempts to stem our advance on December 9th. The town itself, entirely in our control, was receiving constant shelling. The motor pools and kitchens had moved into the town, giving it a rear-echelon aura, despite the fact that the enemy was still close at hand. The company drivers of one unit made their quarters in an abandoned, modern, diesel-driven electric street car. This trolley was parked on a siding by a large factory which had been producing metal machine parts, and was the target for a great deal of the enemy artillery. Throughout the day and night the nearby 4.2 mortars blasted out their destruction at the enemy, only to be answered by the latter feeling around for their position. In this search he came alarmingly close and, in fact, once put a shell in it.

A pocket of about thirty Krauts with automatic weapons and supported directly with 20 mm. flak guns held up the entire Third Battalion as it moved from its reserve position in Melch to the vicinity of Mouterhouse. We called for artillery and with accurate observation

silenced a group of mortars which had been annoying us. Part of Company K near Hemmerkoph Hill, north of the town, was ordered to cover the attack of a section of tanks up in the open draw. This attempt caused such a flurry of hostile mortar and artillery fire that the effort was abandoned by the tanks. We had to go in and knock out the position ourselves. Company L on Ridge Le Witterschall, encountered a terrific barrage as it began to dig in. The result was 28 serious casualties. It lasted for hours, prevented us from digging in and hampered the evacuation of the wounded. A nightmare of the blind leading the halt developed in that those of us who were not too badly off were trying to aid our more seriously hurt comrades. Despite all the confusion and cries and blood, we occupied the high ground. Even now, we do not know how we did it. Perhaps we were so dazed by the cold and the pounding artillery that we weren't fully aware of what we were doing. Whatever it was, we were proud of it, and glad that it had been there when we needed it most.

We had seen buddies leave us for a short period and then return to us with bright, shiny bars on their shoulders, new field jackets and a heightened stature. By this time we had all been issued sleeping bags. We had trouble at first in manipulating the strings and fasteners, but soon became accustomed and found it to be an excellent guard against the cold. Many learned during the Vosges Campaign that if he hoped to have some little warmth at night it was not a good practice to leave blankets with the kitchen in anticipation of having them brought up each night. It



was not always possible for vehicles to get to us and we were not always able to get to them. There were even times when no one to the rear knew where we were. With these new sleeping bags we were always assured of having at least a token bed roll, and they rolled up into practically nothing for light travel. We had by now "lost" a lot of equipment which we found too ponderous and unnecessary for everyday purposes. Some had gotten rid of packs entirely, while others had cut them down so as to merely provide a harness for attaching our gear.

