

This is a copy of the COMBAT HISTORY - COMPANY G, 289th INFANTRY in its original form. It was written in the summer of 1945 at Camp Chicago near Laon, France. Bob Judd was the writer and he was aided by Russ Elliott who supplied names and dates from morning reports, and by many other company veterans who supplied recollections of what was perhaps the most challenging winter of their lives, before or since.

This history was requested by the 75th Division Command with the idea that the histories of all units would be used to compile an official history of the Division. When our history was submitted it was not received warmly by Battalion Headquarters. It was apparently too narrative, too real, too personal. It was supposed to be "official" which seemed to mean that references to lost comrades, screw ups, and the problems of staying alive should be omitted.

The history may not contain the names of all the casualties and it may not contain all of the individual incidents that each of us remembers. But it tells the story of where we were and what we did together during the "Big One". It was written when memories of events were fresh and had not been embellished or improved with retelling over the years. I hope you enjoy having this copy of the 1982 edition of the original.

Jack Hawkes
April, 1982

HISTORY OF
G COMPANY, 289th INFANTRY

Christmas Eve - 1944 - we got off the trucks; we knew we were somewhere in Belgium and on our way up to the front. Also we knew it was colder than Hell and that there was a funny feeling about something we couldn't anticipate - no matter how many infiltration courses run back in the States. We heard the boom of artillery - and there was a definite comfort in the sound - after we adjusted ourselves to it - and were confident it was outgoing.

And so the word "Move Out" was passed down - equipment was secured - looking back we realize that we carried a helluva lot of useless junk - but as time passed each man learned to adjust to his own SOP. Nobody talked, besides an occasional bitch as to the usual stops. Finally the company arrived on position, and by the light of the moon dug in, chipping away the frozen ground, one man sleeping and the other digging. In the distance we could hear tanks grinding and occasionally the clatter of a machine gun. But the realization that we were on the frontlines, that we had been committed hadn't yet hit home. In the travels of reaching the front we knew little of the German break-through. We knew that for some reason or another we had suddenly been switched from the 9th Army to the 1st, but this was not yet connected in our minds with such terms as "Bulge" and "Counter-Offensive," nor such names as "Von Rundstedt" and "Ardennes."

Morning comes late in Belgium during December but stiff and numb with cold we were all ready to take off in attack before it was more than half light. This, then, was the real thing - not a problem that would terminate with the blast of a whistle. The 3rd platoon reported that two men, S/Sgt Bob Myers and Sgt Jim Deane, who had gone out to contact Easy Company on our flank, had not returned. More and more the realization was hitting home this was combat. In the haste and confusion most of the men left their rations in their packs. Orders were "Travel Light" - and ammunition was to be carried, you don't forget that. The hill was long and steep, and the climb was interrupted by the sharp report of an automatic rifle - somebody got trigger happy - or nervous - or both - and one of our own men lay dead, Pvt Henry Kovaleski. No Germans, though. We got to the top of the hill, our objective, without seeing a sign of a German. Resting, we all realized that this was Christmas. We had taken our objective. We had lost a man. And, it was a clear, cold, Christmas day in Belgium.

We dug in again. Those who had rations ate - K rations, a poor substitute for Christmas dinners at home. Those who had none either went hungry or received a share from a buddy. Overhead were spectacular airshows all day long: dogfights when your heart came way up and you said a silent prayer for the guys up there who were on your side and cursed the enemy - flights of bombers leading their long airtrails against the clear blue sky - the B-24

that burst into flames and, seconds later, the three black specks appearing in space - but only two parachutes blossomed out. Now we all knew that we weren't playing this game for marbles. One of the parachutes landed close and several of the boys went out to find out about it, bringing back a gunner unharmed and a white silk parachute that was torn into a number of souvenir pieces.

Just as it gets light late so does it get dark early. Already darkness was falling when Captain Solomito gave the word to saddle up and prepare to move. Again we collected equipment and wondered what could be next. Down a narrow road lined by evergreen woods, thick and almost impenetrable, we marched - a column on either side - 10 yards between men, scouts in the lead.

It was after dark when we finally got to where we were going, two platoons on line, one in reserve, weapons platoon attached to the rifle platoons and again - third time in 24 hours - we had to dig in defenses in the frozen, rocky ground.

Christmas night - and what a strange Christmas. Few had had more than one K ration. The physical work of digging and marching with heavy loads of ammunition together with the mental strain of not exactly understanding what is happening and having no idea as to what may happen had combined to make everyone terribly tired and pretty low in spirits. The adjustment to a new way of living - and dying - had gone a long way in 24 hours.

About 0400 - half the company slept wherever they had dropped, in half dug holes, in a haystack, or huddled two under an overcoat for warmth - the others struggled against persistent fatigue to guard. Suddenly the stillness of the night was shattered by bursting shells. There was no doubt now - these were coming in - and close. A new sensation - somebody was shooting at us in anger with intent to kill. Our baptism of fire. Immediately we were combat troops and our pay had increased ten bucks per month but no one thought of that. The explosions lent dynamic energy to tired bodies and the half dug holes deepened as each burst shot new energy through fatigued muscles. Later it was established these had been our own 105s dropping short - but shrapnel knows not friends. By luck only one man was hit, Pfc William Stasche, but we had all learned a hole is a good thing to have around during a barrage and pays good dividends on the investment of energy wrung from tired muscles by the realization of the necessity of protection.

