

Reluctant Valor

**Special Limited Printing of Six Copies, 1997
For the Family of Thomas J. Evans**



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Richard ("Doc") Buchanan, M.D.,
Friend and Comrade in Arms**

Reluctant Valor

The Oral History of

Captain Thomas J. Evans

Fellow of the Center

United States Third Army
4th Armored Division (Code Name: Harpoon)
704th Tank Destroyer Battalion
European Theatre of Operations

The Lorraine Tank Battles and
The US Third Army's March to
Czechoslovakia

Containing The Combat Diary of the 704th TD Company C By
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**Joe and Henny Heisel Series 1
United States of America Armed Forces Veterans**

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Preface

THIS ORAL HISTORY WAS COMPILED over the course of three months, during the Summer of 1992. It encompasses six interview sessions, each approximately one and one-half hours in duration. Each interview was recorded onto audio cassette at the subject's home. Equipment used was a Realistic VSC 2001 cassette recorder with condenser microphone. Session's 1 – 5 were recorded onto Maxell UR – 90 Normal position tapes, while session 6 was recorded onto a BASF Ferro Extra I 90-minute tape.

The difficulty in dealing with 50-year old memories meant that certain subjects often ended up out of their chronological context over the extended course of the interviews. Thus, in the interest of readability, it was necessary to reconfigure certain passages of the interview as a whole. Individual question/answer integrity remains intact, with the exception of the segments dealing with the liberation of the Ohrdruf Concentration Camp.¹

Some Ohrdruf portions of the original interview were lost (due to equipment malfunction) and those segments were re-done during a later interview. In that instance, Mr. Evans answered the same question twice, and I have included both answers while omitting all duplications within that segment.

Mr. Evans participated in manuscript corrections as regards spelling, syntax and grammar. Such corrections are reflected within the document without notation. Clarifications to existing material or the addition of post-interview material are contained in footnote form within the document. Any materials enclosed within brackets [] are my post-interview additions inserted to clarify possible points of confusion.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Evans and his wife Nancy, who were gracious both in allowing me into their home and in helping to edit the rough transcript.

A word of thanks is in order also to Mr. John T. Sutton, Computer Systems Analyst at Saint Vincent College, for his timely help in solving one of my many computing errors.

A final, special, thanks goes to Dr. Richard D. Wissolik, Professor of English, Saint Vincent College, and Director of the Center for Northern Appalachian Studies for offering this project to me.

—*Gary E. J. Smith*
Latrobe, PA
September 1992

¹ See Bibliography for references to Nazi death camps, especially Robert Mendler.

Introduction

THE GENERATION OF AMERICANS which came of age at the dawn of the Second World War were a special breed. They answered their country's call willingly, not necessarily due to any great idealistic struggle against Nazism or imperialist aggression, but because there was a job to do. The generation which grew up during the lean years of the depression knew that, like the bitter pill of hunger and economic ruin, this new challenge would have to be faced and defeated before they could resume their lives.

The ritual of going to war is as ancient as society itself. It is ingrained deep within our male personas. Perhaps for some there was an element of the fantastic: teenage boys marching cocksure into the induction centers, much like the brave children of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*,² who believed that a show of force alone would win the war, without full knowledge of the journey on which they were about to embark. For others, war represents a type of family duty. It is an honorable and expected way for the son to follow in his father's footsteps. But for most, war is merely a horrible diversion from the normal routine. It is a national, sometimes global sickness which can only be eradicated by throwing away the best and brightest a nation has to offer.

This most ugly facet of war can best be illustrated with an example from the Soviet Union. During the Second World War, the Soviet Union suffered by far the most casualties. Some estimates place the figure as high as 20 million. What that means in human terms is 20 million men are no longer alive to be fathers, brothers, sons and lovers. Consequently, an entire generation of Soviet children were never permitted to be born, because their potential fathers were killed between 1941 – 45. It was not uncommon for entire families of brothers to enlist or be drafted during the Second World War. One example of how this practice could be detrimental occurred in the early days of the war. Five American brothers were serving on the same destroyer when their ship was sunk off the Pacific island of Guadalcanal. In one fell swoop, an entire family, present and future, was wiped out.³ The subject of this oral history, Mr. Thomas Evans, was one of five brothers serving at the same time, albeit on different fronts, during the Second World War. Mercifully, his family fared well.

Thomas J. Evans was born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, on March the 11th, 1920. His father, Frank, was a medicine manufacturer and wholesale druggist with a shop on Mount Pleasant Street in Greensburg beginning about 1925. His mother, Hilda, was, typically for this time period, a homemaker. Thomas Evans attended high school in Greensburg and graduated in 1938. He admits that his best subject was math. He played on the high school tennis team, but regrets not being “big enough to play football, much as I'd like to have.” Evans participated on the 1938 State Champion baseball team from Belmont, and enjoyed playing basketball. Even today, Evans is still quite active. Many times he had to be summoned from doing some type of yard work to sit for an interview. He is also still an active tennis player.

Evans' first wife, Martha, whom he married in 1946, died in 1973. They had lived in Ligonier for one year prior to building a house on Morrison Avenue in Greensburg. There are three Evans children from this first marriage: Thomas, Jr (Tod), owner of Boomer's Restaurant in Greensburg, Mike, and Lisa. Evans remarried in 1976 to his present wife, Nancy, and they reside at 229 Morrison Avenue, Greensburg.

While on terminal leave from the Army, Evans began working for Eidemiller's in Greensburg. He started in the parts department, but with his penchant for mathematics, moved to the accounting department. Evans

² Concerning the American Civil War. The first realistic novel of war, and one of enormous influence on subsequent war literature. It ranks with Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which it also probably influenced.

³ Five sons of Mrs. Thomas E. Sullivan of Waterloo, Iowa, who were killed aboard the USS *Juneau* on November 14, 1942 during the struggle for Guadalcanal. Their story is portrayed in the 1944 film *The Sullivans*.

attended night accounting courses at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, for three years. He worked for Eidemiller for 34 years, both as an accountant and controller for their operations. Evans retired in 1979.

When asked what he had been doing since retirement, Evans laughed and replied, "I'm probably busier now than when I worked." He does accounting work two days a week for Victor Smith of Ligonier. He and his wife own and operate a dry cleaning and coin laundry on Highland Avenue in Greensburg.

Evans is a fascinating man to listen to. He is a decorated veteran, but shuns the recognition he rightly deserves. He admits that some of his actions during the heat of combat "might have been foolhardy." Evans was not interested in medals, only in trying to keep his men alive. As Evans' Third Army Commander, General George S. Patton remarked, "No one ever won a war by dying for his country. He won by making the other poor bastard die for his country."⁴

Evans met several truly historical figures. First and foremost was Patton. After the first day of the Battle of Arracourt, Patton visited Evans' command post to commend him on a job well done. That was just the first of many encounters with General Patton. After hostilities ceased in 1945, Evans was assigned to a Prisoner of War camp near Landshut, Germany. There, while interrogating prisoners, he briefly met General Vlasov, another larger-than-life individual. Vlasov was a former White Russian officer who was convinced (some say coerced) to help the Nazis against the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front. Later, in Switzerland, Evans was able to get a glimpse of a compound full of Nazi war criminals, most notable of whom was Herman Goering.

Evans was also fortunate to have been able to participate in the design, testing and eventual combat deployment of the M18 "Hellcat" tank destroyer.⁵ The United States Army found that its antitank capabilities were woefully inadequate against the masses of German armor, so a new tank destroyer was desired. Evans, along with a handful of other armor officers from various posts around the US, was invited to Detroit to the Buick Division of General Motors, to offer suggestions for the design of this new vehicle. There are precious few times in a soldier's career that he is given the opportunity to impact upon the equipment he will use in the performance of his duty. Evans and these other officers seized the moment and helped to design one of the most effective combat vehicles ever. In just a few short months the M18 went from the drawing board to the maneuver field and then the European Theater of Operations.

Evans' story is remarkable, yet it is only one piece of a much larger puzzle. There are millions of Evans' out there, each of whom was quietly heroic and dedicated to his or her comrades in arms. Each of whom hated conflict, yet put aside their personal lives for five years to focus on the future. Many of them never made it home. Those who did came home to a much different world.

As a Communications Officer from the 4th Armored Division put it:

I believe most of us by the time we entered combat were dedicated to service. Not only service to ourselves, or to our country or our families, but to service as an ideal, abstractly, a desire to do good, abstractly, while we used all the violence we could to kill our enemies.⁶

⁴ See Bibliography under Farago.

⁵ A weapon or vehicle designed and employed to defeat enemy armored vehicles. Tank destroyers may be self propelled, as an M18, or they may be towed, like an artillery piece. The self propelled version was usually highly maneuverable, yet very thinly armored, and was not designed to fight head-to-head with the larger German tanks. Hit and run tactics were generally successful.

⁶ From Irzyk, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 60.

A Note on the German Counterattack in the XII Corps Sector (September 19 – October 1, 1944)

The Lorraine Tank Battles

[These notes and comments, largely summarized from Cole's history [see bibliography] include the German attack at Lunéville (September 18); the armored encounter at Arracourt (September 19 – 22); and the extension of battles (September 24 – 29)].

Events occurred after Allied decisions to effect a double-pronged advance toward the Ruhr and Saar, thus allowing the Third Army to launch an attack across the Moselle River and proceed toward the Rhine.

Eisenhower (10 September 1944, SHAEF SGS, Post OVERLORD Planning 381, I) states:

... to break the Siegfried Line and seize crossings over the Rhine Once we have the Ruhr and the Saar, we have a strangle hold on two of Germany's main industrial areas, and will have largely destroyed her capacity to wage war At the moment and until we have developed the Channel ports and the rail lines therefrom, our supply situation is stretched to the breaking point, and from this standpoint the advance across the Siegfried Line involves a gamble which I am prepared to take in order to take full advantage of the present disorganized state of the German armies in the West.

Involved Units of the German Army

LVIII Panzer Corps
XLVII Panzer Corps
First Panzer Army
Fifth Panzer Army
11th Panzer Division (“Ghost Division”)
21st Panzer Division
15th Panzer Grenadier Division
553rd Volksgrenadier Division
559th Volksgrenadier Division
106th Panzer Brigade
112th Panzer Brigade
113th Panzer Brigade
111th Panzer Brigade
110th Panzer Regiment
110th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
2113th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
15th Panzer Grenadier Division

Involved Units of the American and Allied Army

Third Army
26th Division
79th Division
4th Armored Division
6th Armored Division
10th Armored Infantry Battalion
51st Armored Infantry Battalion
53rd Armored Infantry Battalion
8th Tank Battalion
35th Tank Battalion
37th Tank Battalion
603rd Tank Destroyer Battalion
704th Tank Destroyer Battalion
183rd Field Artillery Group
191st Field Artillery Battalion
313th Infantry
320th Infantry
2nd Cavalry Group
25th Cavalry Squadron
42nd Cavalry Squadron
USAAF 405th Tactical Fighter Group
French 2nd Armored Division

The Lorraine Tank Battles essentially came to a close on September 30, 1944. The 4th Armored established positions near Arracourt, near entrenched German infantry.

On October 22, a decision was made to extend the American salient east of Arracourt, and the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion was chosen to support the troops of Major-General William S. Paul's 26th Division in this endeavor. At the end of the day, the 26th succeeded, after fierce fighting, in reaching the area west of Moncourt. In the engagement Second Lieutenant Charles Kollin (A Company, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion) received the DSC. Cole describes the incident at follows:

[Kollin] was leading a platoon to reinforce the infantry attack, found himself and his platoon in a mine field under heavy artillery fire. He reorganized the platoon and went back and forth through the mine field directing evacuation of the wounded, then led the attack forward [Cole, 290].

Cole also describes the actions of A Company commander First Lieutenant John J. Preneta:

[Preneta] When the company was halted by the mine field he made a reconnaissance on foot, killed two snipers with his pistol, and captured two others in a pill-box [Cole, 290].

Such was the performance of the 26th Division and the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion that their opposing German commander called them “shock troops.”

Cole (243) explains that:

The division [4th Armored] had learned much of the capabilities and limitations of the M-4 Tank and its short-barreled 75-mm gun, with which most of the medium tank companies were equipped. Maneuver had been the major tactic in Lorraine, with various types of the “mouse trap play” and surprise attacks from hull defilade, or under the cover of the fogs rising from the Moselle and Seille bottoms, against German tanks whose high-

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velocity guns generally out-ranged the American tank weapon but whose turrets — traversed by hand — turned so slowly that four or five rounds could be fired into a Panther before its own gun could be brought to bear. American tank losses usually had been sustained in frontal attacks against enemy armor fighting from cover, or over level spaces where the superior range of the long-barreled 75mm gun on the M-4 could make the kill.

During various encounters to October, 1994, The 4th Armored Division destroyed an estimated 285 German tanks or other armored vehicles.

Thomas J. Evans

[Detailed historical background for the events described by Mr. Evans may be found in Hugh M. Cole, "Lorraine Campaign." See Bibliography in this document for additional sources].

GS: State your full name.

TE: Thomas J. Evans.

GS: Where and when were you born?

TE: March 11th, 1920, in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

GS: And your parents' names and occupations?

TE: My father's name was Frank and he was a drug manufacturer and a wholesale druggist. And my mother's name was Hilda and she was a housewife.

GS: Did your father have a shop here in Greensburg?

TE: Yes, he had a business on Mount Pleasant Street, in what's now known as The White Horse Tavern. He started there, I'd say roughly, 1925.

GS: Where did you go to high school?

TE: I graduated from Greensburg High School in 1938.

GS: What was your favorite subject?

TE: Oh, I was pretty good in math.

GS: Were you involved in any sports?

TE: I was on the tennis team. I wasn't big enough to play football, much as I'd like to have, and I played a little bit of basketball, but never in high school. We had a baseball team in town here, in Belmont, that I played on for two or three years. We were State Champions in 1938. But, that's about it.

GS: Did you marry before the war?

TE: No, after the war. My first wife, Martha and I were married in 1946. We lived in Ligonier for a year and then we moved to Greensburg. We built a house on Morrison Avenue. I had three children and my first wife died in January 1973. Then I remarried in 1976 to my present wife, Nancy.

GS: What are your children's names?

TE: My oldest son is Thomas, Junior, that's Tod, and my second son is Mike and I have a daughter, Lisa ... Do you want to know where I worked during these years?

GS: We can talk about that now.

TE: Okay, when I came home from the service in 1945, I was on leave, so I was still in the Army when I started to work for Eidemiller's here in Greensburg. I stayed with them for 34 years.

- GS:** What were your duties while you were working with Eidemiller's?
- TE:** I was an accountant. I started working in the parts department. Two years later, two years later, I worked in the office and also attended Saint Vincent College and took some accounting courses. Actually, I was there three years in night school, taking accounting. I stayed with Eidemiller's as an accountant and was the controller for all of their operations until 1979, when I retired.
- GS:** Since then what have you been doing?
- TE:** [Laughs] I'm probably busier now than when I worked. I still do some accounting for Victor Smith, in Ligonier, a couple of days a week. And my wife and I own and operate a dry-cleaning and coin laundry on Highland Avenue, in Greensburg. Other than that, why, I'm "supposed" to be retired [laughs].
- GS:** Let's go back a few years and talk about your military training. How did you come to be in the military?
- TE:** I was drafted in March of 1941. I was 21-years-old when I got my draft notice. I passed my physical and on November 3rd of 1941 I was drafted. I went to New Cumberland, Pennsylvania for three days for induction and from there to Fort Knox, Kentucky for basic training.
- GS:** What is the draft process like?
- TE:** After your 21st birthday you became eligible and registered for the draft.⁷ You were assigned a number at that time and that number informed you of your status. When it was time to go for your physical, you'd get a letter by name and draft number and you would appear for the physical at an assigned time.⁸

On passing the physical, I was given an "A-1" classification⁹ and knew I would probably be drafted within the next three or four weeks. So, in October, 1941, I got a notice to report on November 11th. I was sent to New Cumberland and from there to Fort Knox. When war broke out on December 7th, I was getting ready to come home for Christmas holidays and all leaves were canceled. I stayed at Fort Knox, finished my basic training and was assigned to a demonstration regiment. I was a sergeant at that time in charge of 17 men to demonstrate the proper procedure for gunnery on the 75mm howitzer.¹⁰ I was in that for six weeks. I got a notification that I could apply for OCS, Officer Candidate School,¹¹ which I did. I was accepted and I went into OCS the 1st of May (1942) at Fort Knox,

⁷ Conscription, Selective Service. A system to secure troops for service. In the United States, the first drafts occurred during the Civil War (1861 – 1865) first by the Confederate States (1862), then by the Union in 1863, when volunteers were scarce. The Conscription Act of 1863 was unfair since it allowed for the hiring of substitutes. Another draft occurred in 1917 when the Selective Service Act was passed. This draft collected 3 million men as opposed to 1 million volunteers. Under the Selective Service Act of 1940, the first number drawn was 158. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, drew it from the same bowl that was used in the 1917 draft. It took some 18 hours to draw all the numbers. Lewis B. Hershey drew the last number, 2,114. Drafts occurred in subsequent national crises (e.g., Korea, Vietnam), and in 1980 – 1981, all males in the United States were required to register for the draft when they reached the age of 18.

⁸ The communication began with "Greetings."

⁹ Classifications ran from 1A (fit for service) to IVF (4 – F), physically, mentally or morally unfit for service.

¹⁰ A field artillery piece, sometimes designed to be broken down and reassembled by mobile forces. The M1A1 75mm pack howitzer (3.5 in) could be broken down into eight loads and was used by Allied airborne and amphibious forces during World War II. The term is from the Dutch *houwtiser*, derived from the Czech *houfnice* (c. 1695), analogous in performance to the Roman siege *ballista*. Generally, a howitzer is a short cannon used to fire projectiles at medium muzzle velocity at somewhat high trajectories.

¹¹ Officer Candidate School. Phase of military training which trains would-be officers in such areas as troop leading, navigation, advanced weapons skills, advanced tactics, etc. Such officers were called, often derisively, "90-Day Wonders" by West Pointers who had

(continued...)

for 90 days. I graduated from OCS and was assigned to Pine Camp, New York in the Fall of 1942.

GS: What was OCS like?

TE: It was a very strenuous program. We were awakened at six o'clock, had morning formation out in front of the barracks and after inspection would march to breakfast. After breakfast we would have, several days a week, classes on tactics. Then we would break up into groups. Some of it was for tank training, some of it was actual 'hands on' operating the tanks. We had gas mask drills and practice on all small arms: pistol, rifle, sub-machine gun, machine gun, light machine gun, .30 caliber, .50 caliber and up as high as 75mm in the tank itself. And we had a lot of physical exercise.

Before breakfast we'd have 50 minutes of calisthenics and drill in hand to hand combat. It was very strenuous, I mean they made you go through a pretty rigorous operation. Which was fine. I was young in those days and I enjoyed it, really. It was great. It got you in pretty good shape. This went on five days a week. Saturday morning, we had an inspection of all gear. We'd fall out early Saturday morning for field drill and equipment inspection, then we'd have an inspection of the barracks. After inspections, we were dismissed until Monday morning. And we were allowed off post. We went into Louisville usually on weekends, to different hotels. As I said, I really enjoyed it. It was a big time. [Laughs] And I made many new friends, which I still have today. Some of us stayed together throughout the war and others I would meet on various occasions.

The classes in tactics and maneuvers and so forth were very interesting. They had very competent people teaching there. The officers that were training us were very, very capable. I graduated July 25th, 1942, as a Second Lieutenant.

Upon graduation, I was assigned to the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which was attached to the 4th Armored Division at Pine Camp, New York. I stayed with the 704th for all of my training and went overseas with them and stayed with them the entire war. Three-quarters of our training was with the 4th Armored Division. But, we spent several months at Camp Hood, Texas, which was the tank destroyer center. We spent three months at Camp Hood, then rejoined the 4th Armored Division at the Desert Training Center, California. We were out there for 10 months, on maneuvers. Seven of the 10 months we were on field maneuvers, training in what we would do in support of a division. We worked with the tanks and the infantry as armored infantry and armored field artillery.¹²

I think the 4th Armored was one of the four or five armored divisions that were formed into "triangular" (divisions). The Army reduced the number of men and increased the number of tanks decreasing the size of the divisions. They were regiments at one time, and I think they cut them down to what they called "combat battalions." The division fought three combat commands. They would assign, depending on the situation, which of the combat commands would lead the attack and which of the battalions in the division were assigned to the combat command.

GS: How was the training at Camp Hood and the desert set up?

TE: The tank destroyers would practice in their expertise and the tanks and the infantry would do the same thing. Then, about every third week we would have field problems and fight as a tactical unit to

¹¹ (...continued)
spent four years in the United States Military Academy to gain their commissions.

¹² Artillery units equipped with armored vehicles for transportation. The guns themselves may be either mounted directly on an armored vehicle chassis or towed behind a vehicle.

an objective. These exercises brought out a lot of flaws. At the same time, they taught a lot, too. A lot of it was set up for actual combat conditions. We trained probably for two, maybe two-and-a-half years as a division, and as a battalion within the division. We were well trained and well prepared. In combat, I was glad that we had the variety of training that we had. Of course, at times I wished that we'd had more.

GS: I'd like to ask you about your rank and pay. What was your rank progression and what was the pay scale like?

TE: Well, when I graduated from OCS I was commissioned a second lieutenant and we were paid a couple hundred dollars a month. I was promoted to first lieutenant in December 1942. [Consults personal files] Here, Officer Pay Data Card. As a captain, my monthly base pay was \$210. Additional for foreign service, \$20, rental allowance, \$90, subsistence, \$42. That totals out to about \$375 a month. I think a first lieutenant was around \$260 – \$280, somewhere around there.

GS: When I was in basic training in 1981, we got \$550 a month.

TE: \$550 a month, really? [Laughs] I'll bet you a general didn't get that much during World War Two. When I was a major I got paid close to \$500 a month, but that was after the war. I was promoted just before I came home. What do they make now?

GS: When I finished up, as a sergeant on active duty, I was making about a \$1,000 a month, take home. It was probably about \$1,200 or \$1,300 before taxes. That was with living allowances.

TE: Holy mackerel. We never made anywhere near that, even as high as colonels didn't make that kind of money. When I was first inducted into the Army I got \$18.75, or something like that, a month. All through basic training, as a private, I got around \$18. They would take out for laundry, and PX privileges and stuff like that. We'd get maybe nine or 10 bucks. Before I went in, I worked for Gulf Oil a couple of summers, about three years off and on, at a gas station. When I went into the service they sent me a check for full pay for three months. I think about \$160-some. I lived like a king.

GS: Why did they do that?

TE: I don't know. It was just their way of taking care of anybody who got inducted into the service. I can remember guys in the pay line, lining up to get 12 bucks, or only two or three bucks. Some of them had statements of charges against them for destroying equipment and wouldn't get anything. One fellow, from Chicago, I'm sure he was connected with the mob. We used to get Saturday afternoons off, and this great big old car would pull up down there and he'd get in the car and go. He always came back with tailored civilian clothes on. He wasn't a regular GI.¹³ When he got in line to get his pay, I think he made eight or nine bucks, he'd just crumple it up and give it a pitch and walk away [laughs].

GS: What were your promotion dates?

¹³ Usually taken to stand for General Issue, or anything issued by the US government to troops, including the infantry (Dogfaces). The initials, however, probably derive from designations applied by quartermaster clerks to garbage cans, "galvanized iron." The image of the "regular GI" was sympathetically and humorously portrayed by such cartoonists as Bill Mauldin, who created the characters Willie and Joe. Mauldin was a staff member of *Stars and Stripes*, the armed services newspaper, and later received a Pulitzer Prize for his cartoons. A corresponded noted for this affectionate treatment of the GI was Ernie Pyle. The term "GI Joe" first appeared in Lieutenant Dave Berger's comic strip in *Yank Magazine* on June 17, 1942. "Joe" was applied universally by the European population the American infantry. "Joe" was stereotypically dressed in baggy combat clothing, had a five-day-old beard, was good-natured, and always had some chocolate and chewing-gum to hand out to the "kids." In fact, "Hey, Joe, you got gum?" became a standard request.

TE: July 25th, 1942, I was commissioned a second lieutenant. December 28th, 1942, to first lieutenant. And to captain on January 23rd, 1943. And to major in December 1945.

GS: Were you ever wounded?

TE: Yes. You know, I was very, very fortunate that I never had any serious wounds. I would see guys with their legs and arms and heads shot up and I was fortunate that I never got into that. I was in several minor scrapes, but as far as any serious wounds, I was lucky enough not to be wounded. And I think that's as much as I want to say about that.