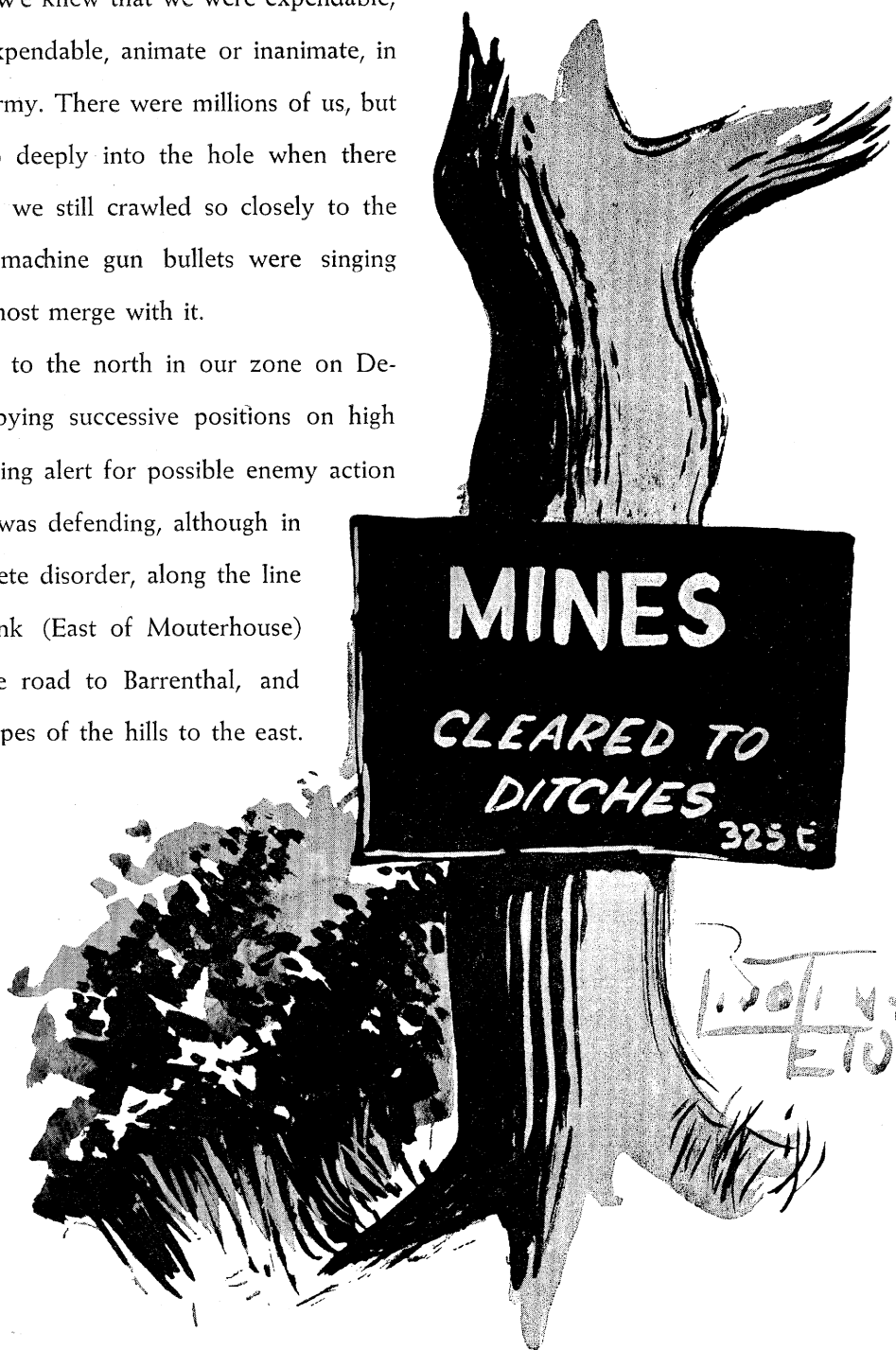
Shelter halves were a thing apart from us as the pup tent was definitely not in vogue this season. Our night's lodging was dug from the ground and covered with stout trees over which dirt was piled. In these we felt secure: but, as often as not, we left a hard-dug position before even having the opportunity to use it once. The longer we occupied a particular hole, the more ornate and servicable we made it. In these rare times pin-up girls appeared on the dirt walls and pine boughs were brought in to make the "floor" a little more comfortable for sleeping. There were at least one or two large engineer shovels in each squad, as well as a large-size axe. Some of the acquisitions were distinctly not "made in the U.S.A." but our immediate needs overruled any qualms we might have had against borrowing.

In this Mouterhouse action, as in the others before and those to come, certain individuals displayed that little extra courage and intrepidity over and above the common heroism that marked our daily doings. A sergeant, despite his wounded condition, took over a platoon and led it successfully in a bitterly-contested advance. Recognition for such valor soon came in the form of a battlefield appointment. A private, while on guard, heard some movement and suddenly a voice in a jargon resembling English demanded his surrender. The voice had come from behind him. The private wheeled, fired his carbine, manned a machine gun, wounded three infiltrating enemy and captured four. A sergeant, squad leader, encountered a strong force of enemy infantry as he spearheaded the company's advance. Realizing that the enemy had been surprised as much as he, the sergeant led his men in a determined charge which forced the Krauts to withdraw, and by promptly reorganizing his men, he was able to repulse a counterattack soon afterwards. Another sergeant, faced on three sides with a counterattack and low on ammunition, exposed himself by going from foxhole to foxhole, distributing ammunition among his men until he was mortally wounded.