The next day things were more organized. A command Post was set up in a formerly luxurious summer home. Contact was established with the other companies and battalion Headquarters, defenses set up. The 3rd platoon moved down the forward slope to the town of LaFosse, established a defense with assistance of the weapons platoon and attachments from How Company and Antitank Platoon from Battalion. Rations arrived and more ammunition. Everyone wrestled with frozen ground and rocks to build secure shelters. At last each had his place of refuge - a home against shells, stray or

intended, and protection against the snow and cold.

Still we had made no contact with the enemy, but we knew from activities on either side of us that there were plenty of Heinies around. A patrol to our rear established definitely that by some freak chance we had by-passed a battalion of Germans, hidden in the snowy woods. Simultaneously contact came in the town of LaFosse and in the main defense line on the night of December 28th. Patrols came close and in both cases were engaged and in all probability wiped out. We had now another lesson in combat wisdom - the chatter of the Heinie machine gun was easily distinguishable from the rat-a-tat-tat of our own. Pfc Claude Lewis and Pfc Bob Long of the 60mm mortar section were credited with knocking a patrol's machine gun out and killing several of the enemy. In town S/Sgt Charlie Fall halted a patrol and with the help of Pfc Botnick and others knocked out the enemy in close in fighting with rifles and grease guns.

The next day the enemy zeroed in on our positions and began to drop spasmodic mortar barrages. They seemed to anticipate the arrival of hot chow and this was always a signal to them to toss in a few rounds. They had the range as evidenced by the evacuation of Pfc Ken Thompson, Sgt Bob Judd and T/5 Orval Akers with shrapnel wounds.

For a week longer we stayed in these positions holding the enemy. The main activities were intensive patrolling, always a difficult job, but more so now because of the fluid activity of the enemy and the difficult terrain and extreme weather conditions. The Jerries continued to harrass our lines with sporadic mortar and artillery fire that daily took more men to the rear with shrapnel wounds: Pfc Ken Miles, Pfc Jack Stone, Pfc Kownacki, S/Sgt Lowell Bruner operated with skill and courage on several night patrols in the enemy territory. Once surprising an outpost, all asleep, he picked up one of their machine guns and killed them all. Sgt Dick VanArsdale with three men, Pfc Sideny Jones, Pfc Jackson Ford and Pfc Eugene Bialczak, were another patrol team that brought back what they went out after. However, they ran into trouble on one occasion and Ford and Jones were killed; only quick thinking saved the other two. S/Sgt Walter Michotek was the leader of a third patrol that was very active at this time. Pfc Gilbert Lewis, Pfc Charlie Green, Pfc Joe McBride and Pfc Lorenzo Vidal were the men who accompanied him. On the evening of January 5th they were sent out as a roving listening patrol to locate weapons and armor. From this patrol no man returned. After the war was over we learned they had been liberated from a German Prisoner of War Camp.

On January 6th a concentrated attack by the 83rd, 3rd Armored, 84th and 2nd Armored divisions went through our lines, the latter two divisions going through our company positions.

During the first week of the New Year the continuous mortar and artillery fire took daily toll of our men. S/Sgt Francis

Figley, Pvt Robert Myers, Pfc William Graves, Pfc James McKeethan, T/Sgt George Rudiman were all shrapnel casualties. Pfc Arthur Johnson was found dead from rifle fire while bringing ammunition to the second platoon. Also winter's severity inflicted casualties. Living and sleeping out in the cold and snow for days on end was a test that had not been anticipated by army supply channels and clothing and equipment was not adequate to meet the demands for warmth and protection from moisture. This was especially evidenced in footgear. GI shoes soon wet through even though overshoes were worn, and when the weary soldier stopped for an hour or two of well deserved rest they froze. It was soon learned that footgear could not be removed for sleeping as it became frozen so solid it couldn't be pulled on again. First to leave with frost bitten feet and trenchfoot were Pfc Leo Finley and Pfc Jean Kuhn, this beginning a steady flow of men to the rear due directly to the rigors of winter weather.

On 7 January we loaded into trucks and set off for the town of Remanchamps for a long promised few days rest. The truck convoy moved with exasperating slowness, the soldiers exposed to bitter cold and heavy snowstorm. The convoy leader was lost in the storm and hours were spent parked in the open with the soldiers griping at the tops of their voices. Late at night the confusion of moving and billeting died down as the sympathetic Belgian patriots did all in their power to make comfortable accommodations for their American friends.

First priority at the rest period was a close examination of each man's feet. During combat many men with mild cases of frost-bite and trenchfoot stayed on from military necessity but here 9 men were evacuated for these causes: Pfc Anthony Kennedy, T/5 Stanley Smith, Pfc George Bales, Pfc Rinaldo Petracci, Pfc George Katz, Pfc Charles Scattone, Pfc Richard Einbecker, Pfc William Griffin, and Pfc William Clark. Here the depleted company was reinforced by men transferred from other companies of the regiment that had suffered less casualties.

On January 8th the company moved out to relieve a company of the 82nd Airborne Division on positions overlooking the town of Renchaux. From Renchaux more men were evacuated as non-battle casualties: Pvt Phillip Bryan and Pvt Ambrose Enos. Here again the enemy's artillery and mortar action harrassed the company and many men were evacuated: Pfc Jessie Marks, Pfc William Stites, Pfc Troy Cate, Pfc Gil Mendivil, Sgt Lawrence Oster, Pfc William Bryant. Patrol activity was constant and by both sides. Winter weather, however, was the chief worry. The nights were long and bitterly cold and the times we had been warm and comfortable in the homes of the Belgians seemed far in the past.