GS: Can you tell me about your awards and decorations?

TE: Well, I have two Bronze Stars.¹⁴ I got one of them at the beginning of Arracourt, the day after we got our tanks up and into position. Colonel Clarke¹⁵ came over and pinned a Bronze Star on me. And I got one around Moyenvic. I have a Silver Star¹⁶ and a Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁷ Of course, the whole outfit was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and the French Croix de Guerre, with palm.¹⁸

GS: Where did you earn your Silver Star?

TE: It was during the battle at Troyes. It was a major battle we'd had there. I was with CC "A,"¹⁹ 4th Armored and "C" Company ran into a situation where we were to protect the right flank of the attack. We were hit pretty hard there. I guided the tanks around, in and out, and was awarded the Silver Star for that.

I maybe should have put my men in for a lot more awards. If I'd known then what I know now, I would've. You talk about above and beyond, every day and every day, they just took it as part of their job. Which is what a good soldier is supposed to do. We had a lot of good guys. Even today I wouldn't be afraid to take them anywhere.

We were into a lot of messy, hard-fought battles. They may have only lasted a couple of hours or half a day, but still, they were significant. We knocked out a lot of German equipment. Every day, we shot up their tanks, their trains, whatever was in front of us, we handled it.

GS: Tell me how you were involved in the development of the M18.

TE: The original tank-destroyer was a halftrack²⁰ with a 75mm gun mounted on it. It was big and bulky and it was a fair terrain vehicle, [but] it couldn't maneuver in mud and snow and ice. They talked about developing a new tank destroyer which would be fast, low in silhouette, and would pack as large an artillery piece as it could handle. Anyway, they talked more and more about it and when we were in the desert in California, the Army decided to develop a new tank destroyer. Each tank destroyer

¹⁴ Awarded for gallantry.

¹⁵ B.C. Clarke. Later, Brigadier General.

¹⁶ Awarded to indicate "a citation for gallantry in action."

¹⁷ Awarded to any member of the army, regardless of rank, who "shall have distinguished himself or herself by extraordinary heroism."

¹⁸ Instituted by the French government in 1915 and awarded to soldiers and sailors of all ranks mentioned in dispatches by a general or CO.

¹⁹ Also CC "B" and CC "R." Combat Command "A" or "B" within an armored division. A combat command would be made up of one of the divisions' three heavy armored battalions plus various other combat attachments. CC "R" was usually kept in reserve.

²⁰ Light armored transport vehicle used by armored infantry. So called because its front axle was wheeled like a truck, while its rear axles were tracked like a tank.

battalion assigned two men to attend classes for the development of this tank destroyer at General Motors in Detroit and Flint, Michigan. I was one of the ones who got to go.

The first night in Detroit, after dinner, they had a meeting. I would say there were roughly 30 to 35 officers there from various tank destroyer and tank outfits. People were from different camps all over the United States. Two of the engineers and two of the artists from the Buick Division of General Motors were at this meeting. They asked everybody's opinion as to what they thought this tank destroyer should look like. As we talked to them, these artists would actually draw our ideas on a blackboard. If we wanted a lower silhouette, or a different shape, we would make suggestions, and they would change the drawing accordingly. When they finished they had quite a machine drawn on this blackboard. And everybody agreed to the new adaptations. From there, the engineering people went to work. They had the actual chassis of this tank built. The engineers intended to use a Sherman tank²¹ chassis, which was not suitable. It was too heavy, too bulky and not fast enough. When I mean 'fast enough,' I don't mean exactly speed. I'm talking about the maneuverability of it.

The next day, they went on with this tank idea. Overnight, they built an actual mock-up of the new design, a life-size model of wood and clay. They had o.d. green paint²² on it and a white star on the front and all the markings. Everyone agreed that it would be quite a machine if it could be built. This was in April 1943.

In December of 1943, this tank was completed. They called it a "Hellcat." The "M18" wasn't on it. They had a "T" number on it at first, which meant "experimental." We were at Camp Maxey, Texas at that time. After they had the halftrack with the 75mm on it, they came out with a much heavier and clumsier tank. It was built on the same chassis as an M4 Sherman,²³ without a turret top. It had a mounted 75mm gun. They called it an M10. That was what we were supposed to use as a combat vehicle until this other one was developed. We practiced out in the desert and trained in M10s. The 4th Armored Division was sent to maneuvers in Louisiana. We went to Camp Hood, Texas, came back to California, and went from there to Camp Maxey. There, they delivered the first two of these M18s to us in the 704th.

We operated the M18s at maximum to discover flaws and work the bugs out. They had an engineer from Buick Division who came along with the tanks. He stayed with us about six weeks. We ran those things day in and day out, night and day, just to see what they would do, what kind of performance we'd get out of them. This engineer kept a complete log of everything that was done on them. He went back to Detroit, and Flint, Michigan was where they actually built the tanks, to make the modifications that we suggested. They made these modifications and we received 36 M18s at Maxey. We trained in these during January and early February, 1944. 36 vehicles was a full complement for a battalion.

GS: Let's back up a little bit. With regard to the modifications to the M18, were there surprises with the tank, things you were happy with, or things that were not good?

TE: Oh, no. We were very much pleased with it. It had a Wright Whirlwind 400-horsepower airplane

²¹ American 34-ton medium tank. It was nicknamed "The Ronson" because of the ease with which it could be set aflame. The tank used gasoline engines the fuel for which easily ignited when the engine was hit. It could not match the German Panther or Tiger, but it was reliable and greatly outnumbered the German armor.

²² Olive drab.

²³ The Sherman was used by the United States until 1956, through various versions from M4 to M4A6, the last accommodating a Wright radial gasoline engine converted to diesel.

engine. The back armor plate door opened down and had tracks built right on it so with four bolts you could take that engine and slide it right out on those tracks. And pick it up with the crane on the back of the “draggin' wagon,”²⁴ as we called it. It was easy to work with, there was nothing to it. It had an automatic transmission. It was what they called a “torquematic transmission,” which Buick later used in their automobiles. It had three forward speeds and one reverse. There was no clutch in it at all, it was fully automatic. You'd pull a lever down and put it into gear just like you'd do a modern automobile. It had two steering levers. You pull back on the one to the right, it would lock the right tracks and it'll spin to the right. Visa versa on the left. And to stop it you just pull back on both steering levers. It had torsion bars instead of volute springs like are on a tank track. It had a torsion bar that would turn and twist and take the shock out of the tank bouncing over rough terrain. It was a christie-type suspension, where all the bogey wheels were all the same size and interlocked with one another. The final drives that drove the track on the front were hooked to the automatic transmission so there was no secret to running it. You just get in and turn it on. As I said, it had this Whirlwind engine in it and that thing would really move. They could go as fast as 65, 70 miles-an-hour on a straight highway. Even cross country it could traverse ditches and bumps and obstacles at high speeds. It could ford a three-foot deep stream, move in reverse at 40 miles-an-hour and change direction on a dime. The tank had a force-taper, high velocity 76mm gun, with a muzzle velocity of 4,000 feet-per-second. It could penetrate German armor at anything under 2,000 yards, except a Tiger tank.²⁵ And I was hoping and praying I would never run into one of those [laughs] straight on. A Tiger had anywhere from nine to eleven inches of armor plate on the glacis plate²⁶ of their tank. When we would hit it at a thousand yards, which we did a few times, it was like throwing a snowball at it. We'd see our projectile bounce off [laughs]. The M18 had a .50 caliber machine gun on the race where the tank commander stood. They had intercom systems throughout the tank, a machine gun, a bow gun mounted coaxially²⁷ with the 76mm. It was very thinly armored for a tank. It had an inch-an-a-half of armor on the side and two inches on the front. It had an open turret. You could not close the turret and be completely safe-you'd get all kinds of small arms fire. If we were hit, it would do a lot of damage to the tank. Our success and part of our expertise was to outmaneuver them. With the speed and the maneuverability, we did. We practiced many times and we knew what that tank would do and what it wouldn't do. We had excellent people. My company was as fine an outfit as I'd ever want to be around. And they proved themselves in combat. We were highly trained and that was to our benefit.

GS: How many members on the crew of the M18?

TE: We had five men in each tank. The tank commander was up in the turret. We had a driver, assistant driver, radio man, and the loader. He loaded the 76mm gun, he was the gunner. Of course everybody would interchange jobs. We later on eliminated the assistant driver, as he had no duties. Many times we'd send him out to be a scout for the vehicle. Out in front of it when it was stopped or taking up a position. We also used the gun for indirect fire.²⁸ We could line up and fire as indirect artillery pieces. We would have tank from maintenance with a bulldozer blade come over and build a ramp,

²⁴ (Slang) Typically any maintenance vehicle used to tow or repair tanks or other armored vehicles. Also a tank recovery vehicle. Sometimes spelled "Dragon."

²⁵ 63-ton German heavy tank. The full designation was VI. This tank was armed with an 88mm cannon and 7-inch-thick frontal armor. With only a 650-horsepower engine, however, it was slow, lacking in maneuverability, and its turret traversing system was slower than any other tank. Moreover, it was not mechanically reliable.

²⁶ The sloped frontal area of any tank, roughly equivalent to where the hood would be on an automobile. Sloped armor was helped deflect anti-tank ordnance.

²⁷ Placed so that it may fire in the same direction as the main cannon. Usually mounted on the turret immediately beside the main gun.

²⁸ Method of target engagement used when there is an obstruction between the weapon and the target which prohibits direct firing. A mortar firing over a hill or a railway gun firing over the horizon are examples of indirect fire.

because the gun wouldn't elevate high enough to get any distance out of the 76mm. We did on many occasions use them as indirect fire for artillery. The executive officer was trained, as well as myself, to be able to line the guns "parallel," for indirect firing. But, the gun had a low trajectory, and was not good for indirect fire, because of the loud muzzle blast and also because it wasn't built for that purpose. But, somebody came up with that idea and we did use it.

GS: What was its maximum range as indirect fire artillery?

TE: I think about 8,000 yards. It was good for five, six miles. We had the whole battalion lined up to fire around Raids, France. And we couldn't get the guns elevated enough to fire over the tree line, so we wrapped some primacord²⁹ around, I suppose, 40 or 50 trees that were in front of our tanks, to cut them down and get a field of fire. The Germans picked up the blast and we got a hell of a counterbattery³⁰ down on us. [Laughs] That was the end of that. We didn't do too much more of that around there. We'd do it where we could line up and fire and move, but not where we were stationary. We were in that orchard at Sainte-Mère-Eglise³¹ for two weeks. And we'd get all kinds of artillery fire on us at night.

GS: Was the automatic transmission an innovation? Did other tanks in service have that?

TE: Oh, no, no. This was strictly a Buick invention. Automatic transmissions at that time were just coming into being.

GS: So the other tanks would have had a clutch and would have been harder to operate over rough terrain?

TE: They may have come out later on with tanks that had automatic transmissions, but at that time the M18 was the only one I know that had it. Even the American light tanks, I think, had a clutch, and you'd have to double-clutch it to get into gear. In fact, the first tank I drove at Fort Knox, the only way you could get it into gear was to put your left foot up on the dashboard, take both hands, push the clutch in and pull back to get it into gear [laughs]. But, not so with an M18. You could put it into gear and push down on the gas throttle, and boy, it would move. There is an M18 at a military museum in New England, that was rebuilt at Aberdeen. In March 1990, one of the men from "B" Company was asked if he'd like to come down to Aberdeen, Maryland,³² and drive this M18. He drove against a Bradley³³ and an M1A Abrams.³⁴ I have a tape of this M18 racing against the Abrams and the

²⁹ Cable used to detonate various forms of explosives. May also be referred to as "det. cord."

³⁰ Response to artillery fire. Artillery fire would be detected by enemy observers and reported to enemy batteries, which would return fire. The solution to this problem was to fire and move as quickly as possible to avoid the counterbattery.

³¹ A critical, crossroads-town which was the D-Day objective of the 82nd Airborne, assigned to the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. To the Germans, the drop appeared to be a failure. 30 troopers landed in the town center, already set ablaze by pre-attack bombers. One trooper became hung-up on a church steeple and pretended to be dead. After two hours he was cut down and taken prisoner. These events are depicted in the film *Longest Day*. Actor Red Buttons portrays the soldier hung on the steeple. The American troops, nevertheless, took and held the town, and by so doing maintained command of the main road between Cherbourg and Carentan.

³² Aberdeen Proving Grounds Museum.

³³ Named after General Omar Nelson Bradley (1893 – 1981), a classmate of Eisenhower's at West Point. He ended World War II in command of four armies. His command finished Hitler's Afrika Korps in three weeks, made quick work of the Germans in Sicily, removed the Germans from France in less than 30 days, fought in the Battle of the Bulge, captured a crucial bridge at Remagen in Germany, and greeted the Russians on the Elbe River. It must be noted that Bradley had the good fortune of having General George S. Patton within his command. Bradley was admirably played by Karl Malden in the film *Patton* (1970). In other films, Bradley was portrayed by Nicholas Stuart (*Longest Day* 1962); Glenn Ford (*Is Paris Burning?* 1966); Fred Stuthman (*MacArthur* 1977); Richard T. Herd (*Ike* TV miniseries, 1979).

³⁴ Modern United States tank. Named the "Abrams," after 4th Armored Division's Colonel Creighton (later General) Abrams. Abrams commanded the 37th Tank Battalion. He spearheaded the columns that broke through the German encirclement of the 101st Airborne

(continued...)

Bradley. And it kept right up there, I'll tell you, for a 50-year-old-vehicle, or a 50 year old engineering design. Incidentally, the new Abrams battle tank is named for Lt. Colonel (later four-star Chief of Staff) Abrams, who I spent a lot of time with in combat.

GS: How did this compare to the German tanks? Did they have automatic transmissions?

TE: No, they were all gear-shifted. They had no automatic.

GS: So this gave you an advantage.

TE: A definite advantage. And another advantage, too, we had an automatic turret, that could spin around three or four times before a German tank would even get around once.³⁵

GS: What was the range of the M18 main gun in direct fire³⁶ mode?

TE: I'd say 5,000 yards. We fired them as far as five to seven miles as indirect fire.

GS: How did the 704th get from Camp Maxey to Boston?

TE: By train. It took us two days to get up there. They had mostly direct routes. They would re-route everybody else and let the troop trains go through. Especially when they were going to a staging area.

GS: How did you travel from Boston to England? Did you travel with your equipment, or was it sent separately?

TE: It was sent separately. We went on a troop ship, the *Britannic*, which was at one time a cruise ship. We were "double-loaded," which means that you were in a bunk for eight hours, then somebody else had it for eight hours while you were up on deck. A lot of the guys were sick as dogs, boy, I'll tell you. I was up on the top deck, there were four of us in a cabin. But the men down below decks really suffered. That was a terrible trip, the water was rough and the ship bobbed up and down like a cork. On February 18, 1944, we went from Camp Maxey to the staging area at Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts. We sailed out of Boston Harbor for England on February 27, 1944, on the British ship, *Britannic*. We landed in Liverpool, England on the 11th of March 1944.³⁷ The 4th Armored Division gradually came, unit by unit, until we were all assembled within a 30 or 40 mile radius of each other. We trained there during March, April and May. We were out every day with the tanks, moving, cleaning and actual 76mm gunnery practice. Of course, everyone was expecting D-Day³⁸ at that time.

³⁴ (...continued)

at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. He later commanded all US forces in Vietnam. The Abrams is the current Main Battle Tank of the US Army.

³⁵ The turrets of the German tanks needed to be turned by hand.

³⁶ Method of target engagement used when there is an unobstructed direct-line view to the target. A tank firing at another tank, or a rifleman firing at a soldier are examples of direct fire.

³⁷ Mr. Evans added, during the editing process: "We went to Talced, England, and the officers were billeted in a beautiful old manor house, called The Denby House. This was on the Salisbury Plains, which were the training grounds for English armor. We had maneuvers on the Salisbury Plains and at times around Stonehenge." The Salisbury plains are a plateau-like area of approximately 300 square miles located around Wiltshire, England. The ancient ruin, Stonehenge, can be found on the Plain. It was and still is used extensively by the military as an exercise area. Stonehenge, a series of monolithic structures made arranged in a circle, is located some eight miles north of the town of Salisbury, England. Stonehenge was constructed sometime around the year 3100 BC. The site's exact purpose is unclear, but Stonehenge is believed to be an ancient place of Druidic worship and sacrifice.

³⁸ Tuesday, June 6, 1944, when the Allies invaded the beaches of Normandy, France. Involved in the initial assault were 185,000 troops, 18,000 airborne troops, 13,175 aircraft, 4,066 landing ships, 745 ships of various sizes, 20,000 vehicles, and 348 minesweepers. The British

(continued...)

We went into a staging area around Trowbridge. And on D-Day, we were on the road at 5:30 in the morning, heading for Bournemouth and Southampton, which was where the armored divisions would await their channel crossing. We were on the road, lined up vehicle to vehicle, until 6:00 that night [laughs]. In the meantime, they had told us to just shut the motors off and sit there a while. They weren't ready to load the armor yet. We were in that position for several days. And all the time this stuff is sitting row after row on every road in England. Our planes were back and forth overhead, for air cover,³⁹ which was a great feeling. I don't know how many different areas they took off from along the coast to go across the channel.⁴⁰

In the meantime, the situation changed. There was a violent storm that came up that destroyed a lot of the landing facilities in Normandy. As a result, it was three weeks before the armored divisions moved across the channel. But, three days after arriving at Bournemouth, I went to recon⁴¹ an area for "C" Company's position near Sainte-Mère-Eglise. I sat there for 10 days, two weeks with nothing to do because we couldn't get our troops over.

GS: Was it a convoy over [to England]? Did you have to zig-zag against submarines?⁴²

TE: Yes, we did. We went in a 40 or 50 ship convoy, with protection from the Navy. They had corvettes, which were like a destroyer, but smaller. A lot of them were British, but I saw many American destroyers, too, cutting in and out and back and forth along the route we traveled.⁴³

GS: Were there any submarine scares while you were en-route?⁴⁴

TE: No, we had no problem at all. We went right across. As I said, it was in March, and the problem was the rough seas. [Laughs]

GS: Did you arrive before your equipment? How long did you wait for it?

TE: Some of it was there. They had all new equipment lined up in several different yards. I had to go back

³⁸ (...continued)

landed at the beaches designated Gold and Sword, which were defended by Russians in German uniforms, and the Canadians came ashore at Juno. The Americans landed at the beaches designated Utah and Omaha, and their attack on the latter beach nearly failed after they came face-to-face with well-dug-in German troops there on a practice maneuver. The Americans suffered large numbers of casualties at Omaha Beach.

³⁹ Cover is protection from enemy fire and observation. Not to be confused with concealment, which is merely protection from enemy observation. One can be concealed and still not be under cover.

⁴⁰ There is an interesting irony of history concerning the Invasion of Normandy in 1944. The first town in France to be liberated by the Allies was Bayeux (British troops, June 8). Bayeux was the 11th century Episcopal See of Odo, half-brother of William the Conqueror who accompanied William on his invasion of England in 1066. The Bayeux Tapestry, a nearly 250ft, 19in high embroidery commemorating the Norman Conquest of England and commissioned by Bishop Odo probably as a gift to William, is today exhibited in Bayeux. The irony was not lost on modern embroiderers who produced a similar work commemorating D-Day. They called their work the "Overlord Tapestry."

⁴¹ Reconnaissance. To gather intelligence. Reconnaissance units (Cavalry, in armored divisions; Scouts, in infantry divisions) would travel to the front and flanks of the friendly column in search of enemy formations.

⁴² A group of ships, usually merchant, sailing together under the protection of warships, as a defense against German submarines (U-Boats).

⁴³ Corvettes were primarily British or Canadian vessels built from 1940 to the end of the war in 1945. These were escort vessels first used for coastal defense work, and armed for anti-aircraft and anti-submarine operations. Eventually, corvettes were used on the open sea as ocean-going escorts. They had long range, but a slower speed than a surfaced U-Boat, thus placing them at a disadvantage. Destroyers were originated in the latter part of the 19th century, and they were designed to combat the fast torpedo boats then extensively used by the world's navies. In World War II, they played a major role as fleet escorts and counter-submarine vessels.

⁴⁴ In 1941, Allied shipping losses in the Atlantic rose to alarming portions because of German submarines employing wolf-pack tactics (large numbers of submarines gathered for night attacks). By 1943, a variety of Allied anti-submarine tactics drastically reduced losses among Allied convoys, while U-Boat detection and losses dramatically increased.

to Cardiff, Wales, which was probably 90 or 100 miles away from where we were, to pick up 12 more of our tanks. I took two jeeps and a six-by-six⁴⁵ with the drivers to bring this equipment back. The tanks that we picked up came equipped with metal tracks, which we were not accustomed to. Most of the tanks we practiced with had rubber grommets built into the tracks, which gave them a little more traction.

A steel track was much better in the field. It would last longer, so the ones we picked up had steel tracks. Anyway, in this little town right outside of Cardiff, with narrow cobblestone streets and houses built right up close to the streets, one of the tanks going down a hill slid and banged into a house. I was up ahead in the jeep when I was notified of the accident. So I turned the jeep around and went back to the house. The tank had gotten away on this slippery street and had turned sideways over the curb. The gun barrel knocked the front door out of this house.

A woman standing in front of the house with her hands on her hips was giving me a nasty stare. I walked over to her and told her I was Captain Evans and she said "Evans, Oh, we have Evans' across the street, we have Evans' down here and there's probably 60 other Evans families in our town." Evans is about as Welsh a name as you can get. Anyway, she said, "Come on in and have some tea." So I went in and had a cup of tea and some biscuits and we talked about the war and things. I said, "I'll have somebody from the Army come back and fix the door." "Oh, just forget about it," she said, "I'll have my man fix the door. It's my contribution, since your name is Evans." [Laughs] I still to this day wish I'd have kept the woman's name. I could've gone back to see them, to talk to them, but you don't think of that at the time.

GS: You got to France before your unit. What did France look like to you?

TE: At the beachhead in Normandy, there were troops all over. As we landed, English beach masters⁴⁶ would keep the men and equipment moving inland. Everywhere you looked there were tanks and trucks and jeeps just stuck in off the road. Soldiers running all over everything. When I went in on the landing craft, an LCI, a Landing Craft for Infantry,⁴⁷ there were probably 200 of us on this craft. We landed at Utah beach.⁴⁸

Different beaches were assigned to different outfits. They had brought a portable docking facility that they had floated into the Channel area a day or two after D-Day, when they saw that we were going to be entrenched there. It was floated in sections and then the engineers put it together. It was going to prevent having to get everybody off of a ship in the deep water and onto a smaller craft to get into shore.

They were going to load them right onto this dock and drive them right onto the beach. It was in operation and then this tremendous storm came up from the sea and just wrecked it. Sections of it

⁴⁵ Slang term used by GIs to denote a two-and-a-half-ton cargo truck. An updated version of this truck is still used by the modern Army, and is still referred to as a "six-by" or a "deuce."

⁴⁶ Soldiers, sailors or marines trained exclusively to coordinate beach activities during amphibious assaults. The beach master was very much in command of the beach and its environs. He would ensure that troops, equipment and other supplies were moved inland in an orderly, efficient manner. This was quite hazardous duty, as the beach master would, of necessity, move along the beach while under fire and be unable to defend himself or seek cover.

⁴⁷ The United States had a large and varied array of landing craft and the experience (drawn from the island invasions in the Pacific) to use them efficiently.

⁴⁸ Code designator of a beach in Normandy assaulted by the US First Army commanded by Omar Bradley. It had excellent landing facilities but limited exit potential because of extensive flooded marshlands. The exit points were to be protected by the 101st Airborne Division, while the 101st Airborne parachuted to the north of the 82nd to prevent a German counterattack. The forces at Utah were to take Cherbourg.

were all mangled and upset, some sunk.⁴⁹ From then on, they brought everything in the old fashioned way, on landing craft. They'd just come in as far as they could and let the door down and the guys were up to their necks [in water]. We got on some six-by-sixes which drove us to an area about where we were going to be.

Sainte-Mère-Eglise was probably three or four miles inland from the beach. There were a good many other units there, other American outfits, mostly infantry and the airborne.⁵⁰ Right out of Sainte-Mère-Eglise was an old apple orchard, which was our designated area.⁵¹ I scouted around, then I had to go back and report as to how much area I thought we would need in addition to what we already had. We could probably put about, oh, maybe a third of the battalion, maybe one of the companies would have fit in this orchard.

They were giving it for the whole battalion, which wasn't big enough, so I had to fight for more area. And you know how it is fighting with the Army. [Laughs].

