

NARRATIVE HISTORY
OF THE
399TH INFANTRY

3100-1NF(399)0.3

Original

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26841
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FRANCE
and GERMANY
1-31 MARCH
1945

HEADQUARTERS, 399TH INFANTRY
A.P.O.447 U.S.Army

5 April 1945.

SUBJECT: Regimental History.

TO : TAG, War Dept., Washington, D.C.
(Through Channels)

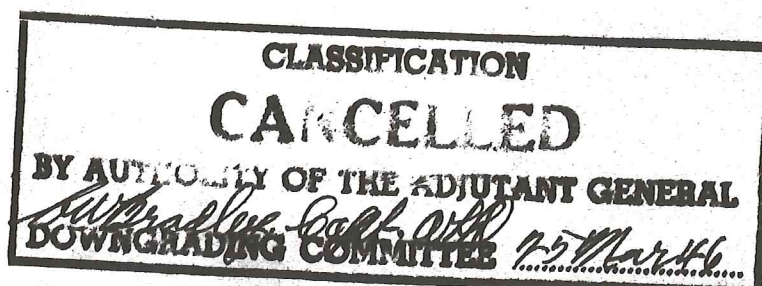
Transmitted herewith Regimental History of 399th
Infantry Regiment for month of March, 1945.

Edward J. Maloney
EDWARD J. MALONEY
Colonel, 399th Infantry
Commanding.

7 Incls:

- 1- Regtl History (in quin).
- 2- Copy S-1 Strength Reports.
- 3- Copy S-2 Periodic Reports and Overlays.
- 4- Copy S-2 Journal
- 5- Copy S-3 Periodic Reports, Overlays, Operations Instructions.
- 6- Copy S-3 Journal
- 7- Copy S-4 Periodic Reports.

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NARRATIVE HISTORY
of the
399th INFANTRY REGIMENT
(Annex Included)

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MAP REFERENCES

Bitche
Eastern France
1:50,000
First Premiere Edition
XXXVII-13
Reproduced at the Ordnance Survey, 1944
From French 1:50,000 Map dated 1939.

Walschbronn
Eastern France
1:50,000
First Premiere Edition
XXXVII-12
Reproduced at the Ordnance Survey, 1944
From French 1:50,000 map dated 1933.

Kaiserlautern
Central Europe
1:100,000
First Edition AMS 1
U-2
Revised, drawn and photolithographed at O.S., 1944
From German Map, 1:100,000, Sheet 130, 1936.

Mannheim
Germany
1:100,000
First Edition AMS 1
U-3
Compiled by U.S. Army Map Serv, 1943 from German G.S. Maps

March 1st found us probing enemy positions vigorously with three night patrols dispatched by our 1st Bn, two by our 3rd Bn and a 21-man raiding party from our 2nd Bn making the situation lively for the Jerries.

The three 1st Bn patrols investigated enemy positions on le Steinkopf and le Spitzberg and Signalberg hills. Patrol No. 1, consisting of 13 men, left our lines at 0200 hours. The men moved with all the stealth they were capable of across the open ground which had made the forward slope of the hill a "no man's land". The Jerries were noisy that night and the sounds of voices from the entrenched enemy drifted clearly down the draw leading to the crest of the hill. The tensed men waited, listening, and then began to move in. They had wormed their way about 100 yards into the draw, however, when they were held up by wire at grid Q74004895. Then, from the eastern side of the draw four rifle shots rang out. With the enemy alerted, further progress was impossible and the patrol returned to our lines.

Patrol No. 2, comprising six men, moved out at 1930 hours. Working their way cautiously over the open ground on the forward slope of Signalberg, the patrol reached the edge of the woods where they discovered a snipers' nest. The nest proved deserted and after marking the position carefully the six men continued eastward into the thick woods. Feeling their way, advancing mainly by instinct in the darkness, the patrol next discovered a communications trench and emplacement which likewise proved untenanted. Leaving the remainder of the patrol at this spot, the patrol leader pushed deeper into the woods to grid Q753482 where he established a listening post before rejoining his men.

Patrols investigating le Steinkopf had, in addition to the enemy, the hazards of traversing a heavily mined, wired and thickly wooded area, and the third patrol dispatched by our 1st Bn knew well the dangers they faced. Made up of 11 men, the patrol left our lines at 2000 hours with the mission of investigating le Steinkopf as far as the Lemberg-Bitche road.

Feeling for the deadly mines with every step, they managed to reach the Lemberg-Bitche road without mishap, but here their luck deserted them. Out of the blackness loomed the shapeless bulk of a road block reinforced with concertina wire running north and south on both sides of the obstruction. The carpet of deadwood made a silent approach impossible. A twig snapped and the enemy, alerted, opened fire with small arms, grenades and a machine gun emplaced at grid Q752474. Outnumbered and outgunned by an entrenched enemy, the patrol withdrew into the shelter of the night.

But the patrol leader still did not feel his mission had been accomplished. After returning to our lines, he again went out with three volunteers. Moving over the same route, the four men returned to the vicinity of the road-block and established a listening post in a vacant enemy dugout. No activity was heard, however, and at 0645 hours they worked their way back to our lines.

The 21-man raiding party from our 2nd Bn attacked the three most westerly houses in Reysersviller. The first house in the bomb-torn town proved deserted and they continued to the next house picking their path carefully through the rubble and keeping in the shadows as much as possible. Still the enemy gave no sign of having been alerted. At the third house, the raiders let loose, hurling hand grenades through the windows and firing into every room.

By this time the Jerries were either awake or dead and above the din of exploding grenades a voice shouted in English, "Hold your fire! We're coming down!" The raiders paused. But the cry was only a ruse. Instead of Germans, what came down was concentrated fire from small arms, machine pistols and concussion grenades while a machine gun began to chatter from slightly west of the patrol.

The raiders fought back savagely, using every weapon at their disposal and did not retire until the house had been thoroughly raked by fire. Then they withdrew slowly, hurling hand grenades into the first and second houses as they fell

back upon the protection of our lines.