From Renchaux the company moved back to the town of St. Marie. From there to near Salmchateau on a forced night march and on into an attack on German positions where the company objective was a high hill overlooking the town of Beck. Before leaving on the

attack the company was briefed and informed the mission was a river crossing - to cross the Salm River on bridges hurriedly constructed by the engineers. The men were a bit skeptical about the success of a river crossing as they mistook the name of the river to be the Somme, one of the largest rivers of this sector, and through their minds ran visions of long pontoon bridges swept by enemy machine gun fire. In their concern for the river crossing little attention was paid to the announcement of a 70 degree climb of several hundred yards on the other bank.

Early in the morning the company wound its way down through the paths in the woods past Salmchateau and then down a ravine in the darkness of the hours just before dawn. Stumbling and sliding in the wooded ravine - moving as rapidly as possible not to lose contact with the file - they moved to the banks of the river. There was a short delay for the engineers to finish the bridges and for more light. As each platoon moved across the short open field toward the base of the mountain they came onto a footbridge spanning a rivulet of a scant thirty feet in width but rushing and roaring as only a mountain stream could. At the far end of the bridges the attack was slowed to a crawl by a steep bluff that almost defied scaling. Many minutes were needed to climb a couple hundred feet to a railway bed and from here the bluff rose more abruptly. In scaling this men would climb several yards and then lose footing in the fresh snow, sliding back for a long loss. Only by the help of occasional shrubs could the ascent be made. The difficulty of the ascent caused some disorganization among the platoons as squads emerged at the summit at different points that had been assigned to other squads.

The enemy was so surprised at the appearance of American troops on a hill thought unassailable that 11 of them astonished the forward elements of the company by running from the woods to surrender. These were the first German prisoners taken by the company - the first German soldiers seen by the majority of the men - and were such a center of curiosity it was a few minutes before the curious could be reminded that there were other Germans about and the attack must go on. No resistance was met during the morning and the company dug in on a woods line overlooking the town of Beck. While the position was being set up Sgt August Sandino was cut down by an enemy machine gun. During the midday period the enemy opened up with machine guns and zeroed in with mortars and artillery causing many casualties on the other companies of the battalion. In G Company S/Sgt Ernest Prokop was killed and Pfc David Lair, Pfc Robert Shewmaker and Pvt Newmark wounded.

In the afternoon the position became so untenable that the battalion commander gave orders to withdraw to the left rear and prepare to assault the enemy's positions in the town. In the withdrawal and reorganization many Germans were taken prisoner from small units that had been bypassed in the morning's attack. S/Sgt Lowell Bruner brought in 9 singlehanded.

The Germans in Beck were so surprised at the assault they were unable to withdraw all their forces and some hundred were captured by elements of the battalion. The company occupied positions in Beck for the night during which the Germans threw in shells at intervals of a few minutes. Here the first officer casualty of the company was evacuated, 1st Lt Harold Manley, suffering from frostbite.

On the next morning, the 16th of January, the company was assigned the mission of securing the high ground 1000 yards to the north of the town. The next 48 hours were to be the bloodiest and most terrible in the company's activities. Early in the forenoon the company moved out with the confidence brought about by the previous day's successes - a river successfully crossed, an unassailable hill stormed and overrun, prisoners taken in great number, a town liberated, all with a small loss to our forces.

The company advanced up the road in the route march, 3rd platoon leading, 2nd, 1st, 4th, in order. Three medium tanks were assigned to the company and a special assault squad was mounted on them for the attack. The leading platoon had reached the woods at the crest of the hill when 2 enemy machine guns and snipers opened up on the exposed soldiers along the open road. All the rest of the company and attached heavy weapons platoon were pinned down. The third platoon maneuvered to destroy the hostile positions and the company attempted to crawl on up the hill under the withering hail of fire. In a few minutes the enemy began to lay in a concentrated barrage of mortar and artillery fire on the exposed troops. There was no cover or defilade and the murderous barrage kept up, slowly cutting the strength of the company.

Under the fire, the 60mm mortar section set up and returned effective fire. Sgt Gayron Brown directed fire to knock out at least one machine gun and one mortar before his mortar was struck by a shell that put it out of action and seriously wounded him. One of the tanks advanced and knocked out a German field gun that was firing flat trajectory on the men, but the mortar shells and 88s kept whizzing in thick and fast. The action consumed two hours and cost almost 50 percent of the force in casualties.

At last the survivors of the barrage managed to reach the woods and set up a small perimeter of defense which it was found necessary to move three times during the afternoon on account of intermittent barrages of artillery that seemed to search out and find our positions. The woods were so thick that each shell was a deadly tree burst. When a definite position had been chosen for the night, the company commander called in his platoon leaders to plan a defense - and while this was being accomplished one of the intermittent concentrations struck the command post area wounding or killing a large percentage of those who had reached the position. Contact with battalion headquarters was destroyed as the SCR-300 radio was knocked out. Captain Solomito, the

company commander, and one platoon leader were among the wounded; two enlisted men killed, S/Sgt Lowell Bruner and Pfc Edward Shurin, two others so seriously wounded they died of wounds, Pfc Neal Laprese and Pfc Arne Johnson, and many others wounded. Others wounded that day were Pfc Charles Munder, Pfc William King, Pfc Herman Bauman, Pfc Elmer Burrer, Pvt Peter Demos, S/Sgt Harold Farney, T/Sgt Thomas Nagle, Pfc Clark Hibbard, Pfc Lazaro Corral, Pfc Herbert Praglo, Pfc Luis Flores, Lt Randall Hammer, Pfc Lemuel Koger, Pfc Richard Parker, Sgt Gayron Brown. Among those killed during the assault on the hill were Pfc's Levinus, Shoup and Burnell.