Anyway, we talked about it and decided that that's how we would work it. I was there for 10 days with very little to do except hide and try to keep from getting shot. I returned to Southampton and we waited for the weather to clear up so we could move the company across the channel. When they finally did bring our tanks in, it was maybe, 15 or 18 days after D-Day. We were scheduled to come in a lot sooner, then as they progressed through the hedgerow country, they couldn't use tanks or heavy artillery, other than what was set up down on the beach. So each day we had to play it by ear as to whether they were going to bring us in.

GS: What was the overall military situation? Was the invasion still in jeopardy?

TE: We were pretty much entrenched at that time. We were there to stay. We held enough area and there were enough infantry and enough airborne people out ahead of us. The front line at that time was, maybe, three miles from Sainte-Mère-Eglise. They were well established and pushing inland to get more and more area to get room to bring more people in. And that was a gigantic buildup. They were just bringing stuff in there just as fast as they could unload it.

I went back down to the loading dock, to see about a supply of food, and they had many LCI's that they were cleaning out, getting ready to take the wounded back. I'll tell you, part of that bay was actually red. They would just bring them up by the hundreds, loading them in head and foot, head and foot, laying them down and taking them back out to the hospital ships. I said, "Hey, that's real stuff there!" And you could hear the artillery fire and the small arms fire. At night you would swear they were right in there with you.

They had what were called hedgerows in that part of France. Over the years, the farmers that had a two or three or four acre piece of ground that they'd farm would plant trees to mark off their boundary. They were all enclosed with tree lines, and the roots went down in and had formed a wall,

⁴⁹ The artificial harbors, called Mulberries, was one of two installed by the British in 1944. One, still may be seen at the town of Arromanches, France. The other, at the American Omaha Beach, was destroyed by violent storms on June 19, 1944. Generally, the weather for Operation Overlord was unfavorable, but on June 18, there was calm over the coast. The barometer fell alarmingly overnight and by morning a gale of 6 – 8 was raging. When the storm ended on June 22, the Mulberry harbors were wrecked and the beaches littered with vehicles and drowned bodies. Mulberries were partly sunken ships and concrete caissons used to form a 200ft breakwater, between which were pontoons and causeways. Mulberries did much to alleviate supply problems for the Allies during the invasion period.

⁵⁰ Meaning both parachute and glider troops.

⁵¹ Blumenson notes: "... Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr. had been waiting impatiently in an apple orchard on the Cotentin Peninsula for his Third Army to swing into action" (*Liberation*, 57).

an almost impenetrable wall. The tank could get over it, but as soon as they did, the thinly armored underside would be exposed to fire. Later on, one of the men from one of the tank outfits came up with the "hedge-buster."⁵² All it was three or four spiked teeth welded on the front of each tank. They would bust into this hedgerow and it would be enough penetration to allow the tank to push the wall down. That's how we got out of there. It was a place where we were bound by roads, you couldn't go anywhere else. The Germans had the roads pretty well covered by artillery or they had direct fire on it.

Every day, why, they'd get through three of four of those hedgerows. We would move enough troops forward to push the Germans back far enough to make room for a few more. It was quite a buildup. When we finally did get our outfit in France, we got everybody assembled and got them into a fighting force.

We had three positions that the infantry and the airborne had pointed out and decided if the Germans break through in a certain area, then I was to move my company from in the woods down a rocky road to a forward position. It was probably about a 4,000 yard move. Sure enough, about the second or third night we got orders that the Germans had counterattacked and they wanted me to move my company down into this position we had picked out. So I led them down a little narrow road and the tanks snagged all the infantry's communications wire that had been laying beside the road [laughs].

Oh, we must have had at least 50 commanders out there raising hell, because we cut up their communications. This colonel came up to me, "Pull this thing off the road!" He came over and hopped all over me, "Get these tanks off the road." "Where do you want me to put them?" He said, "You pick out the first field that you see and get them off of the road." The first field we went in, the [lead] tank hit a mine. Boom!, blew the tracks off and stalled everything. Here we are with all these tanks, my whole company lined up, and he's [the colonel] screaming and hollering.

It's pitch dark, couldn't see the hand in front of my face and he's about this far [holds finger and thumb one-inch apart] away from giving me hell because these tanks are pulling up his wire. Anyway, we got that straightened out and got down into our position. The next morning I could hear these tanks starting up. They weren't American tanks. You could hear, I call them "one-lungers," on a German tank, it doesn't hit like an American engine. [Demonstrates sounds of engine revving] and you could tell it wasn't American.

I thought, oh boy, here we are! We were on the high ground overlooking maybe three or 4,000 yards of valley. It was fog-covered and you couldn't see a thing, but you could hear all this activity. So I got the tanks lined up and we waited. When that fog lifts or if somebody starts up across here, we're just gonna have to take them on. We waited and waited while these tanks started up. They grew loud for a while, then the noise would die down. The fog was starting to lift. By 10 o'clock that morning, it cleared off and you couldn't see a thing, you couldn't hear a thing. They'd evidently moved off in another direction. [Laughs] You talk about being scared. My first day in combat and I couldn't tell

⁵² The hedgerows (called *bocage* by the French) stretching 60 miles long and 25 miles wide, encompassed an average of 500 small plots per square mile. They consisted of hawthorn, thorn-bushes, and vined trees that rose to heights of 15 feet. The vegetation grew out of four-foot high mounds of earth that created deep drainage ditches on either side. Dense foliage overhead made the hedgerows hot, dark tunnels and action within them created a tense fear among both attacker and defender alike. One American platoon leader said: "... , you became so dulled by fatigue that the names of the killed and wounded ... might have come from a telephone book All the old values were gone, and if there was a world beyond this tangle of hedgerows you never expected to see it" (Blumenson, *Liberation*, 17). The modified tank of which Mr. Evans speaks was devised by Sergeant Curtis G. Culin Jr. of the 102nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Ironically, his welded, pointed steel blades were made out of tank obstacles placed on the beaches by the Germans. Culin's invention was placed on three of every five tanks of the American First Army.

whether it was my knees knocking or my heart pounding [laughs].

We stayed in that position till around noontime, and battalion headquarters called and said that the attack was canceled. So we returned to our original positions. I took the jeep back up the road, and saw all those infantry guys out [laughs] fixing their wires.

GS: They should have had the wire buried.

TE: That's right. It was something they learned and something we learned. I'll bet we took 50 miles of wire off of those tank tracks. I reported to my colonel. "Yeah, I know all about it," he said, "it's one of the things that we're going to have to remember in the future." I said, "The only thing to remember in the future is, tell the infantry that if they want our support, make sure those wires are buried." And they want your support, believe me. To the infantry, a tank is the great Saviour.

We stayed in that hedgerow country, probably three or four weeks, till the breakout from Carentan⁵³ to St. Lô.⁵⁴ We patrolled the highway running between Carentan and St. Lô.⁵⁵

I got caught out on the Carentan Highway one night, too, in a jeep.

They told me to try and find a position towards St. Lô where I could move my company. It's starting to get dark and the only way we could get back was on that highway. I wasn't about to go cross-country. As we started up the highway, all was blacked out, so I sat out on the hood to direct the driver. I sat just to the right of the wire cutter. There were four of us in the jeep. And it started to rain. The highway was all pock-marked from the artillery and the aircraft shelling. It was like the Lincoln Highway,⁵⁶ except it was full of holes.

We were dodging the holes, trying to get up the road. We had gone about half a mile when we heard a "click-click," the sound of a bolt coming back. I hollered, "Stop, stop!"

The blackout headlights were all we could see by. This guy yells, "Halt!" I said, "I'm already halted." He said, "What outfit are you with?" I said, "4th Armored." "Never heard of ya," he said [laughs]. I said, "Well, we've got to get up to St. Lô." He said, "Well, you'll never make it up this way." I asked him where he was, and he said he was down in the ditch that ran along both sides of the road.

I walked over and here was a .30 caliber machine gun about this far [holds palm of hand near nose] from my face. It was a paratrooper. He said, "We're dug in all along here. How far are you going?" I told him and he said, "You'll not get through here. Who sent you up this way?" I said, "It's the only way I know to get to St. Lô." He said, "Well, the best thing for you to do is go back and wait for daylight."

⁵³ On the Cotentin Peninsula, 18 June 1944, by Omar Bradley's 1st Army. The Allies wished to cut off the peninsula and isolate the port of Cherbourg. The 1st Army's advance was made difficult by marshlands and hedgerows. Though Channel storms of June 19 – 22 stopped the unloading of supplies and checked the American advance, the breakthrough, followed by the capture of Cherbourg 26 June, enabled follow-up forces to gather with the 1st Army.

⁵⁴ A fortified town in Normandy on the River Vire, and a crucial communications center and German 84th Corps headquarters. The town was one of the first objectives of American forces after the breakout from the landing beaches. St. Lô was also the jumping-off point for the American forces under General Omar Bradley.

⁵⁵ There is a humorous anecdote told concerning Major Friedrich Hayn, the German intelligence officer at St. Lô. A member of the German Womens' Auxiliary in Bayeux telephoned Hayn after the town of Bayeux had been taken. He refused to believe her, until she held the phone out the window so that he could hear the British tanks rumbling past the Soldier's Club in Bayeux.

⁵⁶ US Route 30 in Pennsylvania.

I guessed that was the only thing I could do. We had radio contact with battalion. I called back and they said to stay where we were until daylight. Which we did. In the daylight, [laughs] I looked up ahead and all I could see were dead cows, machinery and equipment all over that highway. We couldn't have gotten through there if we wanted to. There must have been 200 paratroopers that came out of those ditches, they had on their helmets with leaves and cammo-netting⁵⁷ stuck in them so you couldn't see them. It was the 101st Airborne.⁵⁸ They'd been there for six weeks, since the invasion. Shortly after that, they pulled them [101st] back and they moved the 1st Infantry into their positions. This airborne outfit was pretty slick. They really moved around and you never knew they were there. I had no idea there were that many of them dug in like that.

On July 25th was the start of the Normandy Breakout.⁵⁹ It began with the six-mile saturation bombing. They blew out everything for the length of six miles and about two miles wide. We stood up on the tanks and watched as thousands of planes dropped their bombs. We were told that there were 5,000 planes in the attack. As far as you could see in the sky were American planes coming. You could hear them and then see them. They started probably three-quarters-of-a-mile from where we were.

The first plane dropped red flares to show the front line. As the planes passed over that point, they unloaded all that they had. I stood up on top of the tank and could feel the concussion pulling my combat pants back. This went on I would say, for a good hour or two. The sky was just full of planes. I never knew we had so many bombers. Fighters were zigging in and out. Every once in a while you'd see one hit, and it would spin and drop down out of the formation. After the bombing, we moved out of St. Lô and started across France.

After that breakout, we were hitting into German outfits that were trying to get out of that area. We had several major conflicts, but they were short skirmishes, none lasting for any length of time.

GS: Had you ever met Patton?⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Camouflage. Helmets were covered with netting in which could be inserted bits of foliage, etc.

⁵⁸ The 101st together with the 82nd and the British 6th Division made airborne landings on the night of 6 June 1944. These are vividly described by Cornelius Ryan in his *The Longest Day* and the film by the same name made from Ryan's book.

⁵⁹ At Avranches by six divisions from Omar Bradley's 1st Army from St. Lô. The code-name for the breakout was Operation Cobra. The movement was preceded by a devastating carpet-bombing of German positions by 500 fighter-bombers of the American 9th Air Force, who were followed by 2,000 heavy and medium bombers (B-17s and B-24s). Over 4000 tons of standard and high explosive bombs and napalm pounded the German positions, supplemented by 125,000 rounds of artillery. Popular correspondent Ernie Pyle wrote: "[The bombs] began like the crackle of popcorn and almost instantly swelled into a monstrous fury of noise that seemed surely to destroy all the world ahead of us (Blumenson, *Liberation*, 54 – 55). Initially, a last-minute postponement resulted in American casualties, and confusion on the following day caused by obscured target markers resulted in more American casualties (600+). General Fritz Bayerlein, commander of the Panzer Lehr Division later said: "... my front lines looked like the face of the moon (*Mondlandschaft*), and at least 70% of my troops were out of action — dead, wounded, crazed or numbed. All my forward tanks were knocked out, and the roads were practically impassable" (Blumenson, *Liberation*, 56). The commander of the German Army Group B, Field Marshall Günther von Kluge, was discredited by Hitler. On his way home to meet Hitler, Kluge committed suicide. The breakout is depicted in the excellent film *Big Red One* (1980). A routine Hollywood treatment is *Breakthrough* (c. 1950s), which vividly depicts the problems encountered with hedgerows. A British operation called "Goodwood" similar to Cobra and carried out on July 17 failed.

⁶⁰ George S. Patton (1885 – 1945). A former Olympic athlete (1912), Patton finished fifth in the Pentathlon. He was an expert horseman. Nicknamed "Old Blood and Guts," Patton commanded the US Third Army in Europe. He died in a postwar auto accident and lies buried in Diekirch, Luxembourg. Patton was one of the first Americans to embrace new theories of armored warfare, in which he later excelled. During service in Sicily in 1943 Patton was involved in an incident which nearly cost him his military career. He impulsively slapped a battle-fatigued soldier, and after the resulting publicity and public apology, he suffered in humiliation until he was assigned a role in the impending invasion of Normandy (1944). He played a key role in maintaining pressure on the Germans through the campaigns of 1944 and in the defeat of the German offensive through the Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge). In 1945, Patton overtook the main Allied forces in what was the fastest drive into southeast Germany. Much to his anger and dismay, Patton's drive was halted at the request of the Russians. Patton was played by George C. Scott in *Patton* (1970). His other "film appearances" were: John Larch (*Miracle* (continued...))

TE: Oh, sure. Yes, definitely, many times. When I moved from “C” Company commander up to Battalion S-2,⁶¹ one of my jobs was to go up to Third Army Headquarters to get the situation maps updated. Many times [Patton] was around, with that little dog, Willie,⁶² that white mutt of his. William the Conqueror⁶³ was his name, but I always thought the dog's name was “son of a bitch,” ‘cause that's what he called it. It would be laying somewhere and he'd say “get out of the way, son of a bitch.”⁶⁴

He never missed an opportunity to talk about history.⁶⁵ I'd go in there lots of times to get the information and there'd be eight or 10 people around, talking about history. One day there was this general and he was talking about an attack by this division. He had his hand on the map, and said, “We're going to attack, in force, through this area.” Patton was back behind him and he said, “General, do you realize how much space you're talking about from your thumb to your little finger?” “Yes, sir,” he said, “about 2,000 yards.” Patton said, “Well, you look at it again, because you're covering about five miles.” He had the wrong scale map [laughs]. But that's the kind of a man he was. He'd be talking to you and listening to three other people at the same time.

At the drop of a hat he'd talk about battles that happened, years ago, back in the 1,000s. He could tell you who was commander of what legion and where they fought and how long they fought and who was victorious. He'd name everything about the battle. What weapons they used, the tactics they used. He would swear, oh. He could never say yes or no without swearing. He would cuss the whole time [laughs].

GS: So the book and the movie were pretty accurate then?

TE: Yeah, pretty much so. That opening scene in the movie, when he was up on that platform, when he was made Third Army Commander.⁶⁶ He walked up on this tremendously big platform, and from where he was standing in the center he couldn't look down to see the first eight or 10 rows. And all these nurses and WACs⁶⁷ were seated in those first rows. And he's up there talking about “grabbing those sons of bitches by the throat,” and a couple other remarks. He said, “You see all these,” slapping at his chest full of medals. He had medals all over him. If you gave him a medal for drinking water, he'd have it on there. He believed that was a show of what you were as a soldier. Anyway, he made some remark about all the skin he could get with these medals. His aide walked over to him and whispered something to him. Patton took about three steps forward and looked down at these nurses. “Oh, sorry ladies,” he said, “But, oh, what the hell, you know what I'm talking about anyhow.” And he backed up and went on. They didn't put that in the movie!

GS: He was very strict on military discipline?

⁶⁰ (...continued)

of the *White Stallions*, 1963); Kirk Douglas (*Is Paris Burning?* 1966); George Kennedy (*Brass Target* 1978); Darren McGavin (*Ike* 1979); and again by George C. Scott in a sequel to *Patton*, showing his life after World War II to his controversial death.

⁶¹ Staff officer responsible for intelligence matters. Other staff positions were: S-1, Personnel; S-3, Operations; and S-4, Supply. Divisional staff positions were designated “G” and retained the same duties as staff officers, with the addition of a G-5 section, which handled POW and civilian matters during wartime.

⁶² A bull-terrier who resembled the recently popular Spuds McKenzie of TV beer commercials.

⁶³ The Norman warrior- duke who, in despite some scholars' opinions, narrowly defeated King Harold of England at Hastings in 1066.

⁶⁴ In spite of the dog's threatening appearance and namesake, he was apparently a coward. This would not have appealed to Patton.

⁶⁵ Patton has been described as one who not only read and admired historical figures, but also as one who actually thought he was present at ancient battles. These characteristics are depicted by the actor George C. Scott in the eminent Hollywood production, *Patton* (1970).

⁶⁶ Some say that Patton gave the speech depicted in the film during maneuvers in Louisiana. He also gave speeches with similar rhetoric on several occasions, and like any “politician” repeated tag-lines and catch-phrases in each of them.

⁶⁷ Women's Army Corps. See *Out of the Kitchen: Women in the Armed Services and On the Homefront*, Publications of the Saint Vincent Center for Northern Appalachian Studies, 1994 [Oral History Program].

TE: Oh, absolutely. While on maneuvers in the desert in California, his orders were that you had your coveralls buttoned to the throat and wear leggings,⁶⁸ regardless of the heat. You were supposed to learn to take it. Once, driving along, he saw these guys working up on a pole. He pulled his jeep up and got out and hollered, "What outfit are you guys with?" They kept right on working. He said, "Hey, I'm talking to you two sons of bitches up there. Get down here, I want to talk to you." The guy said, "Get out of here, you're holding us up." Patton said, "Get out of here? I'm General Patton." The other guy said, "Well, I'm the superintendent from Bell Telephone of America." [laughs] We heard all kinds of stories about him. He was a hell of a man.

The 4th Armored was pretty close to Patton. We did a lot of his dirty work. We were up front a good bit of the time. I think he thought a lot of the 4th Armored, and rightly so. It was a good outfit. And he had a couple of infantry divisions, the 101st Airborne was one of his pets. After the breakout from the Peninsula, we were with Third Army the whole time, the whole way through to Czechoslovakia.

GS: Tell me about the campaign across France.

TE: [Consults *Unit Historical Journal* of 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion] The man who wrote this was a Staff Sergeant. He was in communications. I had radio communications to my company, to each of the tanks, to each of the platoon leaders. And I had a direct line to Combat Command. We also had a channel where we could talk to artillery or the air, we had P-47s and P-51s outfits never more than four or five minutes away.⁶⁹ After this bombardment [carpet bombing]⁷⁰ the drive started with the Air Corps leading the way. At Carentan we had a major battle. We started from there towards Coutances on July 29th, 1944 and from there, on south to Avranches.⁷¹ Our first engagement was at Avranches on July 30th.⁷²

We traveled mainly on highways and on paved roads as much as possible. The forward elements of the Combat Command, usually reconnaissance, would travel ahead and on both the right and left of the columns moving down these roads. As soon as any resistance was met, the tanks would pull off

⁶⁸ Canvas covering placed over the boot to secure the trouser leg and boot laces.

⁶⁹ "Thunderbolt." US single-engine fighter, produced by Republic. It was a large aircraft nicknamed "Jug." The plane, designed by Alexander Kartveli, was amazingly versatile, especially in close ground support. The P-51 was a single-engine fighter aircraft designed and produced by North American Aviation, originally under British contract, and supplied to the US Army Air Force. The Mustang's long-range ability greatly reduced American bomber losses over Europe because it was able to accompany them on missions. The "Mustang" designation was a British invention. The Americans first called the plane "Apache." Blumenson's remarks provide an interesting gloss to Mr. Evans' remarks: "Outside Bréhal, 16 miles north of Avranches, the Germans had blocked the road with heavy logs. Four P-47s were called in and tried to blast an opening in the roadblock, but not until the lead tank charged into the barrier and broke through could the American armored column resume its drive to Avranches" (*Liberation*, 59).

⁷⁰ Type of aerial bombardment which was used to open large gaps in enemy defenses. This method was employed in Normandy to expedite the breakout from the beachhead. Unfortunately, it was more effective on paper than it was in practice. For more detail, see Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*.

⁷¹ Mr. Evans interjects this aside in the taped narrative. It is placed here for the sake of continuity. *A funny story, I'll tell you. When we started out, back in the States during maneuvers, we always traveled with the headquarters and kitchen units right with us. Naturally, when we got into combat, I figured I'd have the kitchen. When they assigned you a spot with the Combat Command, it would say "C" Company, minus kitchen and so forth. We traveled for days and we'd never see the kitchen. I don't know where they were half the time. The executive officer usually kept track of them. He stayed around with the kitchen unit and the company maintenance. Actually, it was something I just never considered, when we got in combat, what to do with them. I figured they were always going to be right there, but they weren't. I learned the hard way [laughs]. I tried to move the kitchen with us and it just didn't work.*

⁷² Blumenson describes one encounter at Avranches: "... on July 30, troops of the 4th Armored Division crossed the undefended highway bridges over the Sée River and entered Avranches. Behind them a large German vehicular column [arrived] The vehicles bore red crosses, and the Americans assumed that they carried German wounded. The first few trucks were allowed to cross Then the German soldiers inside the truck opened fire ... A second and larger column came down ... and lobbed a shell into the Americans at the bridge, striking an ammunition truck and setting it on fire ... confused fighting took place" (Blumenson, *Liberation*, 59). Field Marshall von Kluge called the engagement around Avranches a *Riesensaueri* (literally, a big pickle).

to the side of the road, one to the left, one to the right until everybody was off.⁷³ A company of tanks would usually lead the column, and interspersed back, they'd tell you your position in the column, depending on what they were going to do that day.

I never fought "C" Company with the Battalion [704th Tank Destroyer Battalion]. I was in a unique position. I was attached to a Combat Command and so I got in on all of the meetings of the higher command. Every day, they would have some sort of critique after the battle, hand out maps and assign your place in column and who you would answer to. I probably spent more time with Colonel Abrams than I did my own battalion commander. He was the commander of the 37th Tank Battalion [4th Armored Division]. Colonel Clarke was the CC "A" Commander for the 4th Armored. I spent more time with those two men than I did with my own battalion commander. Each company within the 704th was assigned to a Combat Command. I went for days and had no connection with the battalion whatsoever. A few times they came up to see how we were doing, if we needed anything. But I more or less scrounged everything from the Combat Command. I depended on them moreso than my battalion people.

GS: How far ahead would the lead element of the column be?

TE: Probably an hour, maybe not even that far. Sometimes a half hour. The flank protection was out, lots of times you could see them working their way to the right and left of the column. If they hit any resistance, they moved off the road and the tanks set up to attack whatever it was if need be. Of course, the infantry pulled off too. They immediately moved up on foot behind the tanks and decided whether they were going to attack that particular position. The same time they were getting ready, the mechanized artillery would pull off and set up to fire. So we had almost instantaneous fire support. As soon as they hit a target, within five minutes they could be bringing artillery fire down on it.

GS: Was it self-propelled⁷⁴ or towed artillery?

TE: Self-propelled. Most of them were on tank chassis. We just gradually worked our way south and east, day to day. Some days we'd travel as much as 40 or 50 miles if there was no resistance. As we moved farther and farther inland, the resistance got less.

At Rennes was another battle. It was enough to hold the column back for two days.⁷⁵ Then on south to Bain and I remember Chateaubriant. Some of the column went [west] towards Lorient, which was a German submarine base.⁷⁶ We really got shelled from there. Their troops all pulled back into the submarine pens and they had some pretty heavy artillery set up there. They turned them around and kept us at bay for two or three days. It was decided it was foolish to hold an armored division so they put the infantry in. I don't think that they [Lorient] ever surrendered. I think that was one of the bases

⁷³ This military maneuver is called a "herringbone" formation, because as seen from overhead the dispersal pattern of vehicles very closely resembles a fish skeleton.

⁷⁴ Term denoting any type of armored equipment which can move on its own power, e.g., a self-propelled gun.

⁷⁵ Also contributing to the delay were factors as described by Blumenson: "Below Rennes, the 4th Armored Division's Commander, Major-General John S. Wood, halted the division and pondered his next move General Middleton (VIII Corps commander), suddenly appeared at Wood's command post. 'What's the matter?' Middleton asked facetiously. 'Have you lost your division?' 'No,' replied Wood. 'They [Allied Command] are winning the war the wrong way.' The right way, as far as he was concerned, was to turn to the east and outflank the Germans. Middleton decided on a compromise. He told Wood to go as far as the Vilaine River, southwest of Rennes, and await further orders. But [Patton's chief-of-staff Major-General Hugh J. Gaffey] ordered Wood to follow the original plan The delay cost Wood a whole day and enabled the German garrison at Lorient to get ready to meet and turn back his assault" (*Liberation*, 77).