Both 3rd Bn patrols came under enemy fire. The first of these two patrols, consisting of five men, moved out at 0100 hours. At the head of a draw north of Legeret Farm, the patrol received enemy machine gun fire from an emplacement to the northeast at grid Q74985194. From not more than 25 yards to their front, the Jerries then opened up with small arms and hand grenades. Badly outnumbered, our men attempted to fight back. But with two of their comrades wounded, were forced to withdraw. It is with the blood of such brave men that enemy positions are charted.

The second 3rd Bn patrol, this time of six men, investigated the area south of Freudenberg Farm. Picking their way over the exceptionally rough terrain, they had reached the northern edge of le Kirscheidt ridge when they heard sounds of machine gun and small arms fire from the woods on the east side of the draw. The patrol intrepidly moved forward to investigate, reaching to within 100 yards of an enemy pillbox from the interior of which came sounds of enemy activity. To their right, a mortar caughed from grid Q755507. And then, a Jerry guard discovered the patrol and hand grenades began to shower shrapnel uncomfortably close to the crouching men. Luckily, the enemy couldn't see too well in the darkness and the patrol was able to withdraw without casualties and with valuable information.

From two enemy deserters, captured by our 3rd Bn, it was learned that the German 6th SS Mountain Division had been relieved by the BG Lotye of the 245th Infantry Division.

Improvement of front line and reserve positions continued on March 2nd with our 2nd Bn laying an additional 200 yards of wire and conducting training in firing and road marches while in reserve.

Our 3rd Bn sent out two night patrols with the mission of further investigating enemy positions south of Freudenberg Farm.

The first patrol, of four men, moved out at 1910 hours and had reached grid Q74825060 before the enemy, probably suspicious, fired two flares. Still unobserved, however, the patrol charted several unoccupied machine gun positions in the vicinity and moved on to grid Q74945062 where they heard mortar fire on their right (east) flank. Upon reaching grid Q75005066, the patrol was finally discovered and the enemy began to hurl hand grenades at our men from entrenched positions.

The second patrol, this time of five men, left our lines at 1920 hours and ^ewent to grid Q74704972 where they established a listening post. Slightly to the northeast of their post, an enemy caught. Then came the sounds of two Krauts leaving their position and two others approaching for what was probably a change of guard. The patrol remained at their hiding place until 0115 hours, when they returned to our positions.

We continued to harass the enemy with small arms sniper fire along our entire regimental front with emphasis on enemy positions in Rezersviller.

Two small Kraut patrols were driven off with undetermined results in killed and wounded.

We again engaged in active patrolling during the night of March 3rd. Two patrols were dispatched by our 2nd Bn and two by our 3rd Bn.

In our 2nd Bn, the first patrol of five men left our lines at 2200 hours and moved to grid Q73854880 where they discovered a cleverly concealed shu-mine field. Continuing eastward to the head of the draw on le Steinkopf, the patrol ran into heavy machine gun fire as well as fire from small arms, grenades and mortars from positions about 50 yards further east.

Another patrol of eight men left our 2nd Bn at 2300 hours. Dividing into two groups, one group went to grid Q75004735 and the other to grid Q750473. Strongly fortified Jerry positions held by 10-20 Krauts were discovered in the woods of le Spitzberg bordering the Lember-Bitche road at grid Q75154730. Previous suspicions of a machine gun position at this point were also confirmed before the patrol returned to our lines.

The two patrols from our 3rd Bn left our positions at 1910 hours. One patrol, consisting of four men, went to le Kirscheidt. They had reached the thick woods at the head of the draw when their attention was attracted by a whistle some fifty yards to their left. Moving forward to investigate, they heard several Krauts walking about and talking, their conversation punctured by the barking of a dog. Continuing northeastward, they were discovered at grid Q750507 and retired under small arms fire.

The second 3rd Bn patrol, made up of five men, also scouted leKirscheidt where they encountered concertina wire 75 yards below the crest of the hill. They cut through the wire and moved up to the crest where they found one Kraut in a foxhole. The Jerry died quickly and quietly. Three other foxholes nearby were deserted and painstaking investigation failed to reveal any other emplacements in the area.

Our "K" Co relieved our "I" Co on position under cover of darkness, completing the relief at 2100 hours.

The enemy remained relatively quiet although sporadic sniper fire was received along our entire regimental front.

One enemy ME-109 and five enemy flown P-47s strafed our positions at Legeret Farm.

March 4th was uneventful, with small patrol action and exchanges of sniper fire providing most of the action.

Two patrols were dispatched by our 1st Bn. The first patrol of three men had reached the northwestern slope of le Steinkopf at grid Q73944930 when they observed a five-man enemy patrol walking toward them. The patrol returned and alerted our front lines.

The second 1st Bn patrol made up of four men, attempted to cross the Lemberg-Bitche road at grid Q75004715. Leaving our lines at 2335 hours, they passed through the heavily mined areas of Spitzberg and then cut across the thickly wooded southern slope of the hill to the highway. In attempting to cross the road, however, they were seen by the enemy who opened fire with small arms forcing our patrol to withdraw.

At 1900, a small reconnaissance patrol from our 3rd Bn attempt-

ted to cross the Meyersviller-Bitche road and reconnoiter the deep draw on le Kirscheidt. The mission was successfully accomplished although the terrain was exceptionally difficult. No sign of the enemy was reported in the area between grids Q745493 and Q747496.

Our 2nd Bn, in reserve, continued its training program. Enemy artillery action continued light.

Our aggressive night patrolling was maintained during early morning hours of March 5th. Five reconnaissance patrols, two night combat patrols and one listening post was dispatched by our 1st and 3rd Bns.

The listening post from our 1st Bn, set up by four men at grid Q74204923 on the forward slope of le Steinkopf was held for half an hour. The patrol reported light flashes at 30 second intervals approximately 100 yards from their position.

A three-man reconnaissance patrol reached the Lemberg-Bitche road where they paused at the edge of the woods at grid Q75254730. Hearing the sound of a Jerry blowing his nose, the patrol moved forward, but a machine gun began to chatter from a short distance to their left at grid Q75384730, compelling the patrol to give up the search.

A three man patrol from our 3rd Bn reconnoitered the le Kirscheidt draw from grid Q750504 north to Q751505, but found no sign of the enemy.