The Executive Officer, Lt Lawton Davis, was absent on a reconnaissance mission with his platoon and the remaining officer was Lt William Davis. The two wounded officers and some ambulatory wounded of the enlisted men were evacuated immediately. In reorganizing the remaining men it was found inadvisable to remain on position with so few men available for defense and so many seriously wounded exposed to hazards of the weather and likelihood of being under further artillery fire and counterattack. Improvised litters were constructed to evacuate the wounded. This was a difficult task, almost impossible with the density of the forest, the darkness of night and the shortage of ablebodied to care for the wounded.

After a tedious and tiring task the remnants of the company reached Beck with the wounded, and delivered them to the aid station. First Lt Lawton Davis returned from his mission, assumed command of the company and began reorganization. On checking he found 34 men available for duty. We moved up the road to the edge of the woods where an abrupt stop was put to the advance by the Germans firing down the road with our own machine gun that had been left behind in the withdrawal. The men were in an exposed position and only the enemy gunner's lack of knowledge of the mechanism of our weapon kept the remnants from being a total loss. Only one man was lost in this unsuccessful project, Pfc Hernandez, who was struck in the leg by three machine gun bullets. Ricochets damaged the clothing and equipment of several other men.

At daylight the company moved out of Beck for the third time, but not on the same road where we had been stopped twice the day before. This time we took the high ground overlooking the town of Vielsalm without meeting any opposition. From there we moved down a firebreak towards the town of Neuville. We had been informed that there would be no opposition here. However, some one was mistaken, for machine guns opened up and mortars and screaming meenies started coming in. Lt Lawton Davis went forward of the company to reconnoiter the situation and on reaching a point of vantage was struck in the chest by a direct mortar hit. This left only one officer with the company, Lt William Davis.

The company moved in the woods at the vantage point it had cost Lt Lawton Davis' life to discover. The company became part

of the battalion perimeter of defense and in these positions spent the next day. Here the supplies began to come up: rations of cigarettes, tropical chocolate, clean underwear, mail and blankets. Owing to the company strength being a mere fraction of the authorized strength the rations were more than ample for the remaining members. Pfc Donald Dougherty drew the lucky number for a pass to Paris. He was the most envied man in the company and was requested to be messenger for many requests of purchases in Paris - liquors, perfumes, souvenirs.

Due to battle losses reorganization took place. S/Sgt Paul Rother was in command of the 1st platoon, S/Sgt Jack Hawkes the 2nd, T/Sgt Pat Catanzarite the 3rd and T/Sgt Buster Williams the 4th. Our one remaining officer, 2nd Lt William Davis was acting company commander. On the morning of the 19th the company moved out in the attack under cover of a heavy blizzard. The 2nd platoon was in the lead. There was no definite objective as enemy positions were unknown and the purpose of the move was to contact the enemy. After advancing several thousand yards with no opposition the company was fired on by burp guns. The enemy was put out of action immediately by the mortars under direction of S/Sgt Sikes, section leader. The rifle elements moved in and cleaned up capturing or killing 15 Germans. A defense was set up on this position and patrols sent to the front and to the flank. These patrols located and destroyed two enemy machine gun nests but the last remaining company officer, Lt William Davis, was wounded during the action. During the cold night the men stayed awake to guard against counter-attack. During the night more prisoners were brought in by roving patrols around the defense. One German was so intent on surrendering he crawled within ten feet of a soldier's foxhole to give up.

In the morning a coordinated attack with the 2nd battalion of the 290th was resumed in the same general direction as the previous days. More prisoners were taken from a house in the woods that had been a troublesome snipers nest. After a rapid 1500 yard advance along the road the company received orders to set up a roadblock and prepare to be relieved by another battalion. Only the end of the war would have been better news to a tired, cold, half-sick handful of men that had seen their comrades cut down until the company could muster scarcely a full platoon strength.

At last the 291st moved up to relieve us and we marched to the rear with far more energy than anyone though the beaten bodies could put forth. At the trucking point we learned we were to go back to Renchaus to a Belgian barracks for rest - rest, what a queer sounding expression. The Belgian caserne was halfwrecked from artillery, holes in the roof, no windows, entire first floor uninhabitable, no fires, but to the weary they were as the finest palace. Hot chow arrived with us, first hot chow in days. The men ate until they were in a stupor, slipped away to sleep and awakened again for another meal two hours later.

We were all suffering from two occupational diseases - aptly described to be combat kidneys and battle bowels. The former probably brought on by the almost impossible job the organisms of the body were called upon to perform and the constant never ceasing nervous strain resulted in overworked kidneys and the loss of a certain amount of normal control. It was often necessary to get up to relieve yourself three or four times during the night, and one of the hardest jobs in the world is to pull yourself from a foxhole or a sleeping bag, where it was at least comparatively warm - but there was no alternative. The other was more serious and more unpleasant. It was another result of an overworked body and a prolonged diet of rations usually eaten cold and in a hurry and, of not having any facilities for keeping clean or regular. Finally the digestive system refused to function in a normal way and in some cases there was little or no control over the bowels. We all had these GIs - and in many cases we continued to have them for weeks to come.