⁷⁶ French port, and the site of the first German submarine base to be established in western France. The first submarine to use the base was the U-30, commanded by Lieutenant Fritz-Julius Lemp.

that didn't surrender until the war was over.⁷⁷ They had enough supplies and equipment that I don't think they ever did surrender.

GS: Do you have more details on the action at Rennes?

TE: "C" Company's mission, again with Combat Command "A," was to feint a frontal attack on the city itself, get to within 1,000 then withdraw. In the meantime, the Combat Command, the tanks, had gone around Rennes to attack from both sides in what was called a double envelopment.⁷⁸ There was really heavy fighting there. When we attacked the front of the city, they had tanks, infantry and artillery, and they were there to stay. Until the main tank attack came into their rear and drove them out toward us.

We had feinted the frontal assault and then withdrew about 1,000 yards. We took up good defensive positions in anticipation of their trying to fight their way out. When they came right at us, why, we had a field day shooting their tanks. We lost, I think, two tanks that day. We got eight or 10 more of theirs, plus a lot of artillery pieces and trucks. A lot of their artillery was horse-drawn, which surprised me. We shot up a lot of their horses. It was just carnage there for a couple of hours before they finally surrendered.⁷⁹

That was just one of the towns we came upon after the breakout. We traveled 20, 30, sometimes 40 miles each day, all the way across France. The whole column was just moving at lightning speed. We'd hit some resistance, get off the road, and fight to break the resistance. We didn't even mop-up lots of times. We left that to the troops behind us. All we were interested in was spearheading the tanks through any German resistance. Every day, there were many, many towns. We went through Vannes, Sens, Troyes, Chalons, Commercy, many small engagements day after day, where we'd give them a chance to surrender, then attack.

We'd destroy German vehicles as they tried to get out of these towns. Lots of times we'd catch them out on the roads and destroy their equipment. We just kept moving.

We pulled away and went back towards Chateaubriant, then south again towards St. Nazaire⁸⁰ and Nantes. Maybe it was St. Nazaire that did not surrender.⁸¹ But the same thing happened here. They turned those big guns back on us and destroyed a few tanks. Again, they decided it was useless to hold the division up there. The column then started going east across France.

GS: How did you coordinate with the Army Air Force for air support?

TE: We had direct contact with a P-47 fighter group.⁸² We, the Combat Command, mostly, would call for air strikes if we ran into resistance that would take a head-on attack to overcome. The P-47s would come in and drop their 500-lb bombs and strafe the area. In my command vehicle, I had a crystal in my radio so that I could call for an air strike if it was necessary. All we had to do was call in a "possible target" and give them the map coordinates.

⁷⁷ This is correct. The German garrison held out until the end of the war.

⁷⁸ Blumenson, (*Liberation*, 77), merely mentions the double envelopment by the 4th Armored, but is dismissive concerning the fighting.

⁷⁹ A large part of the German forces escaped to Saint-Nazaire, some 65 miles to the south.

⁸⁰ Only French port large enough to drydock the great German battleship *Tirpitz*. British commando units attacked the port in 1942 and disabled the ship for the rest of the war.

⁸¹ It was Lorient.

⁸² The 405th. American fighter-bombers were given the name "Jabos" by the Germans. It was a diminutive of *Jagdbomber* (hunting bomber).

GS: How did you mark your positions and vehicles to protect yourselves from friendly airstrikes?

TE: We had panels. They were a luminous plastic panel that we'd drape over the back or the turret of the tank to make sure they would see us. Usually, if we had a target, we'd call for the planes, then fire a smoke round into the target area to indicate where it was. We got very good at it. The air to ground communication was well coordinated.

Lots of times, on their days off, these fliers would come up to visit us, to get to know who they were talking to on the radio. They wanted rides in the tanks and souvenirs [laughs].

GS: What kind of German units were you up against during the drive south and east?

TE: At first we hit a part of the Panzer Lehr Division, an SS⁸³ Panzer⁸⁴ Division,⁸⁵ I would say, around Rennes. We fought them for two or three days and then they beat it out of there. They left some troops back to harass us more than anything else. From Chateaubriant to Orleans, we didn't have too much resistance at all. It was pretty much a drive 40 or 50 miles and we shot up a lot of their artillery. They had a lot of horse-drawn equipment and they were trying to get out of France. Of course, our tanks overtook them and we'd kill 30, 40, 50 horses and break up their guns and artillery pieces that they were towing, and take prisoners. But there weren't any really big battles until here [points to map] at Orleans.

GS: What was the makeup of the German units you came up against?

TE: We took a lot of "ethnic" German prisoners. If they weren't an SS unit, they had a mixture of all types. Old people, young people, all different types of soldiers. A lot of them were not too well trained.⁸⁶ Not like their regular Army outfits. When we ran into one of them, we knew that we were in a battle.

GS: I don't see it on this map, but were you involved in the "Falaise Pocket,"⁸⁷ where we tried to trap that German Army Group?

TE: We weren't really involved in that. We were south of that. The idea with the Third Army was to

⁸³ *Schutzstaffel*. German "Protection Detachment" formed by Hitler to act as his personal bodyguards. Evolved into two branches: Allgemeine SS and Waffen SS. The latter was an exclusively combat-oriented branch which included some 39 fighting divisions during the war. The Waffen SS also provided guards for the concentration camps. The SS was found to be a criminal organization by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal.

⁸⁴ Armor.

⁸⁵ Actually, the Panzer Lehr Division was a Wehrmacht, not an SS division. Its official designation was 17th German Panzer Division, at this time under the command of Leutnantgeneral Fritz Bayerlein (1888 – 1970). There was a 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division (*Goetz von Berlichingen*) in the Thionville-Nancy sector. The Lehr division was "bled white" at Normandy. Bayerlein previously served in Africa as chief of staff to Rommel, and commanded the Afrika Korps during Rommel's leaves. Bayerlein commanded at Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and on the Rhine. He was captured by American troops in April, 1945. It was Bayerlein's 17th took the brunt of Operation Cobra, during which the command post of the 902nd Regiment found itself in the center of the bombing. After refitting under the Sixth Panzer Army, the Lehr Division was made ready for the Ardennes offensive. The replacements, especially the tank crews, lacked experience and training. By November 21st, the Lehr was at half strength in armored infantry and artillery, and the tank units had some 34 Mark IVS and 38 Panthers.

⁸⁶ By this time in the war Hitler had sacrificed some 4 million troops, thus stretching Germany's reserves of manpower to the limit. Many new troops were gained by lowering and raising the draft age, but most of those recruited were sub-standard.

⁸⁷ Or Falaise Gap, where Allies tried to encircle the bulk of German forces in Europe. Allied failure to do so resulted in the escape of half of the German troops, allowing them to continue the defense of the Reich. The failure was Bernard Law Montgomery's fault. Montgomery was still giving orders to US troops, even though Bradley should have been doing so, and he would not allow Patton, his nemesis, to complete the encirclement. History's hindsight is beginning to show that Montgomery's reputation was markedly less than his real performances.

penetrate as far and as quick as we could through France. There were still lots of German troops behind us and around us. We fought along this corridor [points to map] clear over to, well, we were within striking distance of Paris. They pulled us off the road and they let the French, led by General de Gaulle, who was in the lead tank of the French 1st Armored Division, enter Paris.⁸⁸ They were equipped with American tanks. Of course, he went in. He wanted to liberate Paris.

We got to within 10 kilometers of Paris and they pulled us off the road and let them [French 1st Armored] go into the town. All the way through here [points to corridor on map] we liberated a lot of these towns. People would come out and throw flowers and give us cognac. They were just really thrilled at the idea that the war was over, for them anyhow.

Our next objective was Troyes. The 66th Artillery Battalion plastered Troyes with shells and P-47s were giving them hell.

[Reads from *Unit Journal*] *Picked up a supply of leather jackets and sports jackets, compliments of the Boche* [laughs]. Lots of times he [Unit Journal author] would be back with the trains and all he would hear is what the guys talked about. He wasn't really up with me. I would be up forward and he would be back in one of the command vehicles. He wrote what he heard about and what he saw, but lots of times he wouldn't get enough of the details. He did this on his own, which was great. A lot of the people at Fort Knox poured over this diary. That's the kind of stuff they wanted to read.

I remember when we attacked Troyes, the town itself, the 4th Armored Division had it about three-quarters surrounded. Both Combat Commands were attacking Troyes. I can still see the tanks and the infantry moving into the edges of the town itself. What they did, a lot of times was to send a white flag into the town, to the Burgermeister⁸⁹ or to the people and if there were any German troops in there, to see if they wanted to surrender. We'd give them 10 minutes to come out, and if not we were going to blow the town off the map. Sometimes they would surrender and lots of times they'd stay there and fight. Which meant we had to go in after them.⁹⁰

GS: Let's talk about Troyes, then. That's where you received a Silver Star?

TE: Yes. We were attacking Troyes with CC "A," whose mission was to take Troyes. We had three quarters surrounded Troyes with tanks, artillery and infantry. They sent a mission to the mayor of Troyes to give them an hour to surrender. If there were troops there, to come out or we'd attack the town. Of course, there was no answer. All three tank battalions attacked the town, with artillery blowing the town apart.

The German soldiers waited until we were within 100 yards of them before they opened up from basements and buildings. They had two or three artillery spotters up in a church steeple. I brought one of my M18s around and told him to blow the top of the church off. We did that and the German artillery stopped. Then we got into the town, which is something we rarely did. In a three-or-four-

⁸⁸ Actually it was the Free French 2nd Armored Division under General Philippe LeClerc (1902 – 1947). Eisenhower wanted to bypass Paris in order to avoid a costly battle, but was persuaded to send General LeClerc. From inside the city, LeClerc sent back intelligence on the size of the German forces there. At length, Eisenhower ordered the taking of the great city on August 23. With support from the American 4th infantry, LeClerc entered the city on the 25th. de Gaulle followed the day after.

⁸⁹ Burgess or mayor.

⁹⁰ During the editing process, Mr. Evans added: "Troyes was destroyed because they did not surrender. Many prisoners were taken."

block area there were a lot of German infantry and mortars.⁹¹ We spotted another likely spot where they had forward observers,⁹² and we knocked that out. That stopped their mortar fire. After that, it wasn't as accurate.

One of my tanks got hit and I got on the machine gun and machine-gunned a few of the German infantry. Well, not a few of them, a lot. They just kept coming at us. I just stayed there and fired until the tank was destroyed. That was it.

GS: There was only German infantry in the town. No German armor?

TE: No, no German armor. It was all infantry, and they had some airborne troops there. And they were all SS. They weren't fly-by-night troops. I can truthfully say that any time we fought head to head with the German army, they were well trained, disciplined and competent troops. We just overwhelmed them, that's all.

They were just getting thin and didn't have enough replacement equipment. They would send a few tanks here and a few there, to try and plug the holes. We just wore them down. We had so damn much stuff that they'd destroy it and we'd replace it, while they couldn't. We'd lose 20 or 30 vehicles and they'd lose 10 or 15, well, they lost the battle of attrition.⁹³ They just couldn't replace them.

GS: What would your tank destroyer mission usually be in a case like that?

TE: In an attack like that, we would back up the tanks. The tanks would move in, the forward elements, and we would be a secondary line in case of a breakthrough or if the German tanks would counterattack. We'd just protect the ones that were going in, give them supporting fire. Lots of times we were in position where we'd just fire at any targets that were available. Many times the company would be divided up. The platoons would fight with different units. One platoon would be with one of the infantry outfits, one would be guarding the trains,⁹⁴ another would be up with the tank command. So lots of times we'd sub-divide the company. But always in supporting fire. We were never really the front line.

GS: Tell me the story about the horse.

TE: Back in Normandy, we had an outpost of two tanks at a crossroads for the night. During the night I got a call on the radio back to my command post, that something was coming down the road. I said, "Well, if they don't stop, shoot them."

About five minutes later I hear a main gun fire. I walked up, I was about two or 300 yards back from where the outpost was. They had shot a horse. Blew him all apart [laughs].

⁹¹ Indirect fire weapon which propels its warhead on an elliptical arc toward the target. Most often, mortar fire missions must be "adjusted" or sight-corrected by a forward observer, as the mortar crew can not see its rounds impacting.

⁹² Any individual trained in the skill of adjusting indirect fire or directing close air support.

⁹³ An operational method where the enemy is defeated by the cumulative destruction of his forces rather than by general disruption and demoralization. Such a concept, when applied to troops, can have brutal consequences, such as those which resulted in the trench-warfare of World War I.

⁹⁴ Here the meaning is: the supply, maintenance and medical units positioned anywhere from several hundred yards to several miles behind the front line. May also be called "combat trains" or "field trains." "Captain Evans...stated that at this time his mission was that of supporting the anti-tank mission of the tanks, and when necessary, of furnishing protection for the combat trains going to and from the Division Supply Point." Pvt. Milton Koshiol, in Irzyk, *Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 57.

Everything quieted down and I said, "If anything else comes down the road, shoot it. That's what you're out here for."

The next thing I know, they've shot again. And then I heard the other tank shoot. I went back up and they had hit three German vehicles. They were camouflaged and coming down the one road. One tank shot and the shell went through all three vehicles. It set the first one on fire and the third one was burning. The first vehicle had eight or 10 German soldiers in it. We killed a couple of them and captured the others. The second vehicle was a paymaster's truck, which was full of boxes of French francs. They were going to pay the German troops at the front line. So we confiscated a few of the French francs. We were not at that time allowed to use French francs, because we had what they called "invasion money." That's what we used for money. Anyway, we took a lot of these francs, and the next couple of days, as we drove through towns, we'd reach into this box and throw out hundreds of francs to the natives [laughs]. About two or three weeks later they had put out an order that we could use French money as our exchange. But we had already given away about two or three million dollars worth of francs [laughs].

The third truck, incidentally, was an artificer's truck, they'd do repairs to small arms. They had several boxes of Lugers,⁹⁵ German pistols, still packed in the cosmoline.⁹⁶ We took a couple boxes of those for souvenirs, which we later used. That was one of the funny things you remember.

GS: Did you listen to shortwave radios for entertainment in the field?

TE: Not too much, no. Battalion had a few radios. We used to listen to Axis Sally⁹⁷ a lot of times. She had good music on [her show].⁹⁸ And the guys would laugh [at her propaganda]. Laugh, "haw, haw," but they didn't think it was funny lots of times 'cause they'd name outfits, sometimes down to the companies. They'd captured guys who'd talked. They passed out leaflets. I sure wish I'd have kept some of those. They would come over and throw those on the front-line troops from their planes. They'd have pictures of a guy raping a woman and it would say, "Here's what's going on back in the States. This is what the Jews are doing to your people." Some of them were really nasty. They'd write them in English, too. Some of the guys, Doc Buchanan, I think, kept some of that stuff.

GS: During basic training⁹⁹ and OCS, how were you kept abreast of the news of what was happening in Europe and the Pacific?

TE: Usually we'd have, at least once a week, an orientation lecture on current events. One of the officers would keep us up to date. Incidentally, I did that too. I kind of liked the idea and when I got my own company I used to have a class. We also got *Time* magazines that were printed with no advertising and

⁹⁵ After Georg Luger. This was the standard German service pistol (Pistole '08, 1908 – 1945). A 9mm semi-automatic of distinctive shape that was popular with German officers in both world wars. It was a popular souvenir among Allied troops and is still much sought after by modern collectors. Despite its popularity, it was not as good as the P '38 which was introduced as its successor in World War II. The working parts of the Luger required extreme machining and were prone to malfunction.

⁹⁶ Lubricant/preservative used to protect metal parts and weapons from rust and corrosion.

⁹⁷ Nickname for Mildred E. Gillars, a radio announcer used by the Germans as a propaganda tactic. Her purpose was to create an atmosphere of fear and distrust among the Allied forces, to try to entice the Allied soldiers to give up the fight and go home. For the most part, her broadcasts only served to provide the Allied troops with much-needed levity in the field. The Japanese equivalent was Tokyo Rose, nickname of Iva Ikuo Toguri d'Aquino who, incidentally, was pardoned by President Gerald Ford on his last day in office, January 19, 1977.

⁹⁸ Axis Sally's broadcasts provided American troops with the latest swing music popular in the United States.

⁹⁹ Phase of military training which prepares civilians for military life. Basically, the individual's spirit is subverted and replaced with a teamwork mentality. Such topics as drill and ceremony, rudimentary weapons skills, hygiene, customs and courtesy, and the like, are emphasized in basic training.

very small. They told you what was going on around the world. As much as I could I would have classes and would tell everybody as much as I could read about.

GS: What kinds of things did you do to maintain morale in the field?

TE: Mail was the big thing, believe it or not. We had a system where mail was the first thing we went after. Each company clerk's job was to get the mail, to find out where it was and how soon he could get it and bring it back. We tried to keep the food as good as we could and keep the company cooks close by. We tried to have hot meals and coffee as much as we possibly could.

There were movies every once in a while. We could pull back to a secure area and have movies set up in an old barn. We'd let half of the guys go at one time and then the other half later. We had fairly good morale. Course, we got into combat where we were at it for a week and I'd go by the tanks and all I could see were these eyes looking at me, saying, "You're responsible for me being here." (Laughs.)

But, all in all, I had a bunch of men that were as fine a bunch of soldiers as you'd want to have. They were well trained and they knew their jobs. There wasn't any bickering or arguing among themselves. The battalion as a whole was the same way. Of course, I always leaned toward "C" Company. I always thought they were the best and I still do.

GS: Do you remember any of the movie titles that you saw in the field?

TE: Jeeze, what was that one with Betty Grable¹⁰⁰ in it? I can remember, we were in a barn and it was pouring down rain. The roof leaked and the guys put their shelter halves¹⁰¹ up over the projector so they could show the movie. But, I can't remember the name of the movie. [Consults unit history] It just says "Movies in the evening, December 14th, 1944." It doesn't say what movie was playing. Let's see what movies ... They would get to where they'd show the same movie three or four times. *Show Business*, that was one of them, in February [1945]. Don't know who was in that one. "Meet Me in St. Louis" was another one.¹⁰² The one with Betty Grable in it, I remember all the guys whistling and hollering. They weren't really up-to-date movies, but all the guys enjoyed them.

Each battalion had its own movie projector. We had baseball and softball equipment, balls, gloves and bats. We had horseshoes. Each company clerk was responsible for gathering that stuff up and putting it in the supply section. If and when we got to an area where we had the time, you'd be surprised, the guys would play ball. Kick a football around, or play baseball. Anything that would get their mind off of what was going on. Because, believe me, we were within 1,000 yards of trouble from the time of the invasion till we got to Czechoslovakia. Day after day after day, we just plowed along with the column.

One time I took some guys back to Paris. I was in charge of three truckloads of men. We went to Paris for three days. It was a 150 mile ride in a 6x6 truck [laughs]. We had a good time. We had to take turns guarding the trucks at night. Other than that, I can't think of too many times when we weren't within shouting distance of getting our heads shot off. We just moved with the flow and it just so happened that the 4th Armored was always in combat.

¹⁰⁰ Pin-up girl of the 1940s. Grable was a major player in various Hollywood films from the 1930s until the mid-1950s. Her legs were insured for \$250,000.00

¹⁰¹ Each soldier was issued a canvas tent, or shelter, half which, when attached to another soldier's half, would make one complete tent.

¹⁰² Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien (1944). A MGM musical film.

The Red Cross truck,¹⁰³ the donut wagon, used to come around. They kept pretty close to the front lines. They were always around somewhere. *Stars and Stripes*¹⁰⁴ was a big thing, the newspaper. We used to get *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and one other that were in condensed form. They had everything in them that was printed in the States for that week, but they cut all the advertising out. They were 30 or 40 pages long. They kept us up to date on a lot of things.

Doc Buchanan [Captain Richard R. Buchanan] was the surgeon. And we had a dentist. The dentist's drill was run with a foot pedal, like an old sewing machine. You had to pedal up and down to get this thing to drill. I never had any dental work done. Before we went overseas we went through a dental check and anything that needed done was taken care of. Course, lots of guys came up with toothaches. They fixed them up right in the field.

But, Doc Buchanan was unbelievable. He was my personal friend the whole time we were in the Army. He was a typical doctor. Everybody looked to Doc. He would bring the men up to date on any poisonous snakes or other things in the area, poison ivy, anything like that. He was always on top of things, looking after the men. Like an old mother hen.

The first guy we had killed, they'd hit the tank and blew the top of his head off, his brains were splattered all over the tank. Everybody was kind of stupefied. They didn't know quite what to do. Doc came over and threw a shirt over the man's head. He said, "C'mon, let's get him out of there. He's not going to hurt anybody now." Things like that. You could always depend on him. He was a tremendous map reader. He usually rode at the end of the column.

I'll tell you a story about maneuvers out in the desert in California. We had field maneuvers where we'd start out at night. We'd have a night march, go so many miles and be at the range by daybreak, to fire. All the officers would take their turns leading the battalion in case something happened. It was my turn to lead and we were getting deeper and deeper into the desert. I sent a runner to go back and ask Doc where we were. He sent the man back with the map and it was marked, "You're right here." And beside that he wrote, "When are you going to learn to read a map?" (Laughs.)

And he said down below, "My suggestion is to go down to the next crossroad, get off the reservation, get on the public road," which we were not allowed to do, "turn the lights on, go up the road about six or eight miles, turn left again and we'll be back on the reservation. We'll be within striking distance of the range." So I did that. He never told anybody about it, nor did I. The next morning — we had to be there at 5:30 — soon as the sun came up, we were ready to fire. Here's "C" Company all lined up. [Laughs]

The battalion commander couldn't believe it. He'd said, "Damn playboy outfit. They'll never find their way up here, let alone be able to shoot." And there we were. And he never, to this day, could figure out how the hell we did it. [Laughs] Doc was the one ... here we are, riding along the main highway, with all the tanks and trucks and equipment, everything, up to the range [laughs]. But that was the type of man he was. He could run anything. And the guys really looked up to him, too. Even today, he's really into it. He's our association historian. He takes pictures [at the reunions] and sends them

¹⁰³ An international humanitarian organization founded in 1865 which provided medical care for military and civilian casualties on all sides. It also operated field canteens, instigated relief programs for refugees, and audited the treatment of prisoners in POW camps. Red Cross parcels were popular items among POWs. Many servicemen have been known to complain about aspects of Red Cross Services, especially charges the Red Cross sometimes made for coffee and donuts.

¹⁰⁴ The GI newspaper of World War II. It was first published in London (5,000 copies) on April 18, 1942, on the same day James Doolittle bombed Tokyo. By war's end, its circulation had increased to 1,200,000. An illustrated supplement was called *Warweek*.

to me. We have a big time talking about this and that. Every time I bring up this situation he laughs and says, "Oh, yeah, I remember."

GS: Tell me how you received your DSC at Arracourt.¹⁰⁵

TE: We had attacked Commercy, Toul and Nancy and around the 1st of September it started to rain. The ground was just soaked. It rained for two or three weeks. All the time we were in this area. We moved to attack Lunéville.¹⁰⁶ I had one platoon with CC "B," and CC "A" was in this area [points to map] attacking toward Feterange. When the Germans came through and attacked Arracourt. Colonel Clarke was the head of CC "A." I had two platoons on a little hillside here at Arracourt. He [Clarke] came over, and had a captain from the 37th Tank Battalion¹⁰⁷ [Captain William A. Dwight]¹⁰⁸ with him. He said he wanted one of my platoons right away and he wanted me to [place] the rest of the company in position to stop the German attack. There was nobody — nobody — out in through here [points at map east-south east of Arracourt] but "C" Company, 704th, my company [laughs].¹⁰⁹

We were in a pretty good position. It was kind of foggy [on the 19th September] down where we were. I remember, we couldn't see from here across the street. But we could hear the German tanks starting up. That's how we got a warning. I was shaving, beside a tank, when a shell came right down between the tank that I was standing near and another. It plowed up the ground. That's when Colonel Clarke came over and said to move into position for the attack.

3rd platoon was the one that went [with Clarke]. They moved to Rechicourt and Coincourt on what they thought would be a routine assignment. They ran smack into 60 Mark IV and Tiger tanks. They knocked out two German tanks before one of the tank destroyers was hit. Graham [Private Richard Graham] was killed and Stasi [Sergeant Emilio Stasi] received slight wounds. Stasi was one of my gun commanders. Leiper [First-Lieutenant Edwin T. Leiper] was the platoon leader. I left him there and

¹⁰⁵ Southwest of Metz.