At 0225 a second patrol was sent to the same area by our 3rd Bn. The patrol set up a listening post at grid Q750501 and remained in that location for one hour but heard nor saw any signs of the enemy.

Another 3-man patrol from our 3rd Bn scoured the woods at grid Q746507, west of le Kirscheidt, but also found no sign of the enemy.

Three scouts from our I & R Platoon slipped through the woods to the northwestern slope of le Spitzberg where two of them established a listening post at grid Q751479 while the leader advanced 40 yards to the front until fired upon at

grid Q75154790 by small arms. The patrol also reported sounds of chopping at grid Q754429 and harassing machine gun fire from the vicinity of grid Q749482.

Our 2nd Bn relieved our 1st Bn on position during darkness hours of March 5th-6th. Our 1st Bn assembling in Lambach-Siersthal.

On March 6th, a medium tank from Co "A", 781st Tk Bn, attached to our combat team, fired 50 rounds against enemy positions on Steinkopf and Spitzberg with undetermined results.

Psychological warfare was initiated by our Regiment for the first time since we entered combat with a loud-speaker broadcast to the enemy urging them to desert. Three broadcasts were made by our 3rd Bn; two from a forward position on le Kirscheidt and a third from a draw at grid Q7548. One enemy from the 2nd Co, 937th VGR, deserted.

We continued our harassing fire throughout the period with sporadic returns from the enemy.

Once again, on March 7th, we resorted to psychological warfare broadcasts, this time in our 2nd Bn sector. Two Krauts deserted as a result. The PWs were from the 6th Co, 225th VGR Regt, 16th VGD. Two more Jerries were taken when a 3-man reconnaissance patrol investigated a spot on the forward slope of le Steinkopf where a light had been seen during the broadcast. The two Germans were found asleep in a foxhole. They contended they had been awaiting an opportunity to desert.

Seven patrols were sent out by our 3rd Bn on March 8th.

A four-man daylight patrol located enemy dugouts at le Kirscheidt, but the positions were vacant.

A second patrol which left our lines at 2200 and did not return until 0640, reached the eastern slope of le Kirscheidt where they discovered an unoccupied enemy dugout and a single strand of barbed wire running south-southwest. The patrol continued over the wooded terrain for an additional 300 yards, but found no further evidence of the Jerries.

A ten-man patrol found two empty dugouts and several trip wires at le Kirscheidt, but no contact was made with the enemy.

Two occupied dugouts were discovered by a four-man patrol at grids Q74905085 and Q74955070 on the northwestern nose of le Kirscheidt.

Between 1000 and 1200 hours, a six-man patrol combed the le Kirscheidt draw from grid Q750499 to Q748490, but made no contact with the enemy.

Another six-man combat patrol advanced to Q749498 during daylight without making contact.

Continuing our aggressive patrolling on March 9th, one night patrol in platoon strength was dispatched from our "C" Co to raid enemy positions on the northeast slope of Signalberg. The raiders searched a wide area but could make no contact with the enemy. The patrol covered the entire forward wooded slope of the hill before satisfying themselves that the enemy had abandoned their positions in this area. Two flares were fired by the Jerries while the patrol was in progress and two rounds of 50mm mortar landed near them.

Our day and night patrols during the past few days having discovered only negligible signs of the enemy, plans were laid for raids in strength on the important high ground to the east of our lines. Preparations were also made for occupation of the Jerry positions in the event they proved weakly defended.

To force the enemy situation, three combat patrols from our 2nd Bn and one raid in platoon strength from our "L" Co, were sent against the enemy lines while "C" Co was moved into a location which would enable swift occupation of forward enemy positions if the raiders met with success.

One patrol from "E" Co, consisting of six men, left our lines at 1355 hours. They had advanced only 150 yards, however, when they were fired upon by a sniper hidden in a tree. The patrol returned the fire and immediately received a hail of machine gun, 80mm mortar and small arms fire which forced them to withdraw. Valuable information on enemy positions was gained, however, Machine gun emplacements were discovered at grids Q75204726, Q75204735, Q75154740 and Q75104750. A large crater was also

seen in the Lemberg-Bitche road.

The second patrol, this time of ten men, left our 2nd Bn positions at 1405 hours. Crossing open ground to the eastern slope of Signalberg, the patrol received small arms and grenade fire from the enemy entrenched in holes at the edge of the woods. During the fire-fight which ensued, two enemy were killed at no loss to ourselves. Overwhelming enemy fire eventually forced this patrol back also.

The third 2nd Bn patrol, made up of 12 men from "G" Co, stumbled upon an ingeniously concealed shu-mine field at the head of a draw on le Steinkopf. Three casualties were suffered by the patrol before action could be taken to avoid the barrier.

The raiding platoon from "L" Co jumped off at 1345 hours and moved to high ground on le Kirscheidt where they were engaged in a brisk fire fight with the enemy entrenched in dugouts at the northeastern tip of le Kirscheidt. Enemy machine guns opened up from grids Q750499, Q74954980 and Q747495. After inflicting one casualty upon the enemy, our patrol withdrew under fire from automatic weapons and small arms.

Our 1st Bn remained in regimental reserve, improving positions and conducting conditioning marches and field firing exercises.

Patrols from Cos "I" and "K" found only unoccupied dugouts when dispatched toward Freudenberg Farm during daylight. Small arms and machine gun fire were heard from a pillbox south of Freudenberg, however, and five Krauts were observed disappearing into the woods on the eastern side of Kirscheidt Ridge.

At 2025 hours, our Co "I" relieved Co "L" on position.

Enemy mortar and small arms fire increased considerably on March 10th, with particularly heavy concentrations on our "E" Co positions. In all, 118 rounds of 50mm and 80mm were received during the period.

The Regiment continued improvement of forward and reserve positions, laying 75 more yards of concertina wire and strengthening previous tactical installations.

A small enemy patrol which approached our "I" Co positions at 2010 hours, was driven off with small arms fire.

One enemy deserter was captured.

Our 1st Bn made preparations for relief of our 3rd Bn on position during darkness hours of March 10th-11th.