Such acts as these were not unusual. They happened every day and several times a day.

They were the things that made a big war into a lot of little experiences, and made the war, too, a more personal one for us. We had no delusions about our value. We knew that if anything happened to any one of us, he could be easily replaced. True, his friendly kind of smile and the jokes he made, might be missing, but when there was a job to do there would ultimately be someone to do it. We knew that we were expendable, in fact the most expendable, animate or inanimate, in the whole damn Army. There were millions of us, but we still cringed so deeply into the hole when there was a barrage and we still crawled so closely to the ground when the machine gun bullets were singing overhead, as to almost merge with it.

We continued to the north in our zone on December 10th occupying successive positions on high ground and remaining alert for possible enemy action from the east. He was defending, although in pretty much complete disorder, along the line from our right flank (East of Mouterhouse) and east along the road to Barrenthal, and north along the slopes of the hills to the east.



We were offered little resistance in our northward advance. There was no effort to impede us as we went directly north, striking out for Camp de Bitche. Heavy artillery was active for the first time, including a two-hour shelling of Mouterhouse, but casualties were light. Being a comparatively quiet day, some of us managed to squeeze in the rare delight of a hot meal, served to us from marmite cans. We had long since abandoned our mess kits but somehow the kitchens picked enough up so that we all had a half of one brought out to us with the food. Our eating implements were dug up from somewhere. We found our canteen cups where they belonged — around our canteens. When we finished eating, we threw the dirty mess-kits into the trailer of the kitchen jeep and noted with some little satisfaction that it would be the cooks who would be doing the dirty work.

Such things as KP were no more than a memory. Of course most of us stood guard in our foxhole for half the night, but even this had its compensations. We were further removed from garrison life than any of us had ever thought possible. It was a familiar sight to see someone taking off into slightly wooded area with a shovel under his arm, to see writing paper tucked beneath the sweat bands in our helmet liners, to wash in water from our canteen poured into our steel helmets.

Hill 395 was secured by the Third Battalion on December 11th. However from 0030 until 0715, the die-hard foe pounded Mouterhouse with a variety of shell-fire. We had taken the town but the tenacious enemy was determined to make our gain, a loss. Heavy fire was also falling on Hill 415 through the night and intermittently throughout the day. Our troops on Hill 395 were subjected to small arms and automatic weapons fire. Company H had left an 18-man machine gun force on Hill 364. The following morning all were missing except two. Oddly enough the weapons, supposedly enemy bait, were still there. The Regimental Command Post, recently moved into Mouterhouse, received an estimated 130-140 rounds of heavy artillery that morning. As far as safe spots were concerned, this was a war without really distinctive echelons. Heavy artillery could pound installations to a certain distance, and then from there, airplanes took over.

Four days after the supposed capture of Mouterhouse, December 12th, we hit some serious snags in trying to get rid of all the enemy in the immediate vicinity. The Second Battalion continued to clear the vital high ground north of the town, and the Third Battalion went on to take Hills 430 and 395. The First Battalion continued to defend the

Regimental right flank. Our leading elements were advancing on open road and cross country. We came upon a large enemy group when we reached a point three miles from Mouterhouse. The surprise was mutual. A close fight followed and one of our companies organized along the crest of the hill and made a stand, holding off two counterattacks of twice our strength, inflicting many casualties. For the most part, however, there was no real enemy opposition other than mortar fire, and for the first time in quite a while we were able to get our supplies through unhindered.

Our shower unit, located in Mouterhouse, was knocked out by mortar fire. This mobile convenience had an eight-faucet outlet and averaged 400 showers daily. It kept close to the Regimental Command Post, going out to the various battalions when the situation permitted. It was the greatest single factor in maintaining morale. The clean body and clean clothes gave one a sense of well-being, contrasting so radically with that feeling engendered by filth. In twelve hours the pulley on the engine was repaired and the showers were again ready for action.