¹⁰⁶ Almost due south of Arracourt, on the Meurthe River, south-southeast of Nancy.

¹⁰⁷ "The first reported contact with the German armor occurred near Lesey where Company C of the 37th tank Battalion was outposted. A section of M-4 tanks were in position just south of Lesey when suddenly out of the dense fog which permeated the area appeared a Panther tank, hardly 75 yards from the two American tanks. The Panther and two additional German Tanks were destroyed almost within a matter of seconds; the remaining German tanks turned away in a southerly direction." Pvt. Milton Koshiol in Irzyk, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁸ A liaison officer who reported the presence of enemy armor. Upon his arrival at Arracourt he was ordered to take a platoon of the 704th to assist the American tanks at Lesey. West of a place called Bezange-la-Petite, Dwight made out a number of enemy tanks moving through the fog. The tank destroyers were deployed in a depression in the ground and opened fire at relatively close range. Four of the tank destroyers were lost, as were seven enemy tanks. This is Cole's account. Dwight did not actually initiate the engagement. This was done by Leiper, as explained in this text by Evans. Lonnie Gill, I – 6: "Captain Evans' C Company of the 704th had two platoons in outposts backing up the 51st Armored Infantry Battalion's positions east of Moyenvic. Lieutenant Leiper's 3rd Platoon had just been rotated to CCA headquarters in Arracourt the night before. After several tense days and nights on the line, the 3rd Platoon crewmen were looking forward to a rest. Early that Tuesday morning, Captain William Dwight, a liaison officer from the 37th Tank Battalion, was driving his peep [a term for jeep favored by armored personnel] along a country lane in the thick morning fog when he stumbled on the massive outlines of one of the *113 Panzer Brigade's* tank columns. Escaping in the poor visibility, Captain Dwight raced back to Arracourt. About 0730, Lieutenant Leiper was alerted to get his platoon ready to move. The situation was hazy, but something definitely was up! Colonel Bruce Clarke." Gill then follows with Leiper's personal account (from Chapter Five, *Employment of Four Tank Destroyer Battalions in the ETO*, Committee 24, Officers Advanced Course, The Armor School, Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1950), and the initiation of action. See appendices for other account, especially the *Combat Diary of the 704th TD*.

¹⁰⁹ Mr. Evans' account of his involvement, here and following, vividly provides substantive detail to the brief descriptions of events to be found in other sources. Pvt. Milton Koshiol in Irzyk, *Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 57, provides the following sketch: "About 0730 of the 19th of September, Lieutenant Webb the Communication Officer of CCA rushed in to Lieutenant Leiper and told him to alert his platoon immediately but could offer no explanation as to the reason for the emergency. A short time later, Captain Dwight, a liaison officer from the 37th Tank Battalion hurried in and asked if the platoon was ready. By this time, Lt. Leiper was sure something big was up, and his thoughts were confirmed with the arrival of CCA Commander Colonel Clarke who ordered the platoon to follow Capt. Dwight to Hill 279 and take up positions there as an outpost."

I moved down with the other platoon to try and stop them, because where we were on the side of this hill, the Germans were going to try to come around between the two hills. We were up on the two hillsides and they were coming through the middle.

Well, we got them from both sides. Before the day was over we knocked out 29 German tanks. And we turned them back. In the meantime, the 3rd Platoon that was down in Lunéville was supporting "B" Company. They really got the hell beat out of them down there. We had three or four of our officers killed. Third Platoon came back and took up position along with us. We were there for 10 days. But this was our big day.

GS: How did your unit come to be the only one in that area?

TE: They had sent the tanks and the infantry to attack toward the north and east. They didn't expect all these German tanks to be where they were. Through the night they had evidently moved south into the area near Arracourt.

There was a little town called Moyenvic,¹¹⁰ that's where we were hit pretty hard. I had three platoons, of course we had three or four [tank destroyers] that were knocked out. I would say we had maybe nine guns along there, towards Moyenvic. They attacked again, towards Arracourt from the northeast. Again, they surprised us. The division didn't know they had that strength. We fought up and down that area for three days, chasing one another. The 37th [Tank Battalion] would move into an area and the Germans would circle around and come back and try and get inside the defense.

One of the M18s was hit. It had its track knocked off and I could see these German tanks out in front of me. I just got in and emptied the gun. I'll tell you, I guess I was more mad than anything else. It might have been foolhardy. I wouldn't do it today. But at the time, you could see what they were doing and it made me quite mad, more than anything else. I saw this perfectly good gun and thought I might as well fire it. The tank destroyer right beside it was burning and evidently the Germans thought that both tanks were burning because there was a lot of smoke from the other tank. They didn't put another shell into it. After I fired the gun and fired the machine gun at them I did get some return fire. I got out and got down on the ground and crawled away. They eventually burned that tank, too. But, it's just one of those things that happen so quick that you figure you can take on the whole German Army.

GS: You were firing the main gun?

TE: The 76mm, yes.

GS: Did you hit any tanks with it?

TE: I think I did. I'm not sure. There were several of them in the vicinity.¹¹¹ I liked to fire that big gun. It

¹¹⁰ Several miles northeast of Arracourt, and southwest of Metz. "... prior to the 19th of September, Company C of the 704th was assisting in manning the combat outpost on the high ground north of Arracourt. Its Command Post was located at Xanrey and the company had two platoons placed on the line on the ground east of Moyenvic and its 3rd Platoon in reserve with CCA Headquarters in Arracourt. The 51st Armored Infantry was deployed along the Moyenvic line and the tank destroyers were being used as an infantry support team. Along the same line, but just west of Lezey was Captain Tanner with tanks of the 35th Tank Battalion" Pvt. Milton Koshiol, in Irzyk, *Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 57.

¹¹¹ Official US Army accounts credit Evans with one confirmed tank destroyed: "In the face of heavy fire Capt. Thomas J. Evans, C Company, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion, mounted a disabled American tank destroyer, manned its gun, and knocked out one of the
(continued...)

had a nice sight on it. It was like pointing your finger. It would go out 1,000 – 2,000 yards just as accurate as any rifle. It would take on any tank, I would say, at under 1,000 yards, except the bigger tanks, the Tiger and the Tiger Royal. I only saw five or six Tiger tanks in this whole battle. I have an argument with a friend of mine from Washington, D.C. — Dick Miller. He was a Colonel and stayed in the service after the war. He's always bouncing me about Tiger tanks. He says, "How many Tiger tanks did you see in the whole war?" I say, probably, 30 – 40. But never in a concentrated attack, as 20 – 30 Tiger tanks. If I had've, I'd still be running.

He's always on this argument that, if the Germans had enough Tiger tanks in the area at the time, we'd have had a hell of a time. Because they were a formidable weapon, believe me. The one I did know that we hit, it was probably 1,000 – 1,500 yards away. A gunner put at least three shells into that tank, it was coming at us up a hill, and I watched in the binoculars. At least two of them bounced off of that tank like it was nothing. And they were 76mm armor-piercing shells. The third round, I think took his track off, which was what we tried to do, disable them and get them to stop or turn. Then you could really pour everything into them. I wouldn't say that we were ever against a concentrated effort of Tiger tanks. But they had them. What they did towards the end [of the war], would be to put a few of them with each of their tank outfits to scare us into thinking they had more of them. If they would have had more of them, I think we'd have had a tougher time. It was some weapon. The ones we fought mostly were Panther¹¹² and Mark IVS and a few of their older Mark IIs.¹¹³ But they were nothing. We could hit them and destroy them right away.

Arracourt was the biggest tank against tank battle in Europe in World War Two. This [Arracourt] was my big part of the war. Shortly after that I moved up to S-2 and I wasn't with any of the companies after that.

You had asked about Patton. On top of that hill I had a little command post set up and all you could see down in [the valley] were burned vehicles. Ours and theirs. The 37th Tank Battalion moved in and the Germans knocked 20 of the 37th's tanks out before they knew what the hell had hit them. There were burned vehicles all over the place. We hit one tank, I'll never forget this, this German got out of the top of the tank. It was burning and he was on fire, his uniform was on fire. He had his hands up and he started walking toward us. We were 500 or 600 yards away, looking right down on this valley. We'd shoot a couple of rounds then move to a new position and shoot a few more. This German walked out and you could see his jacket smoking, burning on the back. He walked to within 100 yards of us and finally fell over. We couldn't go out after him because the Germans were firing. Nobody could go after him. His jacket finally caught fire and the poor sonofabitch burned up right there in front of our eyes. But there was nothing we could do.

I started to tell you about Patton. He came that evening with Colonel Clarke and they stood up on that hillside. Looking down at the carnage from my CP, Colonel Clarke said, "Captain Evans was in charge of this shootout." Patton asked me what kind of ammunition we were using and if we had

¹¹¹ (...continued)

enemy tanks. During the fight Captain Evans distinguished himself by coolly walking about and disposing his troops, all the while under fierce enemy fire. Evans was awarded the DSC" (Cole, 231).

¹¹² 50-ton German medium tank. Full designation was Panzerkampfwagen V. Heavy tank with improved armor, cannon and suspension. This tank was virtually impossible to destroy from the front, and rear attacks were necessary to defeat it. It was equipped with a 75mm gun, and was supposed to take on the Russian T-34; the Panther's gun a shorter operating range and slower speed, but its gun could shoot farther than the T-34s. Historians conclude that the Panther is the only WW II tank that would be able to perform on the modern battlefield.

¹¹³ German tanks. Full designation was Panzerkampfwagen II or IV. These models, along with the Mark III, were medium tanks of prewar design. Their armor was mostly vertical and was easier to penetrate than later German designs. The Russians, with their T-34 tank, did much to illustrate the benefits of sloping armor.

enough of it. I said, "We had plenty of ammunition, we're in good shape." Patton said to me, "This is the kind of thing that's going to end the war quicker than anybody had hoped." And he turned around, walked to his jeep and took off.

But I had been around him lots of times after that. But that's the first time I saw him up close. After that was when I was made S-2 and moved back and forth from his headquarters.

We moved up into Bastogne¹¹⁴ with the 4th Armored. Oh, jeez, we got up there on Christmas Eve [1944]. We had moved from around Sarreguemines, where we were engaged, and came back and got into Longwy, which was maybe 20 miles from Bastogne. It was about 18 or 20 degrees below zero. There was maybe eight or 10 inches of snow on the ground. And cold! It took us all night to move from Sarreguemines. They had MPs stopped every 20 miles. They had these big cans and logs burning so we could get out and warm our hands up. But we were only allowed to stay for two minutes [laughs].

When we got up into Longwy, I remember it was Christmas Eve. Eisenhower¹¹⁵ had promised that every GI was going to have turkey dinner for Christmas. Supply came along in a jeep with frozen turkeys that were this hard [raps knuckles on wooden table]. They were hollering "Merry Christmas" and throwing us frozen turkeys. Each tank crew got a turkey [laughs]. We gathered them up and had them later, around the 15th of January, after we pulled out of Bastogne.

Anyway, we got up there around midnight and it was a full moon-lit night. It was beautiful, but colder than hell. We had the whole division lined up bumper to bumper going up that road, with steam coming off of everything. They said that CC "A" was to attack Bastogne on Christmas morning, which they did. CC "R" actually got into Bastogne once, and came back out again. Then the Germans closed the road behind them. They tried to get back in the second time and had to fight their way in. Colonel Abrams led CC "A" into Bastogne. He was the first in. He broke up the siege. Then they had to turn around and fight their way back out again.

"C" Company, I wasn't their commanding officer, but I was right with them most of the time we were with CC "A." It was a hairy mess up there [in Bastogne], too. You couldn't tell who you were shooting at.¹¹⁶

GS: Let's go back to Arracourt and try to flesh out some of the actions during the 10 days you were there.

TE: We were in and out of there, around Arracourt for about three weeks. But, the actual fighting was about 10 days.

The morning of the 19th of September [1944], we had been in the vicinity of Arracourt for several days. Part of the Combat Command was in the vicinity of Lunéville, which was south of Arracourt.

¹¹⁴ Town and critical road junction in Belgium that has come into World War II legend. The Germans failed to capture Bastogne during their Ardennes offensive in December of 1944 which began the Battle of the Bulge. The town was defended by elements of the US 101st Airborne Division under the command of Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe, who responded "Nuts!" to German requests that he surrender. Bastogne was relieved by the 37th Tank Battalion under the command of Creighton Abrams.

¹¹⁵ Dwight David Eisenhower. American General and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during WW II. Nicknamed "Ike," he was later twice elected President of the United States (1952 and 1956).

¹¹⁶ The story of the Battle of the Bulge and Bastogne is told in the excellent film *Battleground* (1949) with Van Johnson, John Hodiak, Ricardo Montalban, and James Whitmore, who received a nomination for best supporting actor. The mediocre *Battle of the Bulge* (1965) starred Henry Fonda, Robert Shaw, Robert Ryan, and Telly Savalas.

Moyenvic was off to the north. The 4th Armored Division was in this area. CC "A," which I was assigned to at that time, had their headquarters within 200 yards of where my outpost was.

The morning of the 19th, it was very foggy.¹¹⁷ In fact you could hardly see 10 or 15 feet in front of you. You could see the outline, but you couldn't tell what it was. I had one platoon with CC "B" down around Lunéville. They'd been with them for several days. They had been reassigned to me the evening before, the 18th. So I had all three platoons in that area at 7:30 or 8:00 in the morning. I got a call from Colonel Clarke, who was CC "A" Commander that he was going to send a runner from the 37th Tank Battalion over, and he needed one of my platoons immediately to go with him to take up positions where the Germans were attacking in force. I sent Leiper who was 3rd Platoon with the runner. The other two platoons and I started getting ready. I talked to Colonel Clarke himself and he told me that we would almost assuredly be overrun if we couldn't stop this attack. He had sent most of the tanks in other directions and we were the only ones that were there with enough firepower to stop an attack.

The other two platoons started to move around Arracourt, which was built in a little valley. I put one platoon up on the side of the valley away from Arracourt and the other on the other side, where I figured this attack was coming from. We could hear the German tanks coming, but we couldn't see them through the fog. Of course, they couldn't see us.

At about 10:00, Leiper's platoon had come across the Germans. The infantry and tank attack was coming almost directly at him, almost within 200 yards of where his new position was. He immediately knocked out two or three of their tanks and then he shot another tank, set it on fire.¹¹⁸ The Germans immediately changed directions away from him, down into this valley, where I had the other two platoons. As soon as they came into range, the fog had lifted enough and it was a turkey shoot. We'd shoot them as fast as we could fire, knock out two or three tanks and move to another spot. All I did was run back and forth between the platoons, trying to keep the guys picking up targets and things like that.¹¹⁹

GS: Were you on foot or in your jeep?

TE: I had a jeep. I traveled in a jeep, back and forth between the platoons. We weren't that far apart, so lots of times I'd move on foot. We lost two M18 tank destroyers that were with Leiper. He had two or three men killed. The other two platoons, we had one other M18 hit. It had its tracks knocked off. We got 28 German tanks between the three platoons in about five hours time.

GS: You took out 28 German tanks and only lost three?

¹¹⁷ "The stage was now set for action. It was early in the foggy morning of the 19th of September. German armored units were generally known to be in the Area. CCA was deployed...and was preparing for its own advance while awaiting the return of the task force it had sent to the aid of CCR at Luneville." Pvt. Milton Koshiol in Irzyk, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ "As they approached the hill, Lt. Leiper, who was still in front with his jeep, was startled to see the muzzle of a German tank gun sticking out through the trees at what seemed to be less than 30 feet away! He immediately gave the dispersal signal and the many months of continuous practice proved its worthiness as the platoon promptly deployed with perfect accord. The lead tank destroyer, commanded by Sgt. Stacey [sic], had evidently seen the German tank at the same time as Lt. Leiper, and opened fire immediately. Its first round scored a direct hit, exploding the German tank. The flames of the burning tank revealed others behind it in a V-formation. Sgt. Stacey's next round hit a second German tank, but immediately afterward, he had his own tank knocked out by fire from a third German tank. This enemy Mark IV was taken under fire by the No. 2 tank destroyer and was destroyed. The maneuver and fire of the third tank destroyer got another German tank as it tried to back out of the unhealthy situation, and a fifth enemy tank was destroyed almost immediately thereafter" Pvt. Milton Koshiol, in Irzyk, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 57.

¹¹⁹ "From the employment of Captain Evans' company at Arracourt, it is noted that tank destroyers were used in platoons under company control, supporting an outpost line and moving from place to place looking for enemy tanks or other suitable targets of opportunity" Pvt. Milton Koshiol in Irzyk, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, p. 59.

TE: Right, we lost three. Then we pulled back a little that night. In the meantime, they had sent for the rest of the Combat Command to return. The 37th Tank Battalion brought their tanks in to fill the gap. We fought back and forth in that area, it was attack and counter-attack, against the 112th Panzer Regiment.¹²⁰ And we knocked out 50 or 60 of their tanks and vehicles and ground troops. On the 26th, the Germans finally pulled back. They just gave up the idea of attacking through that area.

They went back out and came around towards Moyenvic, which was to the north. They attacked along that line. I had one platoon up there and the other two platoons farther south on the Moyenvic highway. The Germans attacked us again there on the 29th of September. We hit six or eight more of their tanks and lost two of ours. That's when I got into the one and started firing. They had three tanks in front of me and they moved sideways so I could get a pretty good shot at one of them. I hit it and I fired at another one. I thought I hit it, but I'm not sure. In the meantime, I could see them turning their turrets toward me, so I got out. As I said before, I didn't think about getting a medal. I was just so sick and tired of them pounding on us and knocking out our equipment and killing my friends. It was probably a foolish thing to do, but it worked out. They fired at the tank and hit it, but I got out. They fired some machine guns at me as I tried to get back to one of my other platoons.

We moved from that position. Our idea was to fire three or four rounds and get out of that spot. We weren't armored enough to take on a tank, but we were quick enough to move and fire again.

GS: I noticed that there was an engineer¹²¹ unit in the area. Did they give you any support as far as fighting positions?

TE: Yes, they did. They were used as infantry. They supported us with their machine guns. To this day I can't understand why — it was the 24th Engineers — they were in there in the first place. I guess they'd been moving with the column and that's where they got stuck.

The battles at Arracourt went on for the better part of three weeks. I'd say 12 or 14 days were actual shoot-it-out and move. Every day, from daylight till dark, because the Germans were insistent on getting through there and we were just as insistent that they weren't going to get through. And they didn't. In all, I think 93 German tanks were destroyed and about 28 of the 4th Armored's. We lost seven M18s. We took a pretty good pounding and gave it right back. Arracourt was the largest tank versus tank battle in Europe. I didn't really realize that at the time. I saw an awful lot of armor and equipment there, on both sides, but I didn't realize it was that big a battle.

GS: What effects did the weather have on the engagements?

TE: It had rained day in and day out that whole three weeks. The German tanks could maneuver, they could get through the mud, but not near as well as on a dry surface. The same way with our heavy tanks. Our M18s could get along a lot better because we were lighter. But, the weather was terrible as far as living conditions. Anything you wanted to do was done in the pouring rain and fog. We got almost no support from the air. We usually had P-47 air cover, but in this case the weather was so bad, they couldn't fly in.

GS: You won two Bronze Stars and a DSC during these engagements. Can you go into some detail about each award and what happened those days?

¹²⁰ Cole's history

¹²¹ Military specialty encompassing many tasks, chief among them the building of roads, bridges, and airfields. Engineers also perform such duties and explosive ordnance disposal, mine field emplacement/detection/removal, and demolitions.

TE: One Bronze Star was for knocking out so much of their equipment during that early morning battle. The other [DSC] was up around Moyenvic, about the 27th or 28th of September. We were attacked again and we happened to be right along their line of attack. They hit us with artillery first and then infantry. Well, artillery to us is deadly [Due to the open turret on the M18]. We backed away from our positions until it cleared. Then their infantry came in. Our infantry pretty much took care of them. Then the armored attack came. We moved back up into position and they knocked out three of my tanks. They set two of them on fire and the third was hit and the engine mount was burning, but the gun was still operating. I had moved one platoon and part of another platoon around to another position. One of our tanks that had been hit was pointed right at them. The Germans ignored this tank, thinking it was knocked out. I just hopped up in it and put one round into a Panther tank. Then I wound the turret around and put another shot on another tank. They realized I was shooting at them and I could see their turrets coming around. So I got out of the tank. And it's a good thing I did, because they hit it from three different angles. As I ran along the ground, they machine-gunned me.

I went back to where the rest of the platoon was and brought a couple more of my tanks up to get the tanks that were firing at me. We got two of the three of them. The third one we got the next day. You could almost tell the units you were fighting. If you fought them one day, the next day you could almost tell which of the tanks was there. It was kind of a hairy situation.

GS: When the artillery came in on you and you decided to move back, how far back did you move?

TE: Oh, we moved back several hundred yards, sometimes 1,000, depending on what type of artillery is falling. Keeping in mind that as soon as it lifted, we would come back to those positions that we had picked out. Because they were advantageous as far as fields of fire. Most of the positions were defensive positions where we had the advantage.

GS: What would you look for in a position?

TE: Cover, mostly. We'd look for what we called a "hull down" position, where the tank would be hidden but the gun would have a full field of vision. Usually a field of fire of 1,000 yards or better. Lots of cover for us and a position where we could not be outflanked except by a lot of maneuvering on their part. Most of the men, surprisingly enough, knew what to look for themselves. We had certain rules and regulations, so they knew exactly what to do without having to ask somebody. They could protect themselves and pick out good positions. I had three platoon leaders who were really good at it. They knew where they wanted their guns to be. We'd move into an area and take up positions and that's the first thing they would do, is pick out the best and most advantageous positions for their tanks.

We would set up a perimeter of defense with our reconnaissance outfit to protect us from being flanked and protect us from infantry coming in on us. It was all pretty much standard procedure.

GS: The tank battalions had armored infantry¹²² with them. Did you have infantry support with you?

TE: No. We did not. We were strictly an attached unit. We were with them for a specific purpose. Mostly to support tank attacks. We'd pick up targets that were attacking the tanks. We'd travel with the Cavalry lots of times, to back them up. The Cavalry was the reconnaissance for the Combat Command. We weren't ever given the primary objective of being the attacking force. We were always in support of the main attack.

¹²² Infantry units equipped with armored vehicles for transportation. The armored infantry carrier, typically a halftrack, would drive close to the action where the infantry would dismount and fight on foot. Also known as Mechanized Infantry.

GS: Colonel Clarke, CC "A" Commander, was he CC "A" Commander throughout the war?

TE: No. Towards the end of the war, he was made a Brigadier General and sent to the 6th Armored Division, I think. They just got the hell beat out of them up around Bastogne. It was the 6th or the 7th Armored. He was later a three-star general. He died just a few years ago. We had breakfast with him down in South Carolina during one of our reunions. We talked with him about the war. He remembered the Arracourt battles very well. He said, "I don't know what else we could have thrown at them had your people not been able to hold them off." His whole command post and headquarters for the artillery, everything, was set up right behind Arracourt. Of course, that was part of our mission at that time, to protect the headquarters. He said that he hadn't had enough intelligence information about that German unit moving into the area. They moved some 300 vehicles into that area. They were going to attack the whole division. He didn't realize they were there until the Germans began using the railhead at Lunéville to bring their tanks in. Somebody should have known and gotten the information back to Clarke's headquarters. He was completely surprised by that attack.

GS: Tell me some more about the action around Bastogne?

TE: We were in the vicinity of Saarbrücken and Sarrguemines. We were relieved by the 12th Armored Division and moved south a few kilometers to Sarre-Union and Fenétrange. We regrouped there and were told about the breakthrough at Bastogne, where the Germans had broken out of the Ardennes and got as far into Belgium as Bastogne and the 101st Airborne was surrounded. The Allies decided that was as far west as they were going to allow the Germans to get. We were told to move from the vicinity of Sarrguemines to Longwy, Belgium, which is some 20 kilometers directly south of Bastogne. We arrived there after a 12 to 14 hour march in 15 to 20 degree below zero weather. There was three or four, maybe as much as six inches of snow on the ground, in some places as much as a foot. We were lined up almost bumper to bumper outside of Longwy. We got there around eleven o'clock at night on Christmas Eve.

The Combat Command got orders to attack Bastogne at three o'clock Christmas morning. We started out across what was a corn field that went up hill into a wooded area. We moved probably a half a mile when we were pinned down by German artillery and tank fire coming from the vicinity of Bastogne. They had completely surrounded Bastogne by that time. They had moved in reserve troops, of course the Americans were trying to move more troops in to the area to surround them, which eventually they did. There was some very, very fierce, heavy fighting almost completely around Bastogne, in the fields and the town.