Four more prisoners, three privates and an NCO from the 3rd Co, 937th VGR, deserted to our 2nd Bn at 0630 hours of March 11th as a result of another psychological broadcast. The four deserters raised our total bag of PWs through use of this medium to ten in four broadcasts and our regimental score to 787 for 131 days of combat.

At 2130 hours of March 10th, our 1st Bn relieved our 3rd Bn on position; Cos "A", "B" and "C" replacing Cos "K", "L" and "I" respectively.

We continued to harass enemy positions with cannon, mortar and artillery fire.

A four-man night reconnaissance patrol from our I & R Platoon established an OP at the edge of the woods on the northern slope of le Spitzberg. Three Krauts were observed moving about near a dugout and sounds of chopping and voices were heard from the woods to the mouth and east.

An ambush patrol of ten men from our 2nd Bn left our lines at 1850 hours. Establishing a listening post along a trail running across the southwest slope of Steinkopf, the patrol laid in wait for some unwary passing Krauts, but after almost two hours, returned to our lines without making contact.

Activity on March 12th was limited to further improvement of our positions, installation of wire and extension of a forward trench in the vicinity of Signalberg Tower.

Two night reconnaissance patrols from our Co "C" investigated enemy positions on high ground at le Kirscheidt. One three-man patrol worked their way over the rough, wooded eastern side of the ridge to grid Q749499 from where they reported sounds of the Jerries moving about. The second three-man patrol located three old dugouts and one new foxhole at the edge of the woods leading into the draw north of the Regersviller road.

A ten-man ambush patrol dispatched to Steinkopf by our 2nd Bn, reconnoitered the open ground on the southern slope, but was unable to make contact with the enemy.

Kraut artillery was again active with an estimated 33 rounds of 50mm, 75 rounds of 80mm, 3 rounds of 88mm and 8 rounds of 120mm fire falling in our sector during the period.

Development of our defensive positions to include laying of an additional 400 yards of concertina wire and improvement of an OP trench and supply route to join a military road with the Meyersviller road at grid Q73754980 and Q7389-4980, was carried out on March 13th.

We continued to harass the Jerries entrenched on Freudenberg Farm and Fort Schiesseck with French 75mm guns found in captured Fort Simserhoff.

Two three-man night patrols and one three-man day patrol were dispatched by our 1st Bn. Both night patrols left our 1st Bn sector at 0100 hours. One patrol established a listening post on the eastern slope of le Kirscheidt but heard no sounds of enemy activity. The other patrol saw cigarettes glowing at three points along the southern edge of the woods.

The three-man daylight patrol was assigned the difficult and dangerous mission of investigating enemy positions in the vicinity of Freudenberg Farm. Moving stealthily through the concealing woods, down one draw and up another, the patrol managed to reach the extreme northern edge of Kirscheidt where, at the edge of the woods they were observed by the Jerries entrenched on Freudenberg Farm. Heavy mortar fire forced the three men to withdraw.

Enemy artillery and mortar fire was very active with an estimated 700 rounds of 75mm, 80mm and 105mm falling along our Regimental front during the period.

One PW deserted to our 2nd Bn after another psychological broadcast.

At 0500 hours of March 14th, our 2nd Bn was relieved on position by the 66th Infantry, 71st Division. Our 2nd Bn thereupon joined our 3rd Bn in Regimental reserve.

The supply route joining the military road at grid Q737-497 was completed.

Two additional Krauts from the 4th Co, 225th Inf, deserted to our "F" Co at 0600 hours.

Enemy artillery action was much lighter than during the previous period.

At 0500 hours of March 15th, the long awaited attack on the fortress city of Bitche began.

Our 3rd Bn was the first to move forward. Their line of attack lay through the Frohmul Woods north of the Reyersviller-Bitche road, northeast to clear the formidable Kirscheidt Ridge and then a rapid swing southeast, by-passing strong enemy positions and minefields on Steinkopf and Signalberg and occupying Shimberg and Schoenberg to form the northern prong of a pincers designed to meet our 2nd Bn driving around Spitzberg and Signalberg from the south.

Advancing through the early morning darkness with "K" Co on the left, "L" Co on the right and "I" Co following, the 3rd Bn, supported by a platoon of tanks from Co "A", 781st Tk Bn, passed through our "B" Co positions and began working through the series of graduating ridges and steep, forested gullies and ravines which reached a peak on the all-important Kirscheidt.

By 0613 hours the sweating infantrymen climbed the last ravine with the morning mist and fanned out on Kirscheidt Ridge. The surprised Krauts offered only weak resistance. With our 3rd Bn on high ground, strong points at which we had been battering vainly for weeks fell with ease. Four minutes later, our troops stood on Shimberg Ridge and at 0705 hours, "K" Co, spearheading the attack, had occupied Schoenberg. The 3rd Bn now turned their attention to mopping up the by-passed Jerries on Steinkopf and Signalberg as well as the town of Reyersviller

and Reyersviller Ridge.

Our 2nd Bn, meanwhile, was not encountering such good going. Pushing off at 0605 hours from positions fronting on Spitzberg, with "F" Co attacking while "G" and "E" Cos remained poised in positions southwest of the ridge, our 2nd Bn threw a looping right hook at the enemy in an effort to meet the 3rd Bn driving southeast to Schoenberg Ridge. If successful, this maneuver would seal off the Jerries in their ridge defenses and open the way for our attack upon Bitche from the southwest.

In the path of our 2nd Bn, however, waited an enemy who had had almost three months to entrench in naturally defensive terrain. The open ground on the forward slopes of Spitzberg made a surprise attack impossible while the thick woods on the ridge afforded the Krauts excellent cover and concealment. Previous patrols had discovered extensive minefields, wire and machine gun positions guarding the western and southwestern approaches to Spitzberg. How many mines the enemy had planted was not known until a captured Jerry engineer's map later disclosed 3839 shu-mines, S-mines and AT-mines on Spitzberg alone. One triple row minefield, laid in depth along the rear slope of the ridge, directly in the 2nd Bn's path, contained 2912 shu-mines in addition to trip-wires, concertina wire and other hazards.

Attempting to skirt the known mined areas covering the western approaches to the ridge, our "F" Co, supported by a section of medium tanks, passed through defensive positions of Co "C", 66th Infantry, and hit Spitzberg from the southwest where the woods permitted some concealment.