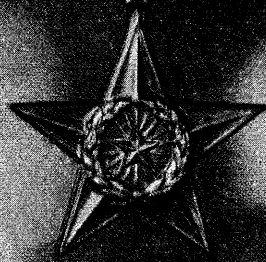
Thus we come to the end of the tale about Mouterhouse. Our operations were now pointed toward the Division objective of Bitche. One reality jutted higher than any other, and all that mattered then — Mouterhouse was ours.



# *Silver Star Medal*

*for Gallantry in action*

AWARDED



- 1st Lt. FRANK H. CRITTENDON (then S/Sgt.), on 10 December 1944, a platoon guide, assuming command of the platoon when the leader and sergeant both became casualties, skillfully deployed his men and crawled forward alone in the face of intense fire to destroy a machine gun position, killing five enemy.
- S/Sgt. HERBERT HARVEY, on 7 December 1944, voluntarily accompanied a patrol into enemy lines, slipped through a ring of enemy soldiers and entered a house containing 19 German civilians. He put them under guard and obtained vital information, which was ultimately used to great advantage.
- Sgt. ALBERT HEWINES (then Pfc.), on 7 December 1944, engaged a numerically superior enemy force with his automatic rifle and temporarily disconcerted the attackers. The accuracy of his fire inflicted numerous casualties and gave enough time for his comrades to join him and repel the attack.
- 2nd Lt. ELBERT W. JONES (then Sgt.), on 7 December 1944, despite three painful abdominal wounds sustained as he led his squad across open, fire-swept terrain, dragged two wounded comrades from the line of fire. He then continued leading the assault, supported by a man on either side of him.
- Pfc. HAROLD E. MADDUX, on 7 December 1944, after determining the position of a platoon despite heavy enemy fire, was establishing a supply route to the unit when he was attacked by a hostile patrol. Although alone he killed two of the enemy and captured the remaining three.

*2nd Lt. ROLAND C. MARBLE (then Sgt.), on 8 December 1944, when his platoon leader was killed, assumed command of the platoon and led it successfully in the bitterly-contested advance, not stopping even when he himself was wounded, until the mission was accomplished.*

*Pfc. LAWRENCE E. MOSOLF, on 13 December 1944, crawled to within fifty yards of a machine gun nest which had immobilized his platoon and killed the gunner. Then rushing forward, he killed the assistant gunner and turned the weapon on the enemy.*

*S/Sgt. HOWARD P. SMITH, on 12 December 1944, while leading a squad in the company advance, encountered a strong force of enemy infantry. He realized that the enemy had been surprised and he led his squad in a determined charge which forced the enemy to withdraw. The prompt reorganization of his platoon enabled it to repulse a counterattack soon afterwards.*

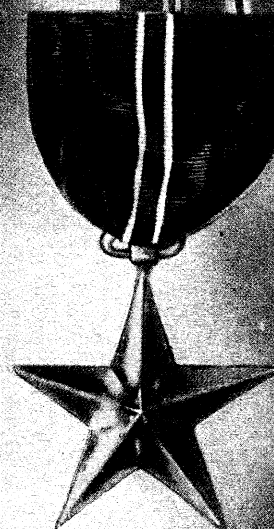
*Sgt. PAUL K. SPURGEON, on 13 December 1944, after his company secured its objective, was faced on three sides with a counterattack. With the men low on ammunition, he exposed himself going from foxhole to foxhole distributing ammunition until mortally wounded. The company was enabled to repel the enemy counterattack by this gallant act.*

*Pvt. ROBERT S. WILSON, on 9 December 1944, when hearing some movement while on guard, and an enemy soldier from behind demanding his surrender, wheeled, fired his carbine, then manned a nearby machine gun, wounding three infiltrated enemy and capturing four.*