My headquarters pulled back to Chaumont, which is about a mile or so to the east of Bastogne. In the meantime, Colonel Clarke sent Colonel Abrams to attack Bastogne. He eventually broke through and got into Bastogne and relieved the siege. Then he had to turn around and fight his way back out, because the Germans had closed in behind him. So they fought their way back out and got down the highway, this was the main road that ran from Longwy directly into Bastogne. We were up and down that highway, going in and out of Bastogne several times before they finally got the Germans backed off enough to say that the siege was lifted. In the meantime, the skies cleared and the Air Force sent in bomber after bomber, fighter-bombers strafed and bombed them, plus our artillery. I don't know how many divisions were in that area, but before that battle was over, I think it was the largest concentration of American troops in any battle area in Europe at that time. As I said, it went on into January. I think we finally left there on the 14th of January.

GS: Did the much-publicized fuel supply shortages affect the 704th at all?

TE: Yes, it did affect us. Around Arracourt we were short on fuel. When we came into Arracourt in early September, for about a week or 10 days, we were almost stopped dead. We weren't allowed to move forward so we took up defensive positions. We had enough gas to get out of the area, but not enough to sustain any type of forward attack. The information we had was that the supply trains couldn't bring it up fast enough. Then Patton put the word out that all the gas was going to Montgomery¹²³ for his drive [Operation Market-Garden,¹²⁴ the drive to capture intact bridges over several major rivers in Holland].

GS: Tell me about the Saar-Moselle Triangle.

TE: By the 14th of January [1945], the Battle of the Bulge was over and we were in a rest area in the vicinity of Luxembourg city. On January 19th, we were on the march again, this time as a battalion. The whole [704th Tank Destroyer] battalion was assigned a mission along with the 94th Infantry Division. Our joint task was to clear what was called the Saar-Moselle Triangle, or the "Siegfried Switch."

From the middle of January to March 4th, when we rejoined the 4th Armored, the 704th fought as a battalion for the first time in some of our hardest battles. The worst obstacles were dragon's teeth,¹²⁵ pillboxes,¹²⁶ mine fields and artillery fire. It was also under the worst weather conditions: ice and snow, cold, rain and freezing rain and mud. We fought through that for the next six weeks, with the 94th Infantry. Our command post was just outside of Bouzonville.

My brother, Jack, who was a Master Sergeant in the 94th Infantry Division, stopped to visit. I had persuaded him to stay with us overnight, then go back to his outfit the next day. During the night we were shelled by a 340mm railroad gun.¹²⁷

One of these shells hit just down the street. It completely obliterated the building and left a crater 30

¹²³ Field Marshall Sir Bernard Law Montgomery (1887 – 1976). Flamboyant British Field Marshall best known for his campaign across (after having adapted his predecessor Auchinleck's plans) North Africa and the defeat of German General Rommel in the desert at El Alamein. After his victory he blamed Auchinleck and his own staff for all the failures, and gave none of them credit for the successes. Later in the war, "Monty," as he was known, would be roundly criticized for the ill-planned and executed Operation Market-Garden. In this operation, Montgomery attempted to seize intact bridges over three rivers in Holland in September 1944. He failed to achieve all objectives in that endeavor. Montgomery escaped from the beaches of Dunkirk in 1940, after which he planned the ill-fated commando raid on Dieppe. He had a high opinion of himself, was mad for publicity, and was loathe to share control of a battle, believing that he only was capable of doing so. Montgomery would not attack unless he had overwhelming superiority. His egoism was notorious, and Eisenhower called him "a thorn in my side." His favorite reading was the Bible and John Bunyan's religious allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*. His own book was called *Infantry Manual*. His nemesis was the equally flamboyant American general George S. Patton, with whose talent Montgomery could not compare.

¹²⁴ Portrayed in the book *A Bridge Too Far*, from the Trilog by Cornelius Ryan, and in the film by the same name (1977).

¹²⁵ Concrete barriers emplaced to prohibit the movement of armored vehicles through a certain area, so named because they resembled teeth. Employed mostly along the beach or the Siegfried Line on Germany's western defenses. What the Allies called the "Siegfried Line," the Germans had named "The West Wall."

¹²⁶ A fortified under- or above-ground bunker, with ports from which an enemy could direct fire on friendly forces. Most effective when used in conjunction with other pillboxes in a static defensive line. In the Pacific Theatre, the Japanese were experts in constructing them.

¹²⁷ If this were indeed a rail-gun, the caliber could not have been larger than 280mm, the largest for a standard German rail-gun in World War II. In World War I, the Germans did manufacture and use the "Max," a 380mm rail-gun, notably in the attack on Verdun. Mr. Evans' unit may have been shelled by some version of the 280mm Kanone 5 (E]isenbahn), introduced into service in 1940. The barrel was 71ft long and was mounted on a special cradle. The gun, known to the Germans as *Schlanke Berta* (Slim Bertha), had a maximum range of 38.5 miles and could fire 8 – 15,536lb shells per hour. Overall, 28 of the guns were built. One version was made in smooth-bore to accept the 310mm Pennemünde Arrow Shell, rocket-assisted, which increased the range to 94 miles. The most famous of these was "Anzio Annie," used to shell Allied troops on the Anzio beachhead. "Anzio Annie," or the "Anzio Express" was concealed by the Germans in a railway tunnel near Colli Albani, Italy, and emerged briefly to fire a few rounds before again retiring into the tunnel. It was never damaged by the Allies. The famous gun was later captured by the Allies at Civitavecchia, removed to the United States, for some reason named "Leopold," and exhibited at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds Museum in Maryland.

feet deep. When my brother saw that, he started packing up and said he was going back with the infantry, where it was safe [laughs].¹²⁸

We rejoined the 4th Armored Division at Bitburg. Again, the companies of the 704th were parceled out to the Combat Commands. We fought through Kroft and Leubach, Meisenheim, Kobern, Seirsenheld, towards the Rhine River. We crossed on March 24th, 1945. We had minor engagements in all these little towns. Two or three tanks engaged and disposed of. We just overran everything. We really had them on the run, then.

We cleared out Darmstadt then crossed the Main River at Hanau. We traveled on the Reichsautobahn,¹²⁹ which was copied after the Turnpike in Pennsylvania.¹³⁰ We went on it for many miles, towards Hersfeld, Creuzburg, Gotha, and into Ohrdruf, the concentration camp.¹³¹ Then on from there to Erfurt and Chemnitz. There, we were told that the Russians were within 30 miles of us, coming from the opposite direction. So the Division started to move south, through Bayreuth to the Danube River.

We crossed the Danube, turned northeast into Czechoslovakia and took up positions in various locations just south of Pilsen. We were there when the war ended.

GS: How did you cross the Saar and the Moselle? Were there still bridges intact?

TE: No, no. The engineers put up pontoon bridges.¹³² Some of it was shallow enough for the tanks to ford the river. If we could find a spot. Through that Saar-Moselle Triangle was a hairy situation. Every day it was something new to confront. We backed up the 94th Infantry on their attacks on these fortifications.

GS: Since you were operating as a unified battalion, did your day to day job change greatly?

TE: Yes, it was a big difference, because we had actual control of our own people. As S-2, I functioned more in that job. We had more direct control of our battalion. My duties were a lot easier when we were with a Combat Command.

GS: What types of German units were you engaging in the Saar-Moselle?

TE: It was the remnants of the 14th Panzer Division and three infantry divisions. There was more infantry there than tanks. Their tank battalions were pretty well shot up. They couldn't replace their tanks. They were fighting with five or six tanks, when they should have had 20 or 30.

GS: Did the weather prohibit any air cover?

¹²⁸ The following remarks by Mr. Evans intervened in the narrative. For the sake of unity, they have been placed in note form here: *Incidentally, I had three other brothers in the service at the same time. My brother Frank was a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy. He was a fighter pilot. My brother George graduated from the Naval Academy on D-Day and was assigned to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. My youngest brother, Meade, was a sergeant in the Army Air Corps. They all survived and got out of the war. George was hurt, he came out a paraplegic . . . none of them are here. Jack lives in Florida, Frank lives in Pittsburgh, George died two years ago, and my brother Meade lives in New Orleans. I have a sister living in Greensburg. There were seven of us. One of my brothers died when he was very young.*

¹²⁹ Pioneering German highway system, similar to an interstate highway in the US.

¹³⁰ Actually, the reverse is true. The PA Turnpike is modeled after the Autobahn.

¹³¹ A camp for prisoners of the Third Reich used as a prison, slave-labor retaining point, and killing site. The word was actually coined by the British during the Boer War who created depots to "concentrate" Boer families during military operations.

¹³² A bridge carried in sections by engineers and erected quickly over water obstacles.

TE: Lots of times, it did. It was hazy, overcast, cold and snowing. We couldn't get any air cover in for weeks. It was somewhat like the weather up around Bastogne, although not as cold. It was a mess. And there weren't any roadways to travel through that whole area. We traveled mostly overland against fortifications.

GS: Did they have the roads blocked?

TE: Yes, the roads were blocked or they would have artillery fire covering them.

GS: How did you get through the dragon's teeth?

TE: We would pick out an area and the engineers would blow four or five of the teeth out. Most of the areas we had picked to move through had artillery fire, both direct and indirect, covering them, as well as small arms, mortar fire and some anti-tank weapons. We tried to pick an area we could get through without much harassment. But, they had it pretty well engineered. All the low spots were covered with small arms fire and the higher spots were covered with artillery fire. If you were attacking one position, another position would be able to hit you with direct fire from the woods or up on a hill. A lot of them were camouflaged. You couldn't see them. That Siegfried Line¹³³ was pretty well set up. After we got through it, they had no resistance. It was one of their last lines of defense.

GS: How much of a front was the 704th responsible for in the Saar-Moselle area?

TE: I would say from 2,000 to 3,000 yards, sometimes as wide as 5,000 yards. As far as I know, the 94th Infantry was the only division to attack that area. That whole "Switch" was their responsibility. They were a regular "leg" infantry outfit. They really fought hard there and lost a lot of men.

After that, we moved east again, into Bitburg and Rittersdorf and as far east as Koblenz [Germany], on the Rhine River. We had several minor battles there. The Germans were across the Rhine and were, of course, trying to prevent us from getting across. At that time we pulled back and headed south towards Worms. We had several engagements there, then crossed the Rhine near Darmstadt and by-passed Frankfurt on the east side. We headed almost directly north towards Grunberg and from there, on to the northeast to Hersfeld. Creuzberg, on the Werra River, was as far north as we got. We crossed the Werra River at Eisenach and moved toward Gotha. We were up in as far as Erfurt and Weimar. These were not any battles that we were ever really seriously threatened. We fought them every day and kept the attack going, but we were never threatened after we crossed the Rhine River. They were all just small skirmishes, where we'd take out anything that was in front of us.

GS: Had the German resistance stiffened as you advanced closer to the Rhine from the west?

TE: Yes, it did. Very much so. That was their last line of resistance, the eastern side of the Rhine River. They had everything that they had left on that side to try to prevent the Americans from getting across the Rhine. We didn't get in on that big bridgehead at Remagen.

GS: What types of German units do you remember engaging near the Rhine?

¹³³ Static defensive line built by Germany along its frontier with France. The French countered with its own Maginot Line. These vast systems of interlocked bunkers and machine guns were built after WW I, and were supposed to deter war. In 1940, as they had done in 1914, the German Army merely went around the north end of the Maginot Line to take France rather easily. The Germans called it "Westfall."

- TE:** Well, at that time, they were pretty well decimated. They had a lot of Hitlerjugend,¹³⁴ and we fought them on several different occasions, but as far as I'm concerned, they were beaten as soon as we crossed the Rhine. It was nothing for us to, in a day or two at the most, to go right through them. Nonetheless, they were still firing at us. We had casualties. We had tanks knocked out from bazooka fire. But I felt that as soon as we got across the Rhine and broke their back, that was the end of any organized resistance.
- GS:** At this time you were the S-2?
- TE:** Yes, I was the battalion S-2.
- GS:** Can you describe what your duties and responsibilities were as S-2?
- TE:** My biggest job was to make sure that everybody got information, as far as maps, to bring them up to date as to what the division was doing, what the battalion was doing, what our goals were for the day, what our targets were, make sure they had ammunition, make sure they had food, make sure the supply trains were in order. Also, I coordinated the attacks. By that I mean whatever the S-3 and the battalion commander would decide as far as the orders for the day, I would make sure everyone understood what their job was for the day, what their target was, all the lines of egress, where the ambulance flow would be, where the ammunition supply was if they ran out, things like that.
- GS:** I'm sure it was set up then much like it is today. S-1 was Personnel, S-2 was Intelligence, S-3 was Operations and S-4 was Supply?
- TE:** Right, yes. As far as intelligence, I did a lot of securing maps and finding out what the whole operation was and to get it out to as many people as I could, so they'd understand the whole situation, not just what was going on right in front of them. Which happened a lot. You knew exactly what was 200 yards in front of you, but knew nothing about what was on either side of you or behind you, or what the rest of the outfit was doing. Many times I'd go out to the platoons and talk to the tankers and they'd thought they were all alone, you know, there was nobody to tell them exactly what the situation was. As much as I could, I would disseminate the information to them, the "big picture," as to what was going on and how far advanced we were. I'd get them maps and things like that.
- GS:** As Intelligence Officer did you have anything to do with interrogating prisoners?
- TE:** Yes, I did. At our level, at that time, if we picked up any prisoners we would interrogate them and search them for maps, then immediately turn them over to division. There was a route set up just for that purpose, if we picked up anybody important or any news or maps, it all went back to division.
- GS:** Talk me through the rest of the campaign.
- TE:** Okay. We went as far east as just west of Chemnitz. Some of the advance units got into Dresden,

¹³⁴ Hitler Youth. Nazi organization which, in theory, taught National Socialist ideals to German youth. In later practice, the youth in this organization were used in desperation as home defense troops when Allied Forces neared the heart of Germany proper. Their use was dramatized in the German language film, *The Bridge*. The group was headed by Baldur von Schirach (1907 – 1974) from 1933 to 1940. Schirach was also Gauleiter (District Leader) of Vienna. *Hitler Jugend* was the designation of the 12th SS Panzer Division which successfully counterattacked the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division at Carpiquet (near Caen) airfield on July 5, 1944. The division was made up of teenagers. Its commander at the time was SS General Kurt Meyer. 90% of the division, formed in June of 1943, was killed or captured in the fighting around Caen.

some of them got into Leipzig. I was never in either one of those towns. We went back south towards Bayreuth and by-passed Nuremberg. We moved south and a little east and crossed over at Cham and Regen into Czechoslovakia. Some of our troops were in Susice and some were as far as Strakonice and [Volyne]. We were on the road that led to Prague and there we met up with the Russians. We weren't to go any farther east than Pisek. My battalion moved back to the vicinity of Susice and we were there when the war ended. Some of the battalion was in Susice and some of it was in Pisek.

In Susice, Czechoslovakia, we pulled up along side this very nice house with a high retaining wall. We parked a couple of tanks alongside this wall. It was starting to get dark when this young girl came out and said, "My mother and I can live upstairs and you can use the downstairs." As it was cold and wet, we gladly moved in. Her mother said that she'd cook for us if we supplied the food. We got some food and with it we got this can of corn. The mother cooked everything but the corn. I asked her why and she said that corn was feed for cattle. They didn't eat cow food [laughs].

GS: Where was the concentration camp that you liberated?

TE: That was at Ohrdruf [near Gotha].¹³⁵ The light tanks from the Combat Command had come onto this concentration camp quite by surprise. Nobody said that there was a concentration camp in the area. In fact, it was the first one I ever heard about. I didn't know that they had anything like that. It's another sight that you'd have to see to believe.

The German guards were still there early that morning. They didn't expect us to come up on them that quickly. The tanks actually knocked the front gates down and got into the camp itself. The German guards went out the back. They were captured later, shot a lot of them.¹³⁶ We got into the camp, I was with the advance party of CC "A." A driveway went in through barbed wire fencing on both sides, maybe 200 yards till we got into the main camp. The prisoners realized that something was going on, because they started to walk down this driveway towards us. They were emaciated, their faces were sunken, and their eyes were bulged out. They just staggered down towards us when they realized that we were Americans. Then they had big tears coming down their faces. More of them started coming out, maybe another 100 or 200. Tears were streaming down their faces and they were chattering and crying. Just to describe those, they were skin and bones is what they were. They had grey-striped uniforms on with a big Star of David on them.¹³⁷ I'll tell you, that was really something. It shook me. Believe me, it did.

The next day, Georgie Patton came up and went through the camp. Then he went down to the town, which was two miles away. He brought the Burgermeister and all his council, anybody who had anything to do with operating this little town. [Patton] made them go through this camp. Of course, they all denied knowing it was there and that they didn't know what went on in the camp. But after viewing the camp, they went back and that night the mayor hung himself. Patton brought many different generals, photographers, newsmen and others to view the camp.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Ohrdruf was established in November of 1944, to support the industries of rail and tunnel construction. Fewer than 75 prisoners were liberated. Numbers of deaths at the camp have remained unavailable.

¹³⁶ In other camps, justice came swiftly to the camp guards. At Dachau: "SS troopers were flushed out and rounded up — some rousted from beds in the hospital. A few GIs appointed themselves avengers, grunting, 'gotta kill 'em, gotta kill 'em.' They machine-gunned more than 100 captive Germans, many of them as they stood against a wall with hands raised. Prisoners then moved among the wounded, finishing them off with handguns. [Pistol! Pistol!] the Germans muttered, inviting a bullet to the brain" (*US News and World Report*, "Freeing the Survivors," (April 3, 1995), pp. 59–60.

¹³⁷ The Jewish population of Europe were required to sew the Star of David on their outer clothing for purposes of identification.

¹³⁸ What Patton did was not an unusual practice among Allied commanders. "Dwight Eisenhower came to the camp at Ohrdruf in high spirits.... Earlier in the day he had wisecracked with his companions, Gens. Omar Bradley and George Patton. But as the three trudged
(continued...)

That camp was a sight I'll never forget. And I'm sure that all the soldiers that went through that camp won't forget either. We only stayed there for two days, then we moved on. While there, many troops moved through the camp, to view it. Everybody was to walk through it and we weren't to touch anything or move anything. I remember you could look in and still see the bodies in the ovens. It was a horrible sight. It was the damndest thing I ever saw. Cruel, cruel wasn't even the way to describe it. Going through the camp, they had several enclosed buildings that they brought the prisoners through. As they went through, they made them undress. They'd throw their shoes in one bin, their socks in another bin, their shirts and pants, so they were naked at the far end. Any eyeglasses or jewelry they had was confiscated. Each of these bins was piled high. I'd say there were 10,000 pairs of glasses. They had a soldier down at the end who was supposed to be a dentist. If there were any gold teeth or anything, he'd chisel those out.

Then they had one building where the people took a shower. While they were taking a shower, that's when they gassed them. They went through and thought they were coming out the other end to go to work, I guess. Then they would stack them [the bodies] in a 300 to 400-foot long building with just a roof over it. They had, head and foot, probably two rows of dead bodies, head and foot piled from the floor up 10 or twelve feet high, to the roof of this building. They threw lime on it to keep the smell down. At the far end of this building they had a conveyor belt that went in to the ovens. It went around in a semi-circle into six ovens. They had men standing around the ovens, supposedly soldiers, and as this conveyor belt came around, why if your oven was ready for some more fuel, why they'd open the door, take a body and just throw it in. Two or three at a time, whatever the oven could stand at the time.

Then the conveyor belt would move on around to the next oven. They did this continually, 24 hours a day. But they were killing more than what they could burn. They just couldn't burn them fast enough. Some of the prisoners that were brought in would work. They had gardens there and a kitchen set up to feed the prisoners, and they had some of them working out on road gangs around the town. And as soon as their health broke down, or if they were too old or too young to work, they'd eliminate them. It was just like a factory operation. It was set up to eliminate the Jews.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ (...continued)

past 3,200 corpses lying in shallow graves and looked at the SS instruments of torture, their buoyant mood evaporated. Bradley was so shocked he could not speak. Patton refused to go into a room piled high with the dead, saying it would make him sick; he ducked behind a barracks and vomited anyway. Later, his he-man persona restored, Patton climbed on a jeep and barked, 'See what these bastards did. I don't want you to take prisoners.' Throughout the tour, Eisenhower's face was frozen in a scowl. When a GI bumped into an ex-guard and laughed nervously, Ike snapped, 'Still having trouble hating them?'¹³⁸ (pp. 60-61); and "Col. Haydon Sears, commander of the troops that liberated Ohrdruf, undertook to find out. He had the [mayor] of the nearby town and his wife brought in for a tour, which included a crude apparatus used to suspend prisoners during torture. I knew nothing of the camp, said [the mayor]. Nor I, said Frau [Mayor], tears streaking down her freckled face. 'Couldn't you smell it?' Sears demanded. The [mayor] said it smelled it now but had never smelled it before. ['Horrible, horrible,'] said his wife. Sears ordered them to return the next morning with other villagers. [Villagers returned the next day, without the mayor and his wife]. They had hanged themselves in the chilly April dawn. The men 'trudged up the street leading to and from the camp, their women in a whispering knot behind them, and now there was mud on their shining shoes'" *US News and World Report*, "Freeing the Survivors," (April 3, 1995), pp. 54-55).

¹³⁹ During their development of oral histories among members of the Jewish Community in Westmoreland County, PA, the staff of the Saint Vincent College Center for Northern Appalachian studies were given the following letter by one of the Jewish American liberators of Ohrdruf, Arthur Goldman. Though they have lived only eight miles apart all of their lives Mr. Evans and Mr. Goldman have yet to meet. *Somewhere in Germany (Ohrdruf). My Dear Mother, Teny. It is 7:30 o'clock, Friday night, April 13, 1945. I am 32-years, 5-months, 2-weeks and 6-days-old today, and of all the sights I have seen during this time, today I saw the most gruesome — a German concentration camp. No, I did not see it in actual operation, but is was just a matter of days ago that the Nazis, in the glory of their barbarous cruelty, left behind them another story that will go down in history with their many crimes. It is foolish for me to attempt to paint a word-picture of what I saw — pictures cannot tell a true story — one must actually see such atrocities with his own eyes to believe them — and I saw. I saw the scaffold on which people were hung; I saw the acid pit where bodies were disposed of; I saw the barracks in which these slaves were quartered; I saw the crematory, a crudely built fireplace in an open field, where bodies were burned; I saw and talked with the more fortunate slaves — fortunate only in that they escaped death and are still living in the camp; and above all, I saw the unburied bodies of those who the Germans [meaning Nazis] shot just before the Americans arrived. Gruesome is hardly the word for it. I have read stories and seen pictures of the things I saw* (continued...)

It [Ohrdruf] wasn't one of their bigger ones. This one probably had 20 or 30 barracks with about 50 people in each barracks. The crematoria¹⁴⁰ area was in the back part of the camp. They had four big buildings to the right where the prisoners would go through and undress. The next building was where the prisoners were gassed. Out of the lower end of that building was a conveyor that took the bodies to one of six ovens. The conveyor belts came around and whichever oven needed fuel, they'd just take the bodies and dump them.

Most of these [camp inmates I spoke with] were Polish. The others were German, from Upper Silesia, I think they said. They spoke German, but they said there were all nationalities there. If we didn't understand them, we'd get somebody to interpret for them. I had a German, two French, Polish, and a Russian interpreters. Nobody that was fluent, but enough to find out what was going on. One Polish fellow that we talked to said that his whole family had been picked up in Poland. They took the whole family, his wife, his children. He never saw them again. This was almost four years later. He had just been trying to survive and he couldn't believe that he'd made it.

I went in to Dachau, but not in the beginning. I went through that camp and saw the ovens. They had many, many ovens there and lots of other activity. They had many work details that went out from there. They had a munitions factory that they took these people to. They had a railroad siding that came right into the camp. It had two or three rails. Dachau was big.

GS: What was the size of the concentration camp at Ohrdruf?

TE: I think they had up to 20,000 prisoners there. We later ran into another concentration camp. I didn't have too much to do with that. I went through it. Ohrdruf was not as well known as some of the bigger ones. We overran Ohrdruf in April [1945].¹⁴¹

GS: Once you got into Czechoslovakia, did you have any contact with Russians? Did you meet or talk with any?