Here, too, we lost more men because of the long exposure to the winter weather with inadequate and unsuitable footgear: Pfc Calvin Olney, Pfc Dannie Thomas, S/Sgt Arthur Angulo, Pfc Perry Hicks, Pvt Polo Medina, S/Sgt Alvin Smollin, Pfc Lester Goodman, S/Sgt William Black and S/Sgt James Collins. The Battle of the Bulge was drawing to a close but we couldn't realize it. Our duties in Belgium were not finished and though we were promised days and days of rest we moved out the second day. Lt Charles Ives came to G Company from How Company to be our company commander. Then we moved out again in the deep snow to support the 291st near the town of Braunlauf. Our patrols were active night and day but could detect no activity. For two days we heard of one division moving in from one flank and one from the other to meet in our front and deprive us of an active sector. Finally the function took place and on the night of January 25th we moved back to Braunlauf to sleep in barns.

The Battle of the Bulge was now over. Our mission was complete. We were scheduled to go to a rest area near Liege and there get reinforcements and a good rest.

We had been on the front for over a month and in that month we had changed a good deal. We had changed more as individuals and as a unit than we ever had previously or would again in such a short time. On Christmas Eve we had been a green outfit facing something entirely unknown and foreign - combat duty. We had been thrust right into the midst of one of the hardest campaigns of the war from nearly any standpoint. We faced an enemy who was far from beaten, who had seized the initiative and with fanatical purpose of mind was determined to hold what he had gained and was willing to desperately gamble lives and equipment to gain more. We had fought winter at its worst - through rugged and desolate terrain in gloomy, thick forests, where every shell was a deadly tree burst and the snow was thick and cold, through shattered towns and across frozen rivers, when advances were measured in yards. All

of this with equipment and clothing that was at times pitifully inadequate and with an ever decreasing number of men. We had seen that was no glamorous adventure but a terrible and deadly fight for survival. We had left behind men for whom we had come to feel a deep affection and whom we would always remember - not as lifeless, frozen, bloody bodies on the Belgian snow - but happy laughing men in Wales, Camp Breckenridge, Louisiana and Fort Leonard Wood. We had seen these men die horrible and painful deaths from shrapnel and small arms fire and had felt first shock that men could die thus, and then grief that they were gone forever from us, and from loved ones, and from country. And the wounded - suffering, cold, and sick - for some the war was over - but for us it stretched on and on into some future eternity.

However, the rest we had been expecting did not come - instead we were loaded onto 40 and 8s and off to a new destination. Finally we found out that we were headed for the Colmar sector in France. The Germans had been counterattacking heavily there and it was thought another breakthrough might be effected. At Luneville, France, we got off the train and on trucks that took us to Ribeauville where we billeted in an old silk mill along with the rest of the battalion. We had already had reinforcements assigned but they hadn't yet been sorted out into platoons and squads. That was our first job after we arrived late on the 28th of January.

Next we received attack orders. We were to relieve part of the 3rd Division and continue on in the attack. It seemed as though this was just a continuation of Belgium. The terrain looked somewhat similar except that the Vosges Mountains surrounding Ribeauville were much steeper and more rugged. The winter weather was the same, and those of us from Belgium expected the same kind of things from the enemy.

We moved out on the 30th of January - after having lost more men, one as a non-battle casualty, Pfc Frank Mulsey, and one of the reinforcements who had shot himself through the foot while cleaning a rifle. We had also had some new officers assigned to the company: Lt Frederick Jeram had the 1st platoon, Lt Hodges the 2nd platoon, Lt Loeb the weapons platoon.

Our first stop was a rear assembly area, where we dug in and waited. Here in the middle of the night they brought up some long awaited winter clothing - shoe pacs, heavy socks, heavy mittens. Shortly, we got the word to move out. The situation on the front lines was changing so rapidly that already our original mission had been cancelled, but we were to relieve a company of the 3rd on a defensive position. This was all completed before daylight. All day was spent in digging new positions or improving the ones inherited from the 3rd. It began to thaw for the first time and the water and mud got deeper by the hour. We weren't to get even part of a night in our positions for we received an attack order, were relieved and moved out as soon as dark came.

Sloshing through mud and water we moved into the small town we had been outside of and here ate hot chow, picked up rations and ammunition, and slept for an hour or two. At 0100 we moved out in the route march to Holzweir which was to be the jumping off place. Here we grabbed another hour or two of sleep before time to move out in the attack.

Before it was light we were in the mud and slush again and on the edge of town. We were to have French armor in support. Now we realized that this was different from Belgium - there we had done battle for commanding ground or a section of road and we fought over wooded and rugged terrain. Here we would fight for a town. Towns were scattered at intervals on very flat cleared ground. In the distance towered the Vosges, but here the land was table flat. About a thousand yards across the open fields was the town of Andolsheim - our objective. The 1st, 3rd and weapons platoon were to attack straight towards the town on the left of the road, the 2nd platoon from the right. Easy Company was on our left flank, preceded by the armor.

It was getting light as we moved out across the open field - and we knew that we were vulnerable to mortars, 88s, machine gun and rifle fire. Every foot of that distance would have to be sweated out, for there wasn't even so much as a ditch for cover. The bulk of the company on the left side of the road drew no fire. The 2nd platoon ran into some mortar fire but it was not so heavy that they were unable to advance. Pfc Harvey Botnick was the only man wounded. The machine gun bullets from the French tanks went zipping over our heads as we advanced. The armor was perfectly coordinated to our advance for they reached the edge of town just as we did and gave the outlying houses a good going over before we entered. We met little resistance in the town, and what was there was soon overcome. A number of prisoners were taken and we set up a defense for the always expected counterattack. Then we took over what houses were necessary and took time out to eat, sleep and drink a little wine. It wasn't long before the Jerries who had fled Andolsheim were set up in some other town and began to toss back their usual barrage of 88s. They seemed to know where we were for more than one house we were occupying was hit. S/Sgt Jack Hawkes, Cpl Kenneth Shapiro and Pfc Elmer Burer were all shrapnel casualties.