# Bronze Star Medal

for Heroic achievement in action

AWARDED

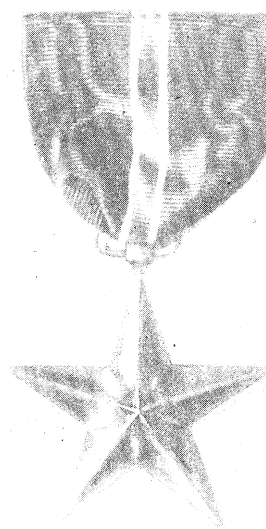


*Pvt. John W. Aitchison* . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
*Sgt. George S. Anderson* . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
*S/Sgt. Aage L. Arnvig* . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Thomas M. Beamon* . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
*S/Sgt. Edward J. Borboa* . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Leon Brooks, Jr.* . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
*Sgt. Philip D. Brooks* . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Allen B. Brown* . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
*T/Sgt. William F. Burke* . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
*S/Sgt. Philip Ciciariello* . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
*Sgt. Richard C. Chapman, Jr.* . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
*Pvt. Mariano Correia, Jr.* . . . . . 6-8 Dec. 44  
*Sgt. Raleigh S. Cox* . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Ray O. Crabtree* . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Edward F. Crofts* . . . . . 6-8 Dec. 44  
*Tec. 4 Marshall G. Dahlen* . . . . . 9 Dec. 44

*Pvt. Robert G. Deheer* . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
*Tec. 5 Edward X. Driscoll* . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Clarence Drucker* . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. Earle L. Ellis* . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
*Pfc. John G. Faulkner* . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
*Cpl. Frank J. Fradella* . . . . . 15 Dec. 44

2nd Lt. Thomas W. Grant . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
 S/Sgt. James A. Grubb . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 S/Sgt. William L. Hackworth . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Avis D. Hammond . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Murray Hornstein . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Raymond E. Huck . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
 1st Sgt. Ernest J. Jaklitsch . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
 1st Sgt. Willie H. Jordan . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
 Sgt. Paul E. Kane . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Richard H. Kohler . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
 2nd Lt. Murray Lancer . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Richard P. Lenski . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
 S/Sgt. John J. Lubrano . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
 T/Sgt. Charles Martinotti . . . . . 7-8 Dec. 44  
 2nd Lt. Jack R. McGee . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Tec. 5 William H. McGee . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Earl W. McKisson . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
 T/Sgt. Pasquale V. Miele . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Sgt. Ralph K. Miller . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Julius D. Morrison . . . . . 6-8 Dec. 44  
 1st Lt. John C. Noel, Jr. . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Robert W. Nycek . . . . . 15 Dec. 44

Tec. 5 John J. Olshefski . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
 Sgt. Stanley H. Pape . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Hubert G. Parker . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. William D. Paschal . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Gaston W. Pennington . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
 Sgt. Richard R. Polhemous . . . . . 6-8 Dec. 44  
 Sgt. Robert E. Robertson . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
 T/Sgt. John M. Rodden . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 S/Sgt. John B. Rogers . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Richard R. Sainz . . . . . 14 Dec. 44  
 S/Sgt. George S. Shaneberger . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Carl Shelton, Jr. . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 1st Lt. Lawrence J. Skiddy, Jr. . . . . 14 Dec. 44  
 T/Sgt. John H. Slade . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Horace T. Spradley . . . . . 6-8 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Jack E. Springgay . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
 Major Felix E. Tharpe . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
 S/Sgt. Charles F. Trainor . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
 Cpl. Donald C. Uhler . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
 Pfc. Joseph Urkevich . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
 Tec. 5 Clyde S. Wolf . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
 Sgt. Richard T. Woodworth . . . . . 7 Dec. 64