TE: Yes, we met a few. We met just outside of Pilsen with several jeeploads of soldiers and officers. They

¹³⁹ (...continued)

today and I never had a great desire to see these sorties and pictures come to life, but not that such a thing has occurred, I cannot say that I am sorry it has happened. It has assured me, all the more, why I am over here. There are confusing stories about the number of people who have been murdered at this camp. As a matter of fact, I don't think anyone actually knows. However, a conservative estimate, and I say again, conservative, is from 3,000 to 5,000. The slaves, and that is what they were — forced labor from most all the oppressed countries of Europe — Russia, Poland, Holland, France, but most of them came from Russia. They worked on roads and built military fortifications. The barracks in which they were quartered are cold, bare, dismal buildings, and we were told that as many as four persons shared a single straw tick [mattress] about the size of a single bed mattress, to sleep on. The working hours were from four-in-the-morning until 6-at-night. Each person was allotted 200

grams of bread and a bowl of soup per day. This information was told to us through an interpreter and by several of the "inmates." When the Germans left, they took along as many as they could, shot some who were too old and sick to be of any value. The ones who were left behind escaped death by hiding or being overlooked. As far as we could learn, there was one American civilian that shared the fate of many at this camp, and we were also told that two American soldiers were killed here. We "talked" to two Russian boys, 18-years-old, who had been here for two years, while we also talked to a Hollander, who said he was Jewish, who had been a prisoner for five years. This man could speak a little English, and said that his wife and two children had been murdered by the Nazis in Holland. I guess I could write many pages about what I saw and heard, but I think I have told you enough to give you an idea of what I mean by the most gruesome day of my life. Love, Art.

¹⁴⁰ Oven complexes within German concentration camps used to dispose of the bodies of their victims. This method of disposal was adopted when the number of victims grew too high for mass burial. The Nazis considered crematoria to be more efficient. See Holocaust survivor Robert Mendler's history in the *Oral Histories of Westmoreland County Jews*, Publications of the Center for Northern Appalachian Studies, 1993.

¹⁴¹ April 4, 1945. The events of the Holocaust are vividly described in many published accounts, some of the most famous by Nazi personnel who participated in it. Information may be obtained by the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC; Yad Vashem, in Israel; or at the Holocaust Center, Seton Hill College, Greensburg, PA. One may also consult the oral history of Robert Mendler, *The Oral Histories of the Westmoreland County Jewish Community*, Publications of the Saint Vincent College Center for Northern Appalachian Studies, 1993.

came across and shook hands with our men and exchanged hats. Some of them exchanged pistols. We'd been forewarned not to give them any government issue .45s or things like that. Which they had, incidently. They were riding in American jeeps.

At the time, we certainly felt good about meeting them, because it meant the war was over. We were allies. I don't know of anybody who had hard feelings about it, except Georgie [Patton].

GS: Was Patton's the only opinion, or did a lot of the men want to go ahead and finish the Russians off?

TE: No, I don't know of anyone else, other than Patton. He made that remark at a big dinner, and there were a lot of Russian officers and dignitaries present, as well as a lot of American division commanders. Patton stood up and made a toast to the Russians. He said what a great fighting outfit they were, however, we can't let our guard down now. He said, "We're here, we have the men here, and the destructive force to march right into Russia and take over now. If we don't do it now, your children will be over here in 20 years." The next day in *Stars and Stripes* there was a big article about Patton insulting the Russians. He was fined \$5,000. He really meant it. He was sincere. And it worked out that way, didn't it? We weren't over there fighting them, but they certainly became our enemy.¹⁴²

I think we were still fighting 10 days after the armistice. Some of the German SS had tanks and some infantry in an area up near Pilsen. They refused to surrender. Several attempts to try to get them to come out failed. They finally came out, but they had tied the children and women from the area onto their tanks, I think they brought 10 or 12 Tiger tanks out of that area, with the women and kids tied onto them, to keep us from shooting at them. They realized that there was nothing they could do, they were surrounded and the war was over, period. I don't think there was any more shooting after that. But, for about 10 days there we did put some artillery on them.¹⁴³

I stayed in and around Susice for two or three weeks, then we moved back to an occupation area around Landshut, Germany, which was south and west of Czechoslovakia. At that time my job was to screen prisoners. There were several large POW camps there. I had an office set up and had German, Polish and Russian interpreters. We screened probably 500 to 1,000 prisoners a day. We had to check them to make sure that they were not SS. We did this by having them remove their shirt and hold their hands above their heads. All SS troops had their serial number¹⁴⁴ tattooed on their upper left underarm. Anybody that was connected with the SS was automatically put back in the cages.¹⁴⁵

Other people, we checked them, and if they had no connection with the government or the SS, we released them. We told them to pack up and go back to their homes. I also worked at that time with

¹⁴² Omar Bradley ordered Patton to move southeastward on Czechoslovakia's western border, toward Linz, Austria. On the way, Patton was to seek and destroy the mythical National Redoubt, a kind of last-ditch alpine defense area of the Reich. The Redoubt was just that, a myth, something of which Patton was already convinced. As far as the Russians were concerned, Patton wanted to beat them there, not meet them there. Bradley did give Patton some inducement by suggesting the possibility that the 3rd Army might be able to invade and liberate at least a part of Czechoslovakia.

¹⁴³ In April, around Ingolstadt This encounter was with the 38th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, or the *Nibelungen* (after the German knights of Medieval romance). They had few tanks and even less artillery. Patton thought so little of the battle that he did not even mention it in his correspondence.

¹⁴⁴ Actually, SS-troops had their blood type tattooed under their left armpit, although this was not necessarily a universal practice. Some high-ranking SS officers, SS-Doctor Joseph Mengele among them, refused to be tattooed out of a sense of vanity: they didn't want to sully their "perfect" Aryan bodies.

¹⁴⁵ A major reason for this is that certain units of the SS ran the death-camps and participated in other atrocities. A prominent SS officer who was assassinated, Reinhard Heydrich, participated in the formation of the Final Solution to the Jewish question. Most importantly, other extremely prominent SS who were alive and still at large were Adolph Eichmann (administrator of the Final Solution), Heinrich Himmler (head of the SS), Rudolph Hoess (Commandant of Auschwitz), and the notorious Dr. Josef Mengele (medical officer at Auschwitz), the "Angel of Death."

what they called the CIC, which was the beginning of the CIA, it was the Counter-Intelligence Corps, then. My job was to check for black market operations. A lot of trains and trucks were being robbed or sidetracked, both by GIs and by Germans. Whole trainloads of goods would disappear. They'd bring these [suspects] in, it was more or less like a court system in the United States today. They would gather the information and get them into court and try them for treason or whatever. I worked for about six weeks on that.

GS: Describe the details of the White Russian Treasure episode.¹⁴⁶ When was it and what happened?

TE: I was battalion S-2 at the time and my job was to run the screening of the POW camp. I would go down every morning and they would bring the prisoners from the cages into the interrogation room. I had four interpreters. We really didn't interrogate them, all we did was check to see if they had SS markings, which were tattooed on the underside of their left arm. They had "SS" and their serial number tattooed there. We had them come in, take their shirts off, and I would check to see if their were any markings or if the markings had been obliterated or scarred. If there was, we'd automatically put them back in the POW cage. All the rest of the soldiers that came through that had no markings or had no indications that they were connected with the SS were turned loose so they could head for home. They came from all over Europe. We would probably interrogate 1,000 or 1,500 each day, as many as we could get through.

One morning there were five men in German uniforms. They were traveling with the German Army, but they were what were known as White Russians. That term dates back to the Czarist days before World War I, when the Red Russians and the White Russians clashed.¹⁴⁷ The White Russians fled and took up residence in Germany, where they stayed until World War II. Then they fought as a unit with the German Army Group South.

They had this treasure with them that had been in the bank in Berlin. As the Russians started to overrun Germany and were pushing towards Berlin, they [White Russians] took the treasure, put it on these horse drawn carriages and traveled south and west out of Berlin to get away from the Russians. In the meantime, they were captured by the Americans and sent to my compound for interrogation.

The five came in and I checked them and told them they were free to go. They wanted to know about their belongings. At that time, they were allowed to take any personal belongings, but nothing else.

GS: Did they speak English?

TE: The one did. Not well, but enough to be understood. The rest of them would just kind of agree with what this one said. He started to tell me the story, then, about the treasure. They traveled with General Vlasak, who was wanted by the Russians.¹⁴⁸ I guess they had been after him for some time. The Americans had taken Vlasak away from this group and left this Colonel in charge of the treasure.

¹⁴⁶ See Appendices for "4th A.D. Unit Guards Fabulous Treasure."

¹⁴⁷ After World War I and into the early 1920s, during the Russian Civil War. The Reds emerged as victors.

¹⁴⁸ Andrei Vlasov, former General in the Soviet Red Army, was decorated by Josef Stalin in 1941 for his courageous efforts in defending Moscow from German attack. Vlasov defected to the Germans in 1942 and was used by the Nazis as a propaganda tool. Vlasov was allowed to form two Russian divisions within the German Army. Vlasov was hopeful that the Nazis would help him to expel the communists from Russia, but this was not to be. In late April 1945, near the end of the war, Vlasov's troops turned coat once again, aiding the Czech partisans in Prague against the German Army. In early May 1945, Vlasov surrendered his command to the Third US Army and ended up in the POW compound which was staffed by Captain Evans. The Americans turned Vlasov over to the Soviets and he was returned to Russia. Vlasov and 10 of his ranking subordinates were tried for treason and executed in the summer of 1946. For detail on Vlasov, see Christopher Simpson's, *Blowback*, from which this information was obtained, and Heinz Hohne's, *The Order Of The Death's Head*.

I notified G-5 [staff dedicated to POW matters] at Division about the treasure. They informed me to inventory the stuff and get back to them with a dollar value. I opened the boxes, which were full of mostly church articles, icons and church artwork, chalices and gold pieces. There were some paintings and glasswork, some coins. We put a value of between 4 and 6-million [dollars] on it. Here it says 10 million [consults newspaper account]. But, to put an accurate dollar value on something like that, would be something someone with a knowledge of that would have to do. We inventoried this stuff and sent the list back to Division. They came and confiscated the treasure along with the five men. There were probably 200 or 300 hundred troops traveling with them, that had all surrendered at the same time.

GS: What type of units were they?

TE: They were artillery. I've forgotten the type of gun they used. It wasn't an 88mm artillery outfit. It was a heavy type of mortar. As I said, they had no connection with the SS whatsoever. According to them, they had nothing to do with them and didn't want to have anything to do with them. We released the treasure to Division with these five officers and that's the end of the story as far as I know it. Whether it went to the Army or went back to the White Russians, I don't know.

This POW camp also had a group of German nurses that had gotten out of Berlin somehow. There were 60 or 70 of them. They had just come back from the Russian front. A nurse officer came and talked to us. She was very fluent in English. She had gone to school in Texas when she was a little girl. She told us about the conditions in Russia. She said she had been there when the winter came in [1941]. She said it was just unbelievable. She said that the Russian soldiers didn't win that campaign, the weather did. She said they had thousands of amputations. Men were eating horses because there was no food and freezing to death. She said that conditions were so terrible there was nothing they could do.

She said there was one artillery outfit that she knew of, she went with a captain in the unit. He told her it was so cold that it would freeze the recoil mechanisms on the artillery pieces, which were hydro-recoil. Whatever fluid they had in the recoil system would freeze. She said they would fire the gun once and it would blow apart, because it couldn't recoil. It was really something, the picture she painted of what went on there.

GS: The White Russian story came out in a newspaper?

TE: Yes, it came out in the *Armored News* in 1945. They have the value listed as 10-million dollars. I don't know where they got that figure. What they had intended to do with this treasure was to restart the White Russian government. They hoped to one day return to Russia and regain their power. They hoped to overthrow the Reds. I don't know what happened to them. I never heard anything more about them.

GS: Had the Russians ever tried to contact you to find out where the treasure went?

TE: Oh, no, no! I never heard anybody say anything more about it. Other than our own people at reunions. They'll ask me to see if I can find out what happened to the treasure. I don't know whether they thought I had it at home here or not [laughs]. That's about the story.

GS: About the time you were getting ready to leave Europe, was there any talk of units in Europe being mobilized to go to the Pacific?

TE: Oh, yes, yes. The 4th Armored was lined up to go, with all its units. We were gonna go to the Pacific. In the meantime, the hostilities ceased there and everybody breathed a sigh of relief. I think the rest of the division came home in October-November and December of 1945.

After that they came out with the point system, where you could get points for every year in service or overseas, for every medal or award that you got. The Army had a system called "Green Project," and if you had enough points, you were eligible to fly home. Which I did. I flew from Susice to Paris and stayed there for four days. Then we had to go down to Marseilles, which was a return-staging area. We were there for three days, got some shots and got all of our papers in order, turned in our supplies and went to Casablanca, North Africa. We flew in a converted B-29 bomber.¹⁴⁹ They had taken the guns and the bomb bays out. We had 30 or 35 men on each plane. As your name came up, you'd get on the plane and go [laughs]. We were there for about three days, then we flew to Natal, Brazil. The reason they took this round about route was so that the planes could fly the most over land, rather than be out over the water. We stayed in Brazil for three days then flew from there to Miami Florida. We got there 10 days after leaving Marseilles. This was the latter part of September 1945.

From Miami, I got on a train to Fort Indiantown Gap [Pennsylvania]. I had probably three or four months of leave accumulated, so I checked in and came home from there. I had to report back in January 1946. At that time, I made a decision not to stay in the army. I went back to Indiantown Gap. I was released from active duty and went into the reserves.

Before that, I had gone to Fort Sam Houston, Texas. I taught tank tactics for about six weeks and that's when I decided to get out of the army. I stayed in the reserves for eight or 10 years after that. I think everybody had to at that time. Right before the Korean War, they said I was either in or out. So, I got out [laughs].

GS: Was there anything memorable about your trip home?

TE: Oh, yeah. The Air Force was flying C-47s¹⁵⁰ from Paris to the vicinity of Landshut. We went over to talk to the pilots of these planes. I think they were taking coal into Germany. Anyway, we talked to them about flying us back to Paris. "Oh, no," they said, "we can't do that." I said, "How 'bout some souvenirs?" They said, "What kind of souvenirs? What are we talking about?" We had several Nazi flags and had a box of Lugers that we had taken out of that one vehicle that we'd knocked out. We struck up an exchange, one pistol for each of us. There were four of us going. They said they'd be leaving in about 20 minutes or so. We asked about our jeep. "Oh, you can't take that." So with a few more Lugers, we got the jeep on the plane, too [laughs]. We flew it into Paris, but we had no billeting facilities. At that time you had to have a billet or you were not allowed to stay. Praglowski [Walter J. Praglowski], who was a warrant officer, had his typewriter and all his forms with him. So he just typed us out a billeting pass. We stayed in Paris the better part of three days before we had to be in Mar-

¹⁴⁹ Superfortress. Four-engine strategic bomber built by Boeing during WW II. Used primarily in the Pacific Theater due to its long over-water range, this aircraft type is best known for its use on the Hiroshima/Nagasaki atomic raids in 1945. General Hap Arnold originated the idea of the B-29 in 1939, to be used against the Nazis. It was plagued with early "bugs," the worst of which was the tendency of the engines to quickly burn out or catch fire. Designed for formation, high-altitude bombing, the B-29 was most successful in individual, low-level (between 5,000 and 7,500 feet) night incendiary attacks against Japanese cities. General Curtis LeMay was the first to use the planes in this manner. A nickname of the B-29 was "Dreamboat."

¹⁵⁰ Two-engine transport/cargo plane built by Douglas. A military version of the DC-3 passenger aircraft. The C-47 was used to transport paratroopers, supplies and light equipment. The civilian version was designated DC-3, and is still coveted by collectors and as passenger and cargo planes by many countries in the Third World and other places. It was called "Gooney Bird" in the Pacific Theatre. The Japanese copied the design of the C-47, and it was called "Tess" by US Intelligence. The Americans called the plane "Skytrain" and the British called it "Dakota."

seilles. We had a big time, spent all our money [laughs]. Got down to Marseilles and took off for home.

GS: Other than when you liberated the concentration camp and when dealing with the SS troops in Czechoslovakia at the close of the war when they tied the children to their tanks, did you ever witness anything that you would consider a war crime or a criminal act by the Germans?

TE: [Lengthy pause] I can't really say that I did. In the heat of battle, in my opinion, anything goes. No, I can't say that I ever did. We fought against the Panzer Lehr Division twice and that was an SS panzer outfit.¹⁵¹ They were a real force to be reckoned with, believe me. We fought them once in Normandy and then again up around Bastogne.

I was back over in Germany three years ago. We went on a tour of Dachau.¹⁵² They have it set up to show what all went on. They tore down all the barracks and have markers where things were. The German people around there couldn't understand why we'd want to go back to see that. They just couldn't understand. I said, "Well, you people created that." They don't want to talk about it. It's something that happened and they certainly weren't in favor of it happening. But, it did happen and they just couldn't believe that of all the things to see in Germany, we'd want to go back and go through that camp. But, there are many different church and Jewish organizations that put up plaques and memorials. They're not going to let it be forgotten and I don't think it's something that should be forgotten. Although, I've heard many stories going around that they say this never happened. That it's all a story made up during the war to create sentiment against the Germans.¹⁵³

It was a fair fight, us against them. They would pull a lot of dirty tricks as far as booby traps, trying to catch a guy off guard. But, after you'd hear a story or two, or see someone with his fingers blown off from a booby trap while looting, you'd get pretty leery.

GS: You had an opportunity to see some of the Nazi war criminals?

TE: Oh, yes. We flew into Bern, Switzerland and there were 40 or 50 MPs surrounding this roped-off area near where we had landed. When we landed, we asked everybody, but nobody would say what was going on. They had 30 or 40 prisoners inside this roped-off area. I walked over to one of the MPs and asked him. He said that they were all Nazi war criminals that they were taking back to prison in Germany.

We picked out a few that we thought we recognized. I know for sure that one was Herman Goering¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Actually a Wehrmacht division, as explained in a previous note.

¹⁵² Dachau, established in March of 1933 under Theodore Eicke, was the first of the Nazi concentration camps set up to house political prisoners. It was at this camp that Eicke coined the notorious slogan *Arbeit Macht Frei* "Work Makes Freedom." The camp was liberated on April 29, 1945 by the US 20th Armored, 42nd Infantry and 45th Infantry. 32,000 prisoners were liberated; more than 32,000 died there. Dachau supported the farming and arms industries.

¹⁵³ These views are promoted by various lunatic-fringe elements of society, most notably those in Neo-Nazi movements.

¹⁵⁴ Although a World War I fighter ace and successor to Manfred von Richtofen (The Red Baron who commanded the "Flying Circus"), Goering developed into one of Nazi Germany's most pathetic and ridiculous leaders. Among other positions, he was head of the Luftwaffe. He was a morphine addict, lived in anachronistic, medieval splendor in an estate called Karinhall, and plundered Europe of its great art treasures. He had a number of nicknames, among which were *Der Dicke* (literally the Fat One), and the "Flying Tailor," because of the comic-opera uniform ensembles he wore, one of which was pink. In addition, he painted his finger and toe nails, and was known to wear make-up. At one point in his career, he became enamored of racoon coats, had four imported from America so he could breed them, but failed in the venture, after which he released the animals into the forest. Today, Europe is still suffers from an overabundance of racoons. He said, much to his eternal regret: "The Americans are capable only of making iceboxes and razor blades;" "If the Allies ever bomb Berlin my name is Meyer;" and (on the Channel coast during the Battle of Britain to one of his Luftwaffe officers, "Can I get you

(continued...)

from his size and his looks. And Von Rundstedt¹⁵⁵ I'd seen pictures of before. Admiral Doenitz,¹⁵⁶ the submarine admiral and eight or 10 more that we thought we recognized. It was quite an experience just to see those people.

GS: Did you get a chance to talk with any of them?

TE: Oh, no. The MPs wouldn't allow us close enough. We asked if we could go over and get a closer look, but the MP captain said we weren't allowed. It was just interesting to see them. After knowing about them and hearing about them all this time. They didn't look like supermen to me. Of course, they were all stripped of their rank. They were just standing there like ordinary people.

GS: After the war, what was your military experience?

TE: Well, I stayed in the reserves. I wasn't really very active. I went up to Johnstown twice. They had Patton tanks.¹⁵⁷ I went up a couple of weekends to try and help them as much as I could. I gave them a few classes. I went to a couple of meetings in Pittsburgh. And they were talking about setting up a tank outfit in Ligonier, which eventually they did. I think it's still there. I went over and talked to them a couple of times, went over some stuff about the tanks. But, I was married in 1949 and started raising a family then. What, with the Korean war going on, I got this letter from the Army telling me either I'm in or I'm out. And I had two little kids by that time and I figured I'm not about to stay in the service. So I got out of the reserve.

Practically every year we have a division reunion and also battalion reunions, which I go to. I've been down to Fort Knox on several occasions, one time with Colonel Jimmy Leach, to meet with about 40 Army tank officers. They were mainly interested in the battle of Arracourt. They had a sand table set up and they wanted what information I could give them on the tactics we used and so forth. It was interesting to talk with them. Later I got to go up to the motor pool and the driving range and rode in an M1A1 [Abrams tank]. Spent three or four hours with it.

GS: Just to set the record straight: You received a Bronze Star for your action near Moyenvic?

TE: No, at Arracourt. I got one Bronze Star at Arracourt.

GS: Then you received the DSC at Moyenvic?

¹⁵⁴ (...continued)
anything?" To which the officer replied: "Yes, a squadron of Spitfires." When he was captured by Brigadier General Robert Stack of the 36th Infantry Division in Bavaria in May of 1945, Goering had in his possession over 20,000 pills analogous in chemical structure to morphine. He was tried at Nuremberg under the serial number 31G350013. He assumed the role of a leader at the trials, where he was found guilty and sentenced to death. He cheated the hangman by swallowing a poison capsule which was smuggled to him in a tube of toothpaste.

¹⁵⁵ Karl Gerd von Runstedt (1875 – 1953), German Wehrmacht Field Marshall of high intelligence. He was instrumental in the victory over France in 1940, the success of the invasion of Russia in 1941, and commanded the Ardennes offensive in 1944. After the Normandy invasion, von Runstedt pressed for an end to the war, was relieved of command, and later arrested for suspected complicity in the plot to kill Hitler (July 1944). He was considered by his captors as a professional soldier who had avoided the excesses of some of his colleagues, although it was briefly considered to try him as a war criminal. He was captured at Bad Tolz in 1945.

¹⁵⁶ Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz (1891 – 1980). He was Hitler's successor. His acceptance of Nazi doctrine tarnished his otherwise excellent military reputation. Doenitz negotiated the surrender of German forces in the West. He was captured at Flensburg on May 23, 1945, and convicted as a Nazi war criminal. He served a 10-year prison sentence in Spandau (prison), Germany. For anecdotal details on the capture of various Nazis after the war, consult Albert Speer's important books *Inside the Third Reich*, 1969 – 1970 (English Edition).

¹⁵⁷ M46 [Pershing], 47, or 48 [Patton]. US medium tank first used during the Korean War which broke out in 1950, and named in honor of George S. Patton.

TE: At Moyenvic, that's correct.

GS: And you got another Bronze Star, which was where?

TE: I'll have to look and see where that was. It was a different engagement, I think up around Bastogne. I'll have to look.

GS: Any final thoughts?

TE: You've brought up a lot of memories, I'll tell you. Stuff that I'd forgotten about all together. We'd got into one plant near Bayreuth. We had heard through the grapevine that it was a munitions manufacturing plant for artillery shells. So I went over with my translator and talked with the manager of the plant. I said we had to inspect the plant. It was a four-story building. The first floor they made leather-goods. Jackets, belts, really nice ankle-length leather coats. I picked one up for a nice souvenir.

We went up to the second floor and it was nothing but machines: lathes, presses and such. All made in Cincinnati, Ohio. Must have been 50 machines. On the top two floors, they had stored, end on end, heavy artillery shells that they had made in this plant. The leather shop was just a front for the munitions plant. So we arrested the manager and had the MPS surround the plant. I don't know whether the building was destroyed or whether they got all the shells out of it. But, this went on through many of the cities in Germany.

I took that leather coat out with me. We were riding in a jeep on the autobahn and it was cold and rainy. So I put that coat on and somebody took a shot at me [laughs]. That coat came off in a hurry! The shot went right into the hinge where the windshield folds down onto the hood. But that coat was all fur-lined. It was nice and warm. It was pretty nice, but I guess those other guys didn't enjoy it [laughs].

Speaking of that, we had two or three prisoners, when they'd be picked up they'd be given to me. I'd sit them up on the hood of the jeep and run them back to where they could be interrogated. I rode past some infantry and they shot them right off the front of my jeep. I had three of them shot right off the hood before we had a chance to talk to them. I went back and asked who the wise guy was, but nobody would admit to it. And I didn't blame them, I really didn't. Towards the end of the war, it got pretty hairy. We'd hear stories of what had happened to our guys and you'd want to turn around and give it right back to them.