We had hoped to spend the night in Andolsheim but once again the attack orders were passed out. This time we were only to be ready to go in the attack should Easy and Fox Companies run into heavy resistance in their attack on the town of Appenweir. So after dark we began another long weary march through the slush and snow. After several hours we arrived at the final assembly area where everybody who wasn't on guard lay down in a comparatively dry spot and slept. Before dawn we moved up to a patch of woods overlooking and about 1000 yards from the town of Appenweir. Easy and Fox Companies were attacking the town and had nearly taken it, with a large number of prisoners taken, when a fierce counterattack,

including armor, drove most of them from the town.

From our position in the woods we knew that things were not going well - and nobody could be certain as to what was going to happen. Then the enemy began throwing heavy mortars at us. One of the first ones killed Pfc Glenn Degan and Pfc Gerald Asselson and wounded Sgt Robert Judd and Pfc Charles Bolyard. Lt Loeb, who had been lent to Fox Company the previous day, was also killed.

Finally our remaining elements left the town. That night we were relieved by the 290th and went into division reserve which was back in a woods where we dug in to wait for further orders. We remained there, near the town of Andolsheim, until the morning of February 6th. We were told that our objective was to be the town of Hettenschlag and we moved into the attack through our old positions near Appenweir.

It had continued to thaw and rain so the mud and water were deeper than before. Around noon we stopped, dug in and ate chow. From here we moved out about 1500 and met the tanks on which we were to ride in the attack. First and 3rd platoons were on medium tanks and 2nd on light tanks. After going through a woods for some distance there was the usual broad, very open, flat approach to the town. By this time it was nearly dark, but the attack carried on. Midway across the field the tanks opened up on the town. Their fire was almost at once returned by heavy fire from the enemy. It seemed as though they were throwing everything in the book at us from small arms and 88s to big artillery and they had the whole area zeroed in. Although it is by far the hardest thing to do, we learned here that there are less casualties if the whole company keeps moving forward through the barrage. The mud that we had been cussing for days now proved to be our greatest ally - and beyond any doubt it saved many lives and prevented many wounds. When a shell hit the soft, soupy ground, it penetrated instead of going off on immediate contact - thus quite a bit of the shrapnel was harmlessly deflected into the mud. And, because of these factors the casualties were not nearly as heavy as they had been at Beck where the barrage was similar.

Communication between the tanks was out, and things were becoming rapidly disorganized when Lt Ives reorganized the attack by moving from tank to tank telling the men to form in their platoons and prepare to assault the town. The 2nd platoon was on the right, 3rd on the left, 1st platoon behind and weapons platoon in close support. The heavy shelling was still going on as we moved into the town meeting some small arms resistance but overcoming it and taking some 30 prisoners. Easy and Fox Companies moved into town and helped in the clearing out. A defense was set up against counterattack and reorganization of the company took place.

We had come through the attack in good shape considering the terrific shelling we had taken. Only one man had been killed, Pfc

Howard Warren. The wounded were: Pfc Orval DeHarty, Pfc George Hansen, Pfc Fred Parton, Sgt Francis Peloquin, Pvt Elmo Heath, Pfc Catarino Felan, Pvt William Reynolds, Pvt Albert Wheeler, Pvt James Raper, Pvt Ocie Hartless, Pvt Floyd Rife, Pfc Stephan Hodovanich.

We stayed in Hettenschlag all the next day and early on the morning of the 7th we moved out, crossing the Colmar Canal. Our mission was to take the town of Heiteren. However, the French forces had already taken the town, and we moved in while it was still under enemy fire. From there a patrol from the 3rd platoon under command of S/Sgt Henry Janssen went out to reach the banks of the Rhine. However, about a hundred yards from the banks, they encountered such a heavy woods that it was deemed unwise to move forward.

The French had now taken the town of Colmar and this pocket was officially cleared out, except for the mopping up of isolated groups. Once again our mission was complete and we moved back to the town of Logelheim to await further orders. The Colmar Campaign hadn't been as long for us as the Battle of the Bulge. We had, however, run into tough and determined opposition and the weather had again made things difficult. Our battle casualties had been proportionately lower - mostly because we had learned valuable lessons both as individuals and as a unit. In Belgium we had made the transition from a well trained but green garrison outfit to a combat team. In Colmar we advanced to an efficient group of fighting men, capable of operating under the most adverse conditions.

During several days at Logelheim there were a good many of the usual rumors, and for some 24 hours we were actually placed in the 15th Army. We then moved on to the town of Domptail and settled down in barns to await the next move. Here we stood formal retreat formations for the first time since leaving England early in December. We also had a daily training schedule, much cursed by men who had learned in combat more than eons of training could teach.

On February 15th we again loaded onto boxcars, which were becoming like an old home by this time and again we were on the move. Our destination was Uroehoven, Belgium. Once here, we learned that we were now attached to the 9th Army. We had been in the 1st in Belgium, and the 7th in France. Our mission here was to relieve an English unit in defensive positions along the Maas River. And after remaining in Uroehoven until February 20th, we moved by truck and on the march to the town of Grubenvorst, Holland, situated on the banks of the flooded Maas. Here we set up a defensive position, utilizing the town to its greatest advantage by billeting the men in houses and having easily accessible positions. Mortar observers were constantly on the alert for enemy activity on the opposite banks and at any sign of movement a barrage was laid down. We set up an intricate system of flares, mines and booby traps to make it as difficult as possible for the

enemy to approach us with patrols without being detected. So complicated was this arrangement that it was possible for us to move only by certain marked routes.