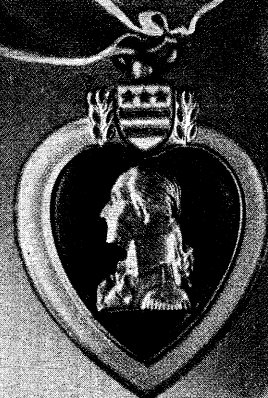
# Purple Heart Medal

posthumously

AWARDED

Pfc. Kenneth H. Baker  
Guttenberg, N.J.  
Pfc. Ralph W. Barker  
Colorado, S.C.  
Pvt. Felipe M. Contreras  
Las Cruces, New Mexico  
Pfc. Tilton Farrell  
Delta, Kentucky  
Pfc. Abner C. Culbertson  
Spartanburg, S.C.  
Pfc. Leo D. Culver  
Rochester, Minn.  
Pfc. Rocco J. D'Amico  
Dunmore, Pa.  
Pfc. John T. Diggs  
Lilesville, N.C.  
Pvt. William H. Dillon, Jr.  
Wilmot, Arkansas  
Pfc. James V. Farguhar  
Hollywood, Calif.  
Sgt. Arthur F. Friday  
Schenectady, N.Y.  
Pfc. Frederick J. Halka  
Port Chester, N.Y.  
Pfc. Murray Hornstein  
Bronx, N.Y.  
Pfc. Herbert S. Hulmes  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
Sgt. Ennis L. Jackson  
Falkner, Mississippi  
S/Sgt. Charlie F. Little  
Gainesville, Ga.  
Pvt. Charles S. Margossian  
Somerville, Mass.  
Pvt. Lawrence W. Marsh  
Goshen, N.Y.

Pvt. William J. Miller  
Atascadero, Maryland  
Sgt. Ralph K. Miller  
Niles, Ohio  
Tec. 3 William J. Muller  
Vineland, N.J.  
Pfc. Tyler G. Nelson  
Brigham City, Utah  
Pfc. Lloyd R. Neseth  
Kenyon, Minn.  
Pvt. Gene K. Neubold  
Halifax, Pa.  
Pfc. Hubert G. Parker  
Wingdale, N.Y.  
T/Sgt. Henry F. Rafalka  
Minerva, L.I., N.Y.  
Pvt. James Rogers  
Ware, Mass.  
Pvt. Robert J. Scherbrei  
Fairport, N.Y.  
Pfc. Edgar J. Smith  
Paramus, N.Y.  
Pvt. Guido S. Silvestri  
Ironwood, Michigan  
S/Sgt. Howard P. Smith  
Lockport, N.Y.  
Sgt. Paul K. Spurgeon  
Patoka, Ill.  
Pvt. Walter Waal  
Brooklyn, NY.  
Pvt. Howard L. Weaver, Jr.  
Akron, Ohio  
Pvt. Charles M. Zastreski  
Chicago, Ill.



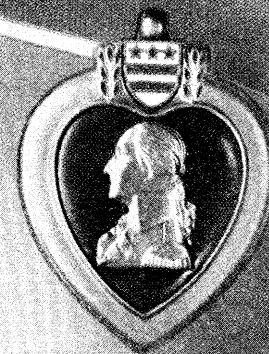
# Purple Heart Medal

*These men sustained wounds due to enemy action*

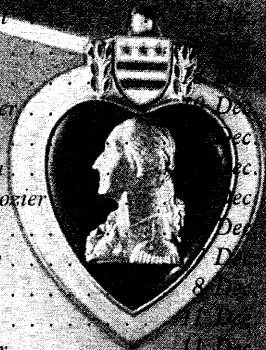
AWARDED

Pvt. Irving M. Abramson . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
1st Sgt. Jack P. Albaugh . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Freeman D. Atkinson . . . . . 12 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Milo R. Bacon . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Glendon O. Bengson . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Ronald S. Birch . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Sgt. Roy E. Bloomer . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Robert J. Borgie . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pvt. John R. Bradberry . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
Sgt. Philip D. Brooks . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
S/Sgt. Isaac J. Brown, Jr. . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
Pvt. John W. Brown . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Dennis E. Brummond . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Zvonimir G. Budrovich . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pvt. William O. Burnham, Jr. . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Jefferson M. Chairs, Jr. . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
T/4 David Chartock . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
S/Sgt. Arthur C. Clifton . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Daniel D. Costello . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Sgt. Gordon W. Coyle . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pvt. William J. Crowley . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
T/4 Marshall G. Dahlen . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
2nd Lt. Bryan G. Davis . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Mario DeCandia . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
S/Sgt. John DeLeeuw . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Henry R. DeLeo . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Julius J. Ei . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Ernest H. Elliehausen . . . . . 12 Dec. 44  
S/Sgt. Russell Ertsgaard . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Robert T. Finlay . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
Pfc. George S. Fiske . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
Pfc. William R. Fyfe . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
T/Sgt. Stanley J. Gontowski . . . . . 7 Dec. 44