With the tanks leading to knock out the shu-mines and the "F" Co men riding the tanks to protect them from enemy fire, our 2nd Bn moved northeast toward the Lemberg-Bitche road and a rendezvous with our 3rd Bn which would close the trap on the enemy.

To exploit the surprise element, no artillery preparation

preceded the attack. But the attackers had no sooner reached the LD when the leading tank slipped off the side of a hill, throwing a tread. A second tank was immobilized by an AT-mine a few moments later. The remaining tank of the section met the same fate.

A reserve tank was rushed up to aid the hard-pressed "F" Co who had been pinned down under mortar, machine-gun and small arms fire. Shu-mines planted in depth, began to take their toll. But with the tank in support, "F" Co moved doggedly ahead. Following closely behind the tank, "F" Co's 3rd Platoon managed to clear a narrow path through the wire and triple-row minefield. Pushing through this breach, "F" Co finally managed to slug ahead 1200 yards to the north nose of Spitzberg ridge after six and one-half hours of effort.

Together with "E" Co, committed at 0900 hours to aid the sorely-tried "F" Co, the 2nd Bn continued the bitter advance. But while progress was slow, our steady pressure in addition to our 3rd Bn's successful advance which flanked the enemy from the north, was beginning to tell on the Jerries.

With Spitzberg virtually encircled, "G" Co, supported by two Sherman tanks crossed the LD at 1530 hours with the mission of clearing Signalberg Ridge. Moving to the left of "E" Co, "G" Co made steady progress. Attacked from the rear and flanked on the north, the Jerry defenders were forced to surrender or die.

Enemy resistance began to slacken. To the north, our 3rd Bn was completing the mop-up of by-passed enemy units on Kirscheidt, Reyersviller, Schimberg and Schoenberg. The 3rd Bn had taken up positions on Schoenberg with "L" Co facing south, "K" Co north, and "I" Co northeast on the left flank of "K" Co, by midday. At 1300 hours, Maj. Angello Punaro, battalion executive officer, rode with a platoon of tanks through by-passed Reyersviller without resistance, completing the operation and placing the 3rd Bn squarely on their objective.

In the interim, our 1st Bn, following the advancing 3rd Bn had cleared a road block from the western end of Reyersviller and dispatched a patrol from "G" Co in combat platoon strength

under 1st Lt Robert E. Lynch to mop up the Krauts remaining on Steinkopf. Taking the gamble of passing through a shu-mine field to avoid known enemy positions on the southwest slope of the hill, Lt. Lynch swooped down on the surprised Krauts from the northeast. Taking two prisoners in the first few minutes of their attack, the "C" Co patrol forced the PWs to lead them through the remainder of the minefields and up to the other Jerry foxholes. Eighteen prisoners surrendered without a fight, leaving our Regiment in control of the ridge.

At 1600 hours, Spitzberg Ridge was fully cleared by our 2nd Bn, following which they were relieved on attack objective by the 2nd Bn, 66th Infantry, and went into reserve in Meyersviller.

Our 1st Bn moved to Schimberg Ridge, leaving one platoon from "B" Co at grid Q745494.

A patrol from Co "C" was sent to Bitche at 1345 hours, but made no contact. Another patrol from "A" Co, was sent to Bitche at 1555 hours. This patrol discovered five enemy machine guns guarding the south and southwestern approaches to the city.

Seventy-five prisoners from the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 6th Cos, 225 VGR, were captured during the day's operations. Our PW bag now totaled 865 for 135 days of combat.

Our losses for the period were 47 wounded and six killed; mostly from our 2nd Bn.

March 16th dawned clear and warm. On this, the second day of our drive for Bitche, our 1st Bn took the lead in the offensive while our 2nd Bn remained in reserve in Meyersviller.

Our 3rd Bn maintained previously gained positions to protect the right flank of the Division.

With "C" Co in the van, "A" Co on the left of "C" Co, and "B" Co bringing up the rear, our 1st Bn crossed the LD at 0600 hours and began moving northeastward toward the Maginot hinge of Bitche.

One hour and four minutes after crossing the LD, "C" Co had secured the College de Bitche, scene of a score of bitter patrol actions, and was streaking for the fortress city without opposition.

By 0730 hours the city had been entered. to 1st Lt. Elwood H. Shemwell and six "C" Co volunteers goes the honor of being the first to enter the towering Citadel. Guided through a minefield by a civilian, Lt. Shemwell and his men climbed a narrow path leading to the Citadel from the south only to find it deserted by the enemy. After being stymied before Bitche for 93 days, the fortress, flanked by the 398th Infantry on the north and by our combat team on the south, fell with the enemy firing only five small arms rounds in its defense.

But our 1st Bn did not pause to rest on its laurels. Leaving "C" Co in Bitche, "A" and "B" Cos, supported by a platoon of tanks, slashed eastward toward Camp de Bitche with "A" Co moving along the Camp de Bitche-Bitche Road and "B" Co advancing down the parallel Bitche-Strasburg Road to the south.

Resistance was negligible until 1300 hours when, at grid Q801508, on the western outskirts of Camp de Bitche, "A" Co encountered a road block and was engaged in a small arms fire fight.

"B" Co, to the south, also began meeting with resistance and was pinned down at the edge of a wood by fire from two enemy pillboxes at grid Q796496, some 2000 yards on the left of the railroad. At this point, "B" Cos two supporting tanks rumbled up to the pillboxes. Eight AP and five HE shells crashed against the concrete emplacements. And then, 2nd Lt. William A. Sullivan and S Sgt Arthur E. Weiss stormed the pillboxes with carbines. In the fire fight which ensued, two Krauts were shot in each of the pillboxes.

But the Jerries did not continue the fight. Flanked by the two tanks, and with the remainder of "B" Co moving in, the Krauts surrendered to 1st Lt. Harry G. Flanagan, "B" Co commander. Out of the two pillboxes walked the commander of the enemy 2nd Bn, 225th VGR, four officers of his staff, and 71 NCOs and men.