When we went into Alsace, we liberated one town and the people came out and by noon, they would have eight or 10 women who had collaborated with the Germans out in the middle of the street. They would shave their heads clear down bald. Then they turned them loose to run down through the streets and they were stoned. Just because they were collaborators. I walked over to Colonel Odin and asked him if we should stop this. He said, "No, it's not our affair. Just back away from it." I'd say half the stones thrown were by women. That war was an ugly thing. Jesus, I'll tell you. So many things were destroyed. Just completely gone. So many antiques that belonged to generations just aren't there any more.

Combat Diary

“C” Company
704th Tank Destroyer Battalion

Fourth Armored Division

General George S. Patton, Jr.'s
Third U.S. Army

by

First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen, Jr.
and
T/4 Norman E. Macomber.

Dedication

We dedicate this diary to those of our buddies who
gave their lives for their country.

Corporal Chester W. Besse
Corporal Floyd Eaton
Corporal Michael Bodinsky
Corporal Frank Panebianco
First Lieutenant Owen C. Bumpass
Private Alfred L. Gordon
Private Horace Marshall
Private First Class Ervin Lanzendorfer
Private Chester Lane
Private John Binkley
Private First Class Patrick Ryan
Private First Class Manuel Hernandez
Private Joseph A. Heichelbach
Private Richard F. Graham
Sergeant Eugene Connors
Sergeant Joseph B. Gaboury
Sergeant Frank Orlene

Preface

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES we have tried to keep a record of the experiences of our Company from the day we left Trowbridge, England, to go into action in France, until our Combat duties in Europe had ended and we arrived at our assigned barracks in Landshut, Germany, where in all probability we shall serve as a part of the Army of Occupation.

Needless to say, many of you will be disappointed, because many of the deeds which you performed, and the combat experiences which you remember well, are not mentioned on these pages, but it was impossible, many times to know of these experiences, because of the great distances which separated our platoons during most of our ten months in action.

We are all justly proud of our company for its record during the long hard months of combat when we endured many hardships and faced death many times. We have a great feeling of satisfaction that 76 of the men who came overseas with us are still with us, and that so few of our buddies, who were wounded, received serious wounds.

We have all missed our old cronies from Pine Camp days — Sergeant Tim Cartusciello, Corporal Fred Stewart, Corporal Joseph Litalien, Sergeant Joe Tetrault, Sergeant Jim Lundgren, Corporal Michael Dawda, and others who were wounded during our many battles and have not returned to us. Among the other Pine Camp men who have not returned are Sergeant Emilio Stasi, Sergeant Mike Emineth, Corporal George Kmoblach and others who made 'C' Company's record so enviable.

We all take our hats off to Sergeant Pat Mascara, one of our newer men, who was seriously wounded while we were fighting in Germany, to Corporal Massey and Corporal Cardozo, who returned to the States because of their wounds. Sergeant Leslie Shaw who was evacuated to the hospital for an appendicitis operation was one of 'C' company's first members and ten of the fellows that made up the small group that formed our Company are still with us as war ended. To them goes a great deal of the credit for our success through the trying days past. Our Motor Sergeant, Frank House, who was one of our Company's first members was evacuated for illness, also Charles Troy. Long with the Company were Harry Davis, Louis Tramontano, Roy K. Endy and Henry O. Mengler. Sergeant Benny Dlugos, who was wounded twice, had been with us for a long time, before he had to be evacuated and Private William Cook, who is now in a hospital back in the good old U.S.A. Corporal Dominick Sorrentino is also hospitalized.

Staff Sergeant Paul Hatfield was the first of our fellows to return to the States for discharge after war in the ETO ended, but four other men from the Company were already at home on rotation furlough and will probably receive their discharges soon. Some of them served in the North African and Sicily Campaigns. They were Corporal John Jakubowitz, Private Kimball Gordon, Private First Class Byron G. Modlin and Corporal Walter W. Miller. Captain John T. Winkhaus, Jr., who took over command of the Company on November 27, 1944, when Captain Thomas Evans went to Battalion Headquarters., is also home on furlough.

To our Officers, who led us through the dangerous days of combat, we express our everlasting admiration and thanks for their excellent judgment, superior skill, and untiring efforts, in bringing us safely through the many battles we have fought. Many of those Officers who led us in combat are with us now. Lieutenant Richard P. Baudo, our Company Commander, Lieutenant Charles R. Oliver, our Executive Officer, Lieutenant Charles A. Callaway, Jr., who now leads the First Platoon, and Lieutenant Harry E. Doughty, who has the 3rd Platoon. Captain John T. Winkhaus, Jr., went home on rotation furlough. Another of our Officers who led us so well through much of the hardest, but most victorious combat, Captain Thomas J. Evans, who is with Battalion Headquarters. Also Lieutenant Edwin T. Leiper, who led the 3rd Platoon so well during many of the biggest battles is Battalion Motor Officer. He is now at home on furlough. Lieutenant Owen C. Bumpass, gave his life on November 11, 1944, near Obreck, France. Lieutenant Richard H. Buss and Lieutenant Solomon Haimowich left the Company last November at Lennoncourt, France and Lieutenant Fieux is now with CCA Headquarters. A great deal of credit must go to our First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen, Jr. and First Sergeant

Hugh Lavery, who took over when Sergeant Mullen was captured and who led the 3rd Platoon throughout most of the war. Also Staff Sergeant Paul P. Hatfield and Staff Sergeant Thomas J. Donovan also led the First and 2nd Platoons throughout most of our combat and Staff Sergeant Robert M. Taylor, who took over after Sergeant Hatfield was wounded. Also a great deal of credit to our Tank Commanders and their well-trained crews who fought so well in the many rugged and grueling battles in which they were almost continuously engaged.

In addition to the 76 men who came overseas with us and who went all through combat with us and are still with us, we have five other men who came over with our Battalion. when we came overseas but are not with our Company. They are Sergeant Lawrence E. Glass, Corporal Charles E. Hill, Private First Class Peter N. Orsini, Private First Class Walter J. Plausky and Private First Class William E. Talbot.

Silver Star Awards

Captain John T. Winkhaus, Jr.
First Lieutenant Charles I. Cole
First Lieutenant Richard H. Buss
Staff/Sergeant Paul P. Hatfield

Awards of Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star

Captain John T. Winkhaus, Jr.

Awards of Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star

Sergeant Stephen Krewsky
Staff/Sergeant Thomas J. Donovan (2)
First Sergeant Hugh Lavery
First Lieutenant Charles R. Oliver
T/4 Salvatore DelMonico
Sergeant John Ewanitsko
First Lieutenant Charles A. Callaway, jr.
T/Sergeant Willard H. Fox
T/4 Addison W. Smith
First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen, Jr.

Bronze Star Awards

Captain John T. Winkhaus, Jr.
Captain Thomas J. Evans
Corporal Frank Amedio
Corporal Dayle S. Cullins
Corporal Joseph H. Gadoury
Corporal Henry P. Godwin
Corporal Louis Tramontano
Corporal Floyd Eaton

RELUCTANT VALOR

Corporal George Knoblach
Corporal Dominick Sorrentino
Corporal Joseph G. Bieniasz
Corporal James Martino
Corporal Frederick A. Stewart
Corporal Jack C. Garnett (Medics)
First Sergeant Hugh Lavery
First Lieutenant Edwin T. Leiper
First Lieutenant Richard P. Baudo
First Lieutenant Owen C. Bumpass
First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen, Jr.
First Lieutenant Solomon Naimowich
First Lieutenant Charles A. Callaway, Jr.
Private First Class Paul Colangelo
Private First Class Harry J. Davis
Private First Class Pearl L. Moore
Private First Class Roy K. Endy
(Posthumously)
Private Charles R. Troy
Private First Class Walter J. Plausky
Private First Class William I. Graber
Private First Class Keith E. Ingalls
Private First Class Charles E. Schultz
Private First Class Henry O. Mengler
Private Richard F. Graham
Private First Class Curtis J. Huguet
Private First Class Wilber L. Flegle
Private First Class Paul Baneky
Second Lieutenant Harry E. Doughty
Sergeant John Ewanitsko
Sergeant Ray W. Day
Sergeant John L. Eidenschink
Sergeant Pasquale W. Ferraro
Sergeant Emilio Stasi
Sergeant Henry R. Hartman
Sergeant George J. Phaneuf
Sergeant Edwin L. McGurk
Sergeant John Jesky
Sergeant Joseph A. Tetreault
Sergeant Alexander Romek
Sergeant George R. Kachline
Sergeant Faldo Mazzola
Sergeant Stephen Krewsky
Sergeant John C. Green
Staff/Sergeant Robert M. Taylor
Staff/Sergeant Thomas J. Donovan
Staff/Sergeant Paul P. Hatfield
T/5 Oscar E. Schinke
T/4 Addison W. Smith
T/4 Lawrence M. Toohey

T/4 Gilbert E. Summers
T/4 Salvatore DelMonico
T/5 Charles E. Hill
T/5 Boyd K. Danzeisen (Medics)
T/4 Joseph F. Kelly
T/Sergeant Willard H. Fox
T/5 Valentine P. Folk
T/Sergeant Stephen Krewsky
T/4 John D. R. Brabham
T/4 Walter Bumbulis
T/4 Mike F. Emineth
T/5 Joseph L. Litalien

Posthumous Awards of the Purple Heart Medal

Corporal Floyd Eaton
Corporal Chester W. Besse
Corporal Frank Panebianco
Corporal Michael Bodinsky
First Lieutenant Owen C. Bumpass
Private First Class Horace I. Marshall
Private Albert L. Gordon
Private John Binkley
Private First Class Erwin G. Lanzendorfer
Private Richard F. Graham
Private Chester Lane
Private Joseph A. Heichlebech
Private First Class Patrick Ryan
Sergeant Joseph J. Gaboury
Sergeant Frank Orleno
Sergeant Eugene Conners

Clusters to Purple Heart Medal Awards

Private First Class Roy K. Endy
Private First Class Paul Baneky (2)
Second Lieutenant Harry e. Doughty
Sergeant Bronislaw F. Dlugosz
T/4 Lawrence S. Glass

Awards of the Purple Heart Medal

Corporal Henry F. Godwin
Corporal Michael P. Dawda
Corporal Michael Bodinsky
Corporal Frederick A. Stewart
Corporal Carmen J. Aita
Corporal Dominick Sorrentino
Corporal Lyndon E. Stephenson
First Lieutenant Charles I. Cole

RELUCTANT VALOR

First Lieutenant Charles A. Callaway
Private First Class Fred E. Wright
Private First Class George F. Knoblach
Private First Class Solomon W. Tone
Private First Class John J. Vrenay
Private First Class Paul Baneky
Private James M. Shaw
Private First Class Arthur Sosonko
Private First Class Ellison A. Bland
Private First Class James W. Kingery
Private William I. Cook
Private First Class Salvatore J. Tripodi
Private First Class William O. Downs
Private First Class Roy K. Endy
Private Pasqualino Conte
Private First Class Lester E. Beard
Second Lieutenant Harry E. Doughty
Sergeant John Ewanitsko
Sergeant Edwin L. McGurk
Sergeant Patsey Mascara
Sergeant George J. Phaneuf
Sergeant Joseph A. Tetreault
Sergeant John F. Jesky
Sergeant Ray W. Day
Sergeant Alexander Romek
Sergeant Paul R. Zamora
Sergeant Bronislaw F. Dlugosz
Sergeant Emilio Stasi
Sergeant Thomas V. Cartusciello
Sergeant John C. Green
Sergeant Pasquale W. Ferraro
Staff/Sergeant Paul P. Hatfield
T/5 Canio A. Costanzo
T/4 Lawrence E. Glass
T/4 John D. R. Brabham
T/4 George Zeljak
T/5 Joseph R. Massey
T/4 Walter Bumbulis
T/5 Valentine P. Folk
T/5 Lyle J. Braud

**“C” Company Men Who Came Overseas With Us And
Are Still With Us At War's End**

Corporal Frank Amodio
Corporal Joseph G. Bieniasz
Corporal Arthur Primavera
Corporal James Martino
Corporal Virgil W. Evilsizor
Corporal Joseph H. Gadoury

RELUCTANT VALOR

Corporal Richard H. Nelson
Corporal George Gamez
Corporal Henry F. Godwin
Corporal Dayle S. Cullins
Corporal Dominick Sorrentino
First Sergeant Hugh Lavery
First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen, Jr.
Private First Class Pearl L. Moore
Private First Class James E. Spradlin
Private First Class Arvid E. Johnson
Private First Class Frank A. Castello
Private First Class Gaetano Rubino
Private First Class Keith E. Ingalis
Private First Class Paul Baneky
Private First Class William I. Graber
Private First Class Andrew Csuma
Private First Class Paul Colangelo
Private First Class Walter P. Ciaszki
Private First Class John Vrenay
Private First Class Curtis J. Huguet
Private First Class Wilber L. Flegle
Private First Class Charles E. Schultz
Sergeant Pasquale Ferraro
Sergeant Ray W. Day
Sergeant John Green
Sergeant Carl C. Dill
Sergeant John Ewanitsko
Sergeant Anthony Dreiswerd
Sergeant Alexander Romek
Sergeant William P. Dellevigne
Sergeant Leslie H. Shaw
Sergeant Henry R. Hartman
Sergeant Edwin L. McGurk
Sergeant Faldo Mazzola
Sergeant George R. Kachline
Sergeant John F. Jesky
Sergeant Paul R. Zamora
Sergeant Stephen Krewsky
Sergeant George J. Phaneuf
Sergeant Emilio Stasi
Sergeant John L. Eidenschink
Staff/Sergeant Paul P. Hatfield
Staff/Sergeant Francis G. Curran
Staff/Sergeant Thomas J. Donovan
Staff/Sergeant Rocco J. Bruges
Staff/Sergeant Robert M. Taylor
Staff/Sergeant Sidney Ebbberling
T/4 Addison W. Smith
T/Sergeant Willard H. Fox
T/4 Lawrence M. Toohey

RELUCTANT VALOR

T/4 George Zeljak
T/4 Gilbert E. Summers
T/4 Albert B. Cardenas
T/5 Fred A. Lombardi
T/5 Oscar E. Schinke
T/5 Salvatore Tripodi
T/5 Daniel A. Lamay
T/5 Earl E. Goettsch
T/5 Valentine P. Folk
T/5 John H. Brickler
T/4 John D. R. Brabham
T/4 Walter Bumbulis
T/4 Joseph F. Kelly
T/4 Norman E. Macomber
T/4 Edward A. Joyce
T/4 Gordon H. Freeman
T/4 John C. Dawson
T/4 Salvatore DelMonico
T/4 William C. Nold

“C” Company Men Who Came With Us After We Arrived in Europe

Corporal Carman Aita
Corporal Lyndon E. Stephenson
Corporal Jack C. Garnett (Medic with C Co.)
Corporal Arthur Sosonko
Corporal Daniel S. Martin
Corporal Edward McCauliffe (Co. Personnel Clerk at Battalion Headquarters)
Corporal Frank A. Heger
Corporal Morris E. Rupprecht
Private William A. Bagley
Private William M. Ackerman
Private Robert L. Arthur
Private Bernard Aronowitz
Private Earl W. Blattel
Private First Class James F. Maver
Private First Class Peter N. Orsini (Transferred to C Co. from Medics at Tilshead)
Private First Class Walter J. Plausky (Transferred to C Co. from B Co. at Lennoncourt)
Private First Class William E. Talbot (Returned to C Co. at Nancy from Replacement Depot)
Private First Class William E. Wright
Private Ray D. Little
Private Calvin F. Thomas
Private Harry J. Neitzel
Private Leroy Weese
Private Richard Randall
Private Louis Chiapetta
Private Robert W. Mulcahy
Private Herbert B. Morrone
Private John F. Fay
Private Lucian G. Fluty

RELUCTANT VALOR

Private First Class William O. Downs
Private Clinton R. Moore
Private Joseph R. Brown
Private First Class Lowell R. Tatrault
Private First Class Donald P. Bedillion
Private First Class Norman P. Bollinger
Private First Class David R. Brownfield
Private First Class George L. Dale
Private First Class Theodore L. Avery, Jr.
Private First Class Donald Williams
Private First Class Edward D. Aguilar
Private First Class William F. Andrasko
Private First Class William C. Brunken
Private First Class Robert J. Bankerd
Private First Class Vincent J. Sottile
Private First Class James Throgmorton
Private First Class Vincent P. Smith
Private First Class Robert Clemson
Private First Class Donald E. Crise
Private First Class William J. Palumbo
T/5 Philip G. Devine
T/5 Charles E. Hill (Transferred to C Co. from Headquarters at Trowbridge)
T/5 Douglas W. Marsh
T/4 Lawrence E. Glass (from A Co. but originally with C Co.)
T/5 Robert F. Brunner
T/5 Maurice Ricci
T/5 Boyd K. Danzeisen Medic with C Co. (came overseas with 704 Headquarters)
T/4 Thomas R. Fraize
T/5 Albert E. Van Dyke
T/5 Willie C. Raphelt
T/5 Willis A. Price

The Diary Entries

1944

- July 8:
The Company left Trowbridge, Wiltshire at 0800 for marshalling area. Arrived at Hivesly Park at 1200 and were assigned to huts.
- July 9:
Care and cleaning of equipment and issuance of all needed equipment.
- July 10:
Left marshalling area at 0400 for port of embarkation. Arrived at Southampton at 0700. The Company had breakfast, dinner, and supper at the U.S. Army feeding points.
- July 11:
We were alerted at 0330 for shipment. Jeeps, 1-1/2 ton vehicles, M20's and tanks were loaded in that order. Six tanks failed to make ship because of lack of space and were left. Our ship left at 0700.
- July 12:
Arrived at Utah Beach, France at 0930. We unloaded and proceeded six miles to the vicinity of Eglise du Man where we had dinner. At 1300 we left and rode to the vicinity of St. Martin where we set up camp.
- July 13:
Care and cleaning of equipment. The remaining six tanks joined Company at 0800. No mess in operation and everyone eating 'C' and 'K' rations.
- July 14:
We were issued 10 in 1 rations. Usual camp duties.
- July 15:
Usual camp duties. Everything in good order.
- July 16:
First call at 0800. Company meeting at 0930. Catholic mass at 1000, Protestant services at 1400 in Company area. Most men washing clothes. Ball game at 1900, 1st Platoon vs. 2nd.
- July 17:
Received notice we should be ready to move at 0900. Finally left at 1415 and rode to an assembly area in the vicinity of La Campagna. The distance traveled was 40 miles. The front line was one mile south and our artillery blasted away all through the night.
- July 18:
First call at 0630, breakfast at 0700. Left Campagna at 1000 and took up indirect fire positions in the vicinity of Raids. We remained in position until 2030 when we received an artillery attack at which time we suffered our first casualty, Private James Shaw of Dallas, Texas (LWA) at 2100. We moved forward and took up a direct fire position but returned at 0200 without firing a shot. Our casualty was the first in the battalion.
- July 19:
First call at 0430, breakfast at 0500. Surveyed guns into position at 1330 and awaited orders. Searched area at 1900 for a reported sniper, with no success. 94th and 66th F.A. firing all day long but we remained in position without firing.
- July 20:
At 0500 Sergeant Leslie Shaw of Good Luck, Ky. was taken to the 46th Med. Det. as a result of a wound inflicted on himself as he accidentally turned over on a trench knife while he was sleeping.

Surveyed guns into position at 0800 and awaited orders to fire. At 1700 two platoons representing 70 EM and two Officers moved 2000 yards forward and took up positions for direct fire. Three men, Staff/Sergeant Miller, Private Lumley, and Private Tramantano accidentally hurt their ankles when they dove into a slit trench during an air attack. Not seriously hurt.

July 21:

Two platoons still remain in direct fire positions without firing a shot. The past two days have been rainy so that activity has been limited on both sides. Private First Class Howard Privitt of Henrietta, Texas accidentally shot himself in the right foot when he fell while going on guard at 1400.

July 22:

Everything the same. Received word that Sergeant Shaw, Private First Class Privitt, Private Shaw and Private Lumley were transferred. Usual combat duties. Eight shells from 88's¹⁵⁸ dropped in area at 1100. No casualties.

July 23:

Usual combat duties. A few 88's were fired in close but there were no casualties. Our Air Force was out for the first time in three days after being grounded by rain.

July 24:

At 0600 we had the worst artillery barrage of the young campaign. Over 100 shells from 88's dropped in area at 1100 but no casualties. One shell landed within 15 feet of our Commanding Officer's tent and another one within 50 feet of our Executive Officer's foxhole.

July 25:

We were treated to the greatest sight we have yet seen when over 3000 planes bombed and strafed enemy positions 600 yards to our front. It shook the ground under us and we were glad we weren't on the receiving end of that terrific bombardment. Other than that most everything was the same. Very little artillery firing. Something big in the air?¹⁵⁹

July 26:

At 0530 a drive started with Air Corps leading the way. By noon Raids had been taken. We are still in same positions waiting to move forward.

July 27:

Receiving another shelling at 0100, no casualties in our Company. Alerted to move forward and we all hope it's soon. Usual combat duties. Chow could be improved.

July 28:

Received word at 0100 that our Company would be part of an advance guard for CCA, moving forward at 0800 to vicinity of Coutances, enemy being on the run. At 0330 enemy planes bombed our area but we suffered no casualties in our Company.

July 29:

Left at 0800 as part of the advance guard for CCA. Pulled into an assembly area one mile north of Coutances at 1200. Heavy fighting still raging in town and prisoners being taken by hundreds. General Patton passed us while we were in the assembly area.

July 30:

Left assembly area at 0605 and pushed seven miles south of Coutances where we had dinner then left at 1320.

July 31:

We really hit jackpot. We captured and searched over 600 Jerries¹⁶⁰ in the vicinity of Avaranches. At 2200 we captured six more around our bivouac area. One horse was shot from beneath its rider.

¹⁵⁸ 88mm high velocity German artillery piece used throughout the war. It was a triple threat weapon because it could be used as an anti-aircraft, anti-personnel, or anti-tank cannon.

¹⁵⁹ This was Operation Cobra. See main text pages 18-19 for Evans' description.

¹⁶⁰ Nickname of the Germans.

During the early evening several Jerry horse drawn pieces of artillery came into our area and were hastily taken care of. We spent the night out in front of the whole damn Army with one small force of AA men who were our only friendly neighbors. Enemy troops continued coming into our area throughout the night, unaware that we were any where around. Our Medics, Danzeisen and Garnett were busy patching up Jerries.

August 1:

Left bivouac area and captured 25 more Germans, one a paratrooper, gave Captain Evans some valuable information. We pulled into an assembly area and left at 1300, driving south to Rennes. On our way we were given a tremendous welcome by the French. They showered us with flowers and cider and were sure glad to see us Americans. We bivouacked at 2200.

August 2:

Company got up at 0515 and were ready to leave at 0600 but plans were changed and we remained in bivouac until 1515 when all destroyers, except Donovan's which was left behind for maintenance, moved up five miles and took up fire positions and are standing by to fire if needed. Our kitchen, supply trucks, and security finally caught up with us this afternoon. They all had big stories of their experiences enroute during the past few days when they were strafed and bombed, captured enemy troops, etc. We moved our Company Headquarters across the road near Battalion Headquarters.

August 3:

Destroyers still in same positions two miles NE of Rennes. Two guns fired at about 1400 and Tony Dreiswerd knocked out an OP being used by enemy troops. Not much activity except for a few snipers who whip over a shot now and then. Kitchen, supply and Executives still back in area near Headquarters.

August 4:

Destroyers returned at 0445 and Company left bivouac area at 0600 and bypassed Rennes then traveled 61 miles through Mordelles to a point near Messac. The 1st and 3rd Platoons took up positions to fire if needed and later the 3rd Platoon took up a new position. At about 1600 the 2nd Platoon, and Company Headquarters drove to a point North of Janze where they bivouacked for the night. Security captured 25 Jerries and one Jerry was brought in on the front of the Executive Officer's M20. Most of our men helped search the several hundred prisoners who were being guarded in the field opposite our position near Messac. Total miles traveled for the day was 75. During the evening the 3rd Platoon shelled enemy positions killing several Germans and resulting in the capture of about 200 Jerries.

August 5:

1st and 3rd Platoons still in position. Company left bivouac area north of Janze at 1300, our destroyer assigned to guarding of Division Trains. The 3rd Platoon shelled enemy positions killing an undetermined number of Germans. 1st Platoon Security brought in ten prisoners and guarded them until