Sgt. Roger D. Goos . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
2nd Lt. James H. Gore . . . . . 13 Dec. 44  
T/Sgt. William J. Gostkowski . . . . . 15 Dec. 44  
2nd Lt. Thomas W. Grant . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Allen O. Gray . . . . . 10 Dec. 44  
S/Sgt. James P. Grimes . . . . . 8 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Joseph J. Guillen . . . . . 9 Dec. 44  
Pvt. Nelson D. Gunter . . . . . 11 Dec. 44  
Sgt. Stanislaw C. Haduca . . . . . 7 Dec. 44  
Pfc. Robert V. Hanson . . . . . 10 Dec. 44



Pvt. Edgar R. Harper, Jr.	8 Dec. 44	Pfc. Loren N. South	8 Dec. 44
2nd Lt. James P. Harrison	11 Dec. 44	Pvt. Lloyd L. Netherland	8 Dec. 44
Pvt. Wallace S. Hersh	14 Dec. 44	Pfc. Robert G. Newman	13 Dec. 44
T/4 George A. Hommerding	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. David L. Nutter	13 Dec. 44
Pvt. Richard J. Huling	11 Dec. 44	Pvt. John H. Padden, Jr.	11 Dec. 44
Pfc. . . . .	9 Dec. 44	Pvt. James G. Pierce	8 Dec. 44
Pvt. . . . .	9 Dec. 44	Pvt. James E. Pilgrim	10 Dec. 44
Pfc. . . . .	11 Dec. 44	Pfc. Louis Poy, Jr.	11 Dec. 44
Pfc. . . . .	13 Dec. 44	Pfc. Harvey S. Raines	8 Dec. 44
2nd Lt. Elbert W. Johnson	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Martin Robinson	9 Dec. 44
Pfc. Otho S. Jones	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. John J. Rogers	8 Dec. 44
Pvt. Paul A. Kerr	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Robert L. Rouse	8 Dec. 44
S/Sgt. Jim W. Key	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Ervin C. Rude	7 Dec. 44
Pfc. Francis J. Kinzie, Jr.	9 Dec. 44	Sgt. Leonard Schindler	11 Dec. 44
Pfc. Paul G. Kline	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. Leon W. R. Schultz	14 Dec. 44
Pfc. Terry A. Klingel	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. Thomas I. Sellers	9 Dec. 44
Pvt. Charles W. Koeppen	15 Dec. 44	Pvt. John O. Seratt	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. William Komar	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Gregory Shenloogian	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. Dennis E. Koval	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. Robert E. Shipp	9 Dec. 44
Pvt. Robert A. Lacroix	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. Charles L. Shoff	7 Dec. 44
S/Sgt. Leland R. Landers	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Eugene B. Simms	8 Dec. 44
S/Sgt. Anthony J. LaPorte	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Roy W. Siquefield	10 Dec. 44
Pvt. Francis L. Lawler	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. Bona A. Sizemore	7 Dec. 44
Pfc. Harold R. Lehman	9 Dec. 44	Pvt. William A. Skinner, Jr.	11 Dec. 44
Pfc. Paul S. Lichtenstadter	13 Dec. 44	Pvt. . . . .	12 Dec. 44
Pvt. Nicholas Licina	8 Dec. 44	Pvt. . . . .	13 Dec. 44
Pvt. Leavitt W. Little	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. . . . .	13 Dec. 44
Pvt. Peter A. Lorrens	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. . . . .	7 Dec. 44
S/Sgt. John J. Lubrano	9 Dec. 44	Pvt. . . . .	8 Dec. 44
T/5 George D. Maharan	13 Dec. 44	Sgt. Thomas F. . . . .	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. Isador Malenski	11 Dec. 44	1st Lt. Merlin R. Sweet	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. Donald W. Martin	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. Landis M. Temple	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. George M. Martin	8 Dec. 44	Pvt. Adam Tetla	7 Dec. 44
Pfc. James E. Maxson	13 Dec. 44	2nd Lt. Walter Thatcher	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. Fred C. McCurry	7 Dec. 44	Sgt. Julius Theodore	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. Daniel J. McDonald	7 Dec. 44	Pfc. James K. Thomson	7 Dec. 44
S/Sgt. John J. McNeil	8 Dec. 44	T/4 William R. Vanhookier	7 Dec. 44
Sgt. Albert F. Melick	7 Dec. 44	Pvt. James F. Walsh	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. John D. Meyers	8 Dec. 44	Pvt. Kenneth H. White	7 Dec. 44
Pvt. William H. Montgomery	8 Dec. 44	Pvt. John C. Wilson	8 Dec. 44
Pvt. Edward Moody	8 Dec. 44	T/5 John S. Wires	11 Dec. 44
Pvt. James J. Moran	9 Dec. 44	Pvt. James E. Wishmier	11 Dec. 44
1st Lt. John T. Mullins	9 Dec. 44	Pfc. Carl L. Woodrum	9 Dec. 44
Pfc. William A. Murdoch	9 Dec. 44	Pfc. John C. Wright, Jr.	10 Dec. 44
Pvt. Henry E. Myers	9 Dec. 44	Sgt. Carden A. Young	8 Dec. 44
Pfc. Victor H. Nash	8 Dec. 44	Pfc. Cecil M. Young	8 Dec. 44
Pfc. John S. Neel, Jr.	9 Dec. 44	Pvt. James P. Zumwalt, Jr.	7 Dec. 44