Our patrols across the river were especially active at this time. One led by Lt Jeram was the first from our battalion to successfully gain the other bank and reconnoiter enemy positions. Another led by Lt Willis gained access to the town across the river and spent some time searching for enemy troops but were unable to locate any. Outside of our patrols the activity was chiefly one of throwing artillery at the enemy and getting some in return. The heaviest barrage came on the night of February 28th, and it probably was to serve as a screen for the return of one of the enemy's patrols. Lt Hodges was the only man wounded during our stay on the Maas. He was wounded when a shell came through the window of his billet. While we were here we received reinforcements to take the place of men lost. Lt Robert Turlington, Lt Albert Plotnick and Lt Charles Harris also joined the company at this time.

On the 3rd of March the Canadian 1st Army came down from the north and took the ground on the east bank of the river. So again our mission was completed and we were waiting our next assignment.

On March 5th we moved out on the march down the river where we crossed into Venlo. Within a short while (a long hike) we were in Germany. Our first stop here was the town of Borholz, where we stayed five days. From there we moved to the city of Mors. Here Captain Harlan Wright joined the company and took over as company commander. Here, too, the men that had been wounded in earlier campaigns began to return to duty with the company. Among the first to return were S/Sgt Francis Figley, Pfc Luis Flores, and Pfc Vitomier Yakin.

We remained at Mors until March 16th when we moved to the town of Baerl to relieve a company of the 3rd battalion. We stayed here overnight and moved up to the banks of the Rhine near the town of Rhinebeck directly across from Duisburg. Here we set up a defensive position. Once again our patrols were active. The only other activities were constant artillery and mortar duels. Quite obviously they knew just where we were for they managed to score a direct hit on our CP with artillery, wounding Pfc John Dillery, T/4 Fred Ruer, Pfc James Kincaid, and Pfc Leo Hammond. The next day Pfc Bailey Ragan was seriously wounded by shrapnel and died before he could be evacuated to a hospital. Luckily a good many of the enemy shells were duds, one of which crashed against the CP building, another dropped into the house used as a machine gun position during the day and as a 24 hour mortar observation post. It was a shell about the size of our 155s and crashed through three walls coming to rest a few feet from two sleeping men.

S/Sgt VanArsdale led a patrol across the Rhine with S/Sgt Dougherty and Pfc Irving Myers. Crossing in a rubber boat on a

bright night they were able to reconnoiter enemy positions and confirmed the position of enemy defense lines. We also had front seats for the main crossing of the Rhine by other divisions of the 9th Army. The main crossing was slightly downstream. However, there was a heavy barrage of artillery laid down all along the sector - and our mortars and machine guns fired all night long as part of the fire plan. Here for the first time German planes were active and our positions were strafed several nights in a row.

Now that the Rhine was crossed we were again awaiting our next mission and, after spending several days in Mors in reserve, we set out to cross the Rhine. This was done on March 28th. We spent the night near the town of Hardingnaussen and the next day moved up to a rear assembly area where we dug in to await attack orders.

On the 31st we moved out as a reserve battalion in the attack, our forces were meeting very light resistance at the time and we moved fairly rapidly all day long. We were shelled by the retreating enemy but suffered no casualties. That night we moved a short distance to the town nearby.

From this town we moved out early in the morning in the attack. This was Easter Sunday and it was a fine, clear, sunny day. Fox Company was on our left, 2nd and 3rd platoons were in the lead - followed by the 1st and weapons platoons. We moved forward without meeting any resistance and reached our objective, a fire station and a small group of houses about 2 miles from the town of Sinson. After a brief rest we moved on into the town of Sinson. Here we moved under 88 fire for a short while but after this ceased there was no sight of the enemy. We set up a defense and awaited our next move. The 3rd platoon under command of Lt Willis was to move forward with platoons from Fox and Easy Companies under command of LtCol Gearhart. Their missions were to capture a bridge across the Dortmund - Ems Canal, and to hold this until the arrival of the battalion. This group was known as Force Gearhart.

The balance of the company moved out after dark to join the rest of the battalion in a march that was to go on until we contacted enemy forces. And so we marched all night long without contact! Shortly after daylight we stopped. Everyone was just beginning to catch up on sleep when we were told that we were going to get on trucks and move until we contacted the enemy. This ride ended in about 2 miles when a blown-out bridge halted the convoy at a cross roads. Also halted was a company of tanks who were attempting to cross. We got off the trucks and marched into the nearby town. We contacted the enemy with a bang - they shelled us heavily for a time. The main barrage, however, was directed at the tanks on the crossroads. Several of them were knocked out and members of their crews killed. We were in the town of Hornberg on the edge of the Ems-Dortmund Canal. The task

force that had set out the previous night was also there. Their mission could not be completed because the bridge had been blown. The enemy was dug in across the canal and we were going to have to fight our way across.

Here we stayed all day and under the cover of darkness moved down to the edge of the canal and dug in defensive positions. S/Sgt VanArsdale, S/Sgt Dougherty and Pfc Myers again went out on patrol across the canal. The first time out they ran into a German patrol. They tossed grenades and fired rifles at the enemy and received fire from a burp gun. They returned with a report to battalion and set out again. Just as they were set to cross they were halted by a German sentry. They could hear Germans digging in on the opposite side. As they had secured the information of the enemy they desired, they returned to battalion.