In the interim, "A" Co, under command of Capt Richard Young, had battled forward to the ^{western} outskirts of Camp de Bitche against stiffening enemy resistance. Extensive road blocks had slowed "A" Co's progress along the Bitche-Camp de Bitche road and only the coordination of elements of Co "C", 325th Engineer Bn with our Infantrymen had made our progress possible.

Having withdrawn to the western edge of the Camp, however, the Krauts decided to make a stand behind the protection of a road block. For the first time, the enemy called upon his armor and six Tiger tanks and self-propelled guns mounted on Mark VI chassis rumbled toward our "A" Co supported by a section of Sherman tanks.

Badly outgunned, Capt Young ordered the Shermans to lay back while the Infantrymen closed in on the Tiger tanks and SPs with bazookas. In the bitter fire-fight which followed 2nd Lt. Thomas E. Plante was killed by an 88mm shell exploding near him while he was attempting to fire a bazooka at one of the Tigers, and several of the "A" Co men were wounded.

After it seemed as if our men would be forced to fall back in the face of this superior firepower, a well aimed rocket found a vulnerable spot in a Tiger's armor and the Jerries decided they had had enough of our "A" Co. Followed by approximately 80 Kraut Infantrymen, the five remaining tanks and SPs turned tail and fled southeast along the railroad tracks, leaving us in occupation of the Camp.

Our 2nd Bn was relieved at 1730 hours by the 14th Infantry on high ground at Schimberg.

Our Regimental CP moved twice during the day; one CP being opened in Siersthal at 0730 hours, and a second in Bitche at 1910 hours.

Ninety-eight prisoners were talleyed, representing the Hq. Co, 1st, 2nd, 5th, 7th, 8th, 14th and 15th Cos, 225th VGR; the 2nd Co, 1316th TD Bn, and the 1316th Mortar Co. These prisoners, almost all of whom were captured by our 1st Bn, increased our Regiment's total to 961 for 136 days of combat.

Relentlessly pursuing the retreating enemy, CT-399 continued the attack on March 17th. Following relief on position at 2300 hours of March 16th by the 1st Bn, 14th Infantry, our 3rd Bn, with "L" Co on the right and "K" Co on the left, struck north at 0930 hours along the Bitche-Waldhausen Road. Capturing Hanviller and Bousseviller, the 3rd Bn turned east, occupying Liederscheidt and Schweix, the Bn objective and first town across the German border. The border was crossed at exactly 1431 hours in the vicinity of grid Q833583 with "K" Co the first unit of our combat team to enter Germany.

Our 1st Bn, relieved on position at Camp de Bitche by elements of the 398th Infantry, was shuttled northeast from Bitche to Haspelschiedt with "C" Co leading. Neudoerfel was taken at 1430 hours and Roppeviller, the 1st Bn objective, by 1610 hours against light opposition. Before pausing, however, "A" & "B" Cos advanced to high ground west of Hilst where they dug-in astride the border. "C" Co assembled in Roppeviller where the 1st Bn CP was located.

Our 2nd Bn, relieved in its assembly area in the vicinity of Bitche at 1530 hours, moved northeast by shuttle at 1715 hours to high ground north of Roppeviller. This objective was reached with negligible resistance from the enemy, at 2130 hours.

Thirty-four prisoners, mostly from stragglers of the 5th and 8th Cos, 225th VGR, were captured during the period to increase our total to 992 for 137 days of combat.

Our CP moved to Bousseviller, opening at 1800 hours.

The enemy continued his withdrawing action toward their Siegfried defenses throughout March 18th while CT-399 reorganized positions under cover of darkness.

Enemy movement and sounds of general activity in Hilst were reported by our 1st Bn patrols. At 1035 hours, however, a reconnaissance patrol dispatched to Hilst found the town deserted.

A few rounds of 88mm fire fell in the 1st Bn's sector but the Krauts showed no indications of an ability to counter-attack.

Our 2nd Bn left its assembly area for a new assembly area

south of Breidenbach at 1545 hours.

In our 3rd Bn sector, contact was established with the 397th Infantry on our left flank. The Krauts relinquished their hold on ridges in the vicinity of grid Q863581 and withdrew further eastward.

Two craters were blown in the road passing through the dragons teeth defenses at grid Q874612 as additional tank obstacles. Some machine gun and about 10-20 rounds of 88mm fire harassed our 3rd Bn during the period, but no other contact was made.

The Regiment awaited relief by elements of the 5th Infantry while making preparations for moving to a new assembly area.

Four PWs were captured.

Following relief of our combat team by the 5th Infantry during the night of March 18th, we closed into a new assembly area in the vicinity of Bousseviller, Hanviller and Breidenbach.

During early morning hours of March 19th, our 2nd Bn moved again, this time to defensive positions along a general line bounded by Dietrichingen and Riedelburg to block an enemy thrust from the northeast against the left flank of CT-397. Our 2nd Bn arrived on these positions at 0615 hours and dug-in with "G" Co at Dietrichingen, "F" Co at Riedelburg and "E" Co in reserve at Ahrenthal.

Orientation periods were conducted by the reserve battalions on the Bitche engagement and the general situation on the Western Front.

While the 1st and 3rd Bns remained in reserve on March 20th, devoting the period to orientation and instructions in storming fortified positions, our 2nd Bn relieved the 106th Rcn Sqdn on position. Relief was completed at 0157 hours with our 2nd Bn in position along a general line from Gross Steinhausen to Dietrichingen. Upon relief of the 106th Rcn Sqdn, our 2nd Bn was attached to the 397th Infantry.

At 2315 hours, our 2nd Bn was relieved on position by elements of the 66th Infantry and reverted to control of our Regiment, closing into an assembly area in Breidenbach at 0200

hours of March 21st.

Training continued in the attack upon fortified positions while we awaited further instructions.

On March 22nd, the pursuit of the enemy was resumed. The strategy called for a swift thrust through the breach in the Siegfried Line cut by the 3rd Division, a drive northeast across the narrow defiles and mountain passes of the Hardt Mountains and then over the plain of the Rhine River Valley to Neustadt and Ludwigshafen on the Rhine and a junction with elements of the 3rd Army.