*"No, we didn't take Bitche..."*

*Proton*

## PHASE VI—BITCHE



### INTRODUCTION

*"And now there came both mist and snow  
And it grew wondrous cold — —"*

Our Regiment did not have the glory that comes with liberating a city but this was our fight and the end could not have been achieved without the contribution we made. In this campaign there are many stinking scenes we don't like to remember or talk about but someone has to know about it. No, we didn't take the town but the evidence of our heroism is documentary. Dead soldiers and dead sheep at a cross-road used as a zeroing in point; mine fields, deceitfully covered by snow, killing four and five at a time; forest fires from phosphorous shells that burned your eyes out curling hatefully about at dusk, and the ground, frozen solid, so you couldn't dig and snow three and four feet high that covered other holes, and 88's that landed directly in a fox-hole and the GRO comes back with a basket and says "I think I've got nearly all of one of them." No, we didn't take Bitche.

And the expression "No Man's Land" belongs to this war too. All the towns surrounding Bitche had been abandoned and the desolation was everywhere. Ghost towns with ghosts. Absolute stillness holding God knew what, emptiness stretching far as the eye could see, limitless, boundless, unearthly. Hush! There wasn't a pot without a hole in it, a piece of metal without rust, a building with four walls. It was all like a Hollywood backdrop, fixed, silent, as silent as a painted ship upon a painted ocean, and it was terrifying.

We cannot guess at what books written twenty years from today will say about this battle and maybe they won't mention the outfit at all but they won't have to. If they write about Bitche they will use the word "blood" and that was the Regiment, or the word "misery" and that was us too, or the word "pain" and that too was the 397th. We didn't take Bitche, we didn't get

the by-line, but it was our agony, our cold, our horror, our physical and moral triumph over tremendous odds.

No, we didn't take Bitche but the high ground on the north and west; not Bitche, but the strongly defended outlying positions and the entrenched gun and personnel positions that threatened the advance of the main offensive. No, we didn't take Bitche, but lift the mist, brush away the snow, and count the dead!