We stayed here all the next day and at night prepared for the crossing that was to take place on April 4th. We moved out before daylight and moved up to the canal. K Company was to take off first and make the initial assault. We crossed at about 0900 and by that time the Heinies had it well zeroed in and were pouring in artillery and mortar fire thick and fast. Only one man could cross the footbridge at a time and the banks were very steep on either side. It was necessary to use a ladder to get up the far bank. Only one man was wounded, Pfc Preston Held.

The 1st and 2nd platoons were leading. Due to the difficulties in getting the company across the canal we were faced with problems of control. It was necessary to cross some 1000 yards of open ground before entering the town of Ickern. It was almost necessary to creep and crawl up the ditches to get into town because the whole area was zeroed in by the enemy. They continued to throw mortars and 88s. Finally the company was in town and fairly well organized. S/Sgt Baker from the 1st platoon led a small patrol out and succeeded in putting two 88s out of action. However, we all kept moving and ducked into a ditch in a helluva hurry when we heard one coming in. Those ditches probably saved a good many lives. Pfc Henry W. Sandina and Sgt Richard Van Arsdale were casualties, the former from shrapnel and the latter while in a vehicle in which he and two other men were trying to contact Fox Company. Pfc James Morrell also in the vehicle, was killed by a sniper's bullet.

We finally reached our objective late in the afternoon and there set up a line of defense. Here the enemy continued to shell us during the night. We remained here all the next day and night. Early on the morning of April 6th, the 290th attacked through our positions and we moved back a mile or two as division reserve.

Lt Ives took over as company commander again. By this time the American 9th and British 2nd had linked up and created the

Ruhr Pocket.

Early on the morning of April 8th we again moved out in the attack. We were to go through Bovinghaussen to a group of factories on the other side of the town. Before daylight we had an indication of what the day was going to be like. We received a very heavy artillery barrage. Again the ditches and some holes the Germans had left came in handy. Pfc Clarence Barlow was wounded and later died in the hospital as a result of these wounds.

We jumped off in the attack just as it was getting light. The opposition was very heavy. Snipers firing machine guns were placed so that they had maximum fields of fire down all approaches and were almost impossible to locate in the ruins of the city. We had British tanks equipped with flame throwers with us but they weren't a great deal of help. All day long we inched forward, most of the time under machine gun fire. We were forced to abandon our plan of reaching the objective that day. We had lost more men - most of them wounded by snipers or machine gun bullets: Pfc Elmer Burrer, T/Sgt Pat Catanzarite, Lt Frederick Jeram, Pvt John Saldon, and Pfc Thomas Absher were wounded and S/Sgt Harry Maxwell killed.

The next morning we again set out for our objective and ran into the same heavy resistance we had met the day before. These days were significant for individual acts of courage and bravery - men advancing under heavy fire, helping a wounded comrade, and spotting and knocking out snipers. As the day moved on we moved forward slowly - behind houses or shattered ruins or walls - and crawled up ditches. That night we were within sight of the objective but had not yet achieved it. About 1800 we were counterattacked by four tanks and infantry. The 2nd platoon area was the route of the enemy approach and it was mainly due to the efforts of this unit that the attack was repulsed. The platoon leader Lt Harris, T/Sgt Edwin Pizzetti and S/Sgt Harry Specht were the key men in beating off this infantry attack. This platoon killed over 20 men. A patrol from the 4th platoon went to battalion with a situation report, and shortly a squadron of P-47s came over and bombed and strafed the enemy tanks, putting them out of the battle.

Later that night we moved back to reserve company. Again we had suffered casualties: Pfc John Expanet, S/Sgt John Trimmer, Pfc Joseph Smith, Pfc Theodore Lewandowski, S/Sgt Donald Herda, Sgt Meares, Lt Robert Willis, Pfc Vitomier Yakin, Pfc Irving Myers, Pfc Richard Miller, Pfc Raymond Post, Pfc Rinaldo Petracci, Pfc Eugene Jackson, Pfc Rufus Taylor were wounded, and Pfc Edward Kleszcz, Pfc John Sears, Sgt Louis Sieczkowski, and Pfc Conrado Verdugo were killed.

From here we moved up to positions near the town of Witten where we expected to be committed again. However, the Ruhr Pocket was rapidly shrinking and we were not called upon to fight again. Although the war would continue for just about another

month we had seen the last combat we were to see in the ETO. Once again we had accomplished the task we had been given. The fighting was different from any we had seen before. This had been city fighting when we never knew whether we were going to meet fanatical opposition or no resistance at all. Here we ran into more small arms fire and snipers accounted for most of our casualties. It had been hard fighting, but then all of it is. Again men had suffered and died - but in doing so they had completed their mission.

From here we moved into occupational duty and it was while performing these tasks in Hagen, Germany, that we learned the war in Europe was over. We took this news with somber thanksgiving: glad that for a while at any rate we could go from day to day knowing that our lives were safe. However, we had been too close to the war for celebrating - and you can't really celebrate some victory that has taken the lives of some of your best friends to attain. And we all knew that Japan must yet be beaten as Germany had been - and that most of us might be in on that before too much time passed. We all hoped that we would go into the Pacific Theater together. Although many who had gone into the Battle of the Bulge on Christmas Eve were gone, the men who remained and those who had joined us had come to have a deep feeling of pride in the company. We were and are confident that we are a part of a fighting team that had fought hard and well for the cause of our country. We cannot know what the future holds, but we can look back on our combat record with a helluva lot of pride.