Speed was of the greatest importance to prevent the disorganized enemy from bolstering his shattered defenses in the difficult mountain terrain through which part of our route lay. Accordingly, we set about the almost superhuman task of motorizing our combat team from Regimental and attached vehicles. To accomplish this, Artillery and Engineer trucks were used to the fullest extent, part of our men were mounted on tanks and even kitchen trucks were utilized for transporting troops. In this manner, it was tactically permissible to motorize our 1st and 3rd Bns to spearhead the attack while our 2nd Bn followed in two shuttles.

Attached to our combat team were Co "A" and one platoon from Co "D", 781st Tk Bn, Co "C", 824th TD Bn (SP), and the regular Engineer and other attached units.

At 0947 hours, CT-399, now a part of the XXI Corps, with our 1st Bn leading supported by the 1st and 3rd Pltns, Co "A", 781st Tk Bn, the 1st Pltn, Co "C", 824th TD Bn, and Co "C", 325th Engr C Bn, crossed the IP in the vicinity of Breidenbach and advanced northeast along the highway toward Dietrichingen.

By 1022 hours, Dietrichingen had been entered and 33 minutes later, our 1st Bn was rolling through the hole punched in the Siegfried defenses by the 3rd Division and into Contwig. Stanbach, about one mile to the southeast, was cleared at 1107 hours, and still no contact had been made with the enemy.

Great numbers of freed Russian, Greek, French and Polish

slave laborers appeared along the highway. Most of them seemed bewildered by their sudden freedom from bondage by the onrushing Americans. Dressed in nondescript, tattered clothing arranged in a pitiful effort to maintain some vestige of their colorful nationalities, they trudged along the weary miles of road westward, away from the battlefronts and the horror that was Nazi Germany. A stocky Russian girl with a bright red bandana covering her head and carrying an infant in her arms, paused to rest against an embankment. Four Greeks in slave uniforms with the letters ~~KG~~ stamped on their backs, pushed an overloaded cart crammed to collapsing with bedding and the precious junk of the destitute.

From around a bend in the road came the sound of a horn blowing a clarion call of freedom and a confiscated German truck loaded with French men and women and with the Tricolor dancing on a rough, wooden staff lashed to the bumper, careened down the road toward France and freedom. Freedom! You could see it shining in the eyes of the impassive Tartar from Siberia. It was in the step of the burly Russian in the cassock and worn, fur hat. It beamed from the prematurely hardened faces of the three pretty Polish girls, the weak V-signs of the old couple with backs bent through years of toil, the elated waves of the cosmopolitan group bathing their tired feet in the mountain brook.

There were other signs of war in the mass of abandoned and wrecked equipment left by the trapped Wehrmacht. Uniforms, discarded by the Jerries attempting to avoid capture by donning civilian clothing, littered the roadside for miles. An occasional German corpse sprawled grotesquely in a ditch. Cut off from their units by our rapid drive, hundreds of Krauts we didn't even stop for, attempted to surrender.

Two blown bridges and several abatis were either quickly by-passed or cleared away by our Engineers.

At 1300 hours, one mile west of Burgalben, our 1st Bn contacted elements of the 10th Armored Division and by 1435 hours,

Burgalben was reached.

A Regimental CP was opened at Fischbach at 1635 hours.

By 1800 hours, the 1st Bn was clearing Neustadt and continuing east to Neckenheim, while our 3rd Bn, having left their assembly area at 1155 hours, was proceeding toward Neustadt. Our 2nd Bn moved from their assembly area at 1315 hours and had reached Stanback by 1500 hours. By 1800 hours they were approaching Huryofen.

A second Regimental CP was opened at Neustadt at 1635 hours.

Due to the fact that we did not stop to take deserters, only thirty PW's, comprising stragglers from various defeated enemy units, were taken during the period.

With the 1st Bn again leading, supported by the 1st Pltn, Co "A", and the 1st Pltn minus one tank, Co "D", 781st TKBn, the 1st Pltn, Co "C", 824th TD Bn (SP), and Co "C", 325th Engr C Bn, minus one squad, CT-399 continued our motorized "blitz" at 1000 hours of March 23rd. Our route of march was through Deidesheim, Neckenheim, Hochdorf, Dannstadt, Mutterstadt, Maudach and then to the objective of Ludwigshafen on the west bank of the Rhine. Upon our arrival in Ludwigshafen, orders were to sieze any bridges which might be found intact and all boats and barges which might be used to transport troops across the river with special emphasis on tugs.

By 1100 hours, our 1st Bn had reached Mutterstadt where they detrucked and continued the advance on foot, capturing Maudach. Northeast of Maudach, however, our tanks contacted elements of the 94th Division and our 1st Bn halted its advance and drew back to Maudach.

Our 2nd Bn, following the lead of our 1st Bn, and supported by two tanks from Co "A", 781st Tk Bn and the 2nd Pltn, Co "C", 824th TD Bn, left their assembly area in Schwarzbach at 0900 hours, passed through Neckenheim at 1230 hours and closed into assembly at Dannstadt at 1550 hours.

Our 3rd Bn, supported by the 2nd Pltn, Co "A", 781st Tk Bn, one squad, Co "C", 325th Engr C Bn, and the 3rd Pltn, Co "C",

824th TD Bn, left Neustadt at 1045 hours, with 15 2 1/2-ton trucks and closed into Mutterstadt at 1215 hours. It was at Mutterstadt that our Regimental CP was established.

Giving the disorganized enemy no respite, our 2nd and 3rd Bns continued the attack at 0900 hours of March 24th while our 1st Bn went into Regimental reserve. The attack, designed to seize the west bank of the Rhine within the Division zone south of Ludwigshafen as well as all tugs, barges and boats which might facilitate a crossing, progressed rapidly.

Our 2nd Bn, with the 3rd Pltn, Co "A", 781st Tk Bn, attached, moved forward at 0915 hours with the mission of seizing the west bank of the Rhine River in their sector, south of Ludwigshafen. With "F" Co on the right flank, "E" Co on the left flank and "G" Co in reserve, they had reached their objective by 1118 hours without meeting resistance.

In our 3rd Bn sector, a motorized patrol from Co "I", broke through to the Rhine southeast of Rheingonheim at 0830 hours, the first 100th Division troops to breach the river.

By 0930 hours, a platoon from Co "L" mounted on a section of tanks from the 2nd Pltn, Co "A", 781st Tk Bn, had captured Altrip and reached the river, followed by Cos "K", on "L" Co's right flank and Co "I" on their left.

By 1230 hours, the 3rd Bn had secured all objectives with "I" Co at grid R520940, northwest of Altrip, "K" Co in the vicinity of grid R535938 on the bend of the river, and "L" Co in Altrip.

Resistance to the 3rd Bn's drive was mainly in the form of sniper fire from the east bank of the river. Co "I" met the most serious opposition and suffered three men wounded.

While our 2nd and 3rd Bns were engaged in carrying out these operations, our 1st Bn was given the mission of a house-to-house cleanup of the southern portion of Ludwigshafen as well as the suburbs to the south and east. At 0945 hours, Co "C" entered Mundenheim, followed by Cos "A" and "B" at 1100 hours. The slow, nerve-wracking process of mopping-up continued until the end of the period against spotty resistance.

At 1000 hours, the 2nd Bn, 397th Infantry, was attached to our Regiment. The added support was furnished our combat team as protection to our right and rear against a possible attack from an extensive woods to the southwest, outside the Division zone, which had not been cleared.

At 1100 hours, the 100th Rcn Tr and Co "D", 781st Tk Bn, were also added to our Regiment.

Cos. "I" and "K" began movement into assembly positions west of the Rhine at 1325 hours while Co "L" extended their positions along the river bank to include the entire 3rd Bn sector. Cos "I" and "K" now entered Rheingonheim and by 1700 hours had completed occupation with no resistance from the enemy.

Co "L" was relieved by our 2nd Bn at 1730 hours, our 2nd Bn initiating patrolling of the river bank in the Division zone with motorized patrols and extending their sector to include the 3rd Bn sector. Co "L" thereupon went into battalion reserve in Mundenheim, closing at 1930 hours.

Following occupation of Mundenheim, Co "I" moved to the big bend of the Rhine south of Ludwigshafen between grids R511948 and R517962, relieving Co "A", while Co "C" took up positions on the left flank of Co "K" to extend our defense of the river line to the Division boundary.

Late in the afternoon, the 2nd Bn, 397th Infantry, was detached from our combat team and was replaced by the 1st Bn, 398th Infantry, who assembled in Schifferstadt.

One hundred and eleven prisoners were captured during mop-up operations. The prisoners proved mostly stragglers from diverse enemy units. Our PW toll now stood at 1267 for 144 days of combat.

House-to-house mop-up of the southern portion of Ludwigshafen with operations extending south to Altrip continued on March 25th. Intermittent artillery fire from the east bank of the Rhine and harassing small arms sniper fire from enemy positions within the city were the only contacts made

with the enemy. Sniper fire was particularly heavy on our Co "C" positions during the night.

At 0730 hours, Co "L" relieved elements of Co "C" in the sector between grids R517963 and R526966; Co "K" took over positions held by Co "I" at 0735 hours; while Co "B" relieved the remainder of Co "C" between grids R521980 and R515989 at 1200 hours.

Contact points were established with the 14th Infantry on our right flank and the 397th Infantry on our left flank.

Seventy-six additional prisoners were captured; our total for the Regiment rising to 1343.

Harassing enemy mortar, artillery and small arms sniper fire fell intermittently upon our "C" Co and "L" Co positions along the bank of the Rhine and in Ludwigshafen during March 26th. Clearance of Ludwigshafen continued, however, and good progress was made.

At 0930 hours, Co "I" was relieved on position by Co "K" and at 1300 hours relief of our combat team by elements of the 5th and 66th Infantry was begun. Our Co "E", less one platoon along the banks of the Rhine, was relieved by Co "I", 5th Infantry, and closed into Mutterstadt at 1430 hours together with Co "F" who had been in battalion reserve.

At 1628 hours, our Co "G", having relinquished their positions to Cos "K" and "L" of the 5th Infantry, also moved to Mutterstadt where they were joined at 1815 hours by the remaining platoon from Co "E" less an outpost left on the Rhine.

Our Co "A", in 1st Bn reserve, moved to Maudach at 1735 hours. Our Cos "B" and "C" were relieved by Cos "L" and "K", 66th Infantry, at 1800 hours.

Co "I", in 3rd Bn reserve, moved into Maudach at 1630 hours followed by Cos "K" and "L" after relief by the 5th Infantry. The entire relief of our combat team was completed by 2100 hours.

The 1st Bn, 398th Infantry, attached to our Regiment, rejoined its parent organization at 1640 hours, while all special units attached to our combat team assembled in Mutterstadt.

Fifty-one more prisoners were captured, increasing our total

to 1396.

CT-399, now in VI Corps reserve, spent March 27th in furthering care and cleaning of equipment and personal hygiene. Orientation lectures on recent operations were conducted.

Eleven Krauts surrendered to our Regiment while we were in reserve.

The Regiment continued in VI Corps reserve through March 28th, devoting the period to lessons in military courtesy, personal hygiene and orientation. Demonstration firing of the German "Panzerfaust" was conducted by our 3rd Bn.

An additional 19 prisoners were rounded up by our Regiment to increase our score to 1426 for 148 days of combat.

In VI Corps reserve for the third day, the Regiment, on March 29th, held ordnance inspections and conducted training in tank-infantry coordination.

Three Jerry stragglers were captured.

There was no activity on March 30th, another day in Corps reserve.

Three German soldiers, dressed in civilian clothes, were discovered and taken prisoners.

At 0500 hours of March 31st, the anxiously awaited orders which were to take our combat team across the Rhine, were received. The movement, by motor, began at 1245 hours over a route through shattered Ludwigshafen, across a pontoon bridge spanning the Rhine, thence southeast through almost obliterated Mannheim to Brühl where a regimental CP was opened at 1400.

Our 1st Bn closed into their new assembly area at grid R601-896, north of Schwetzingen, at 1525 hours; our 2nd Bn assembled at grid R583902, north of Brühl, at 1530 hours; and our 3rd Bn moved to Brühl, closing at 1540 hours.

Seventeen additional stragglers were captured, increasing our Regimental PW total for 152 days of combat to 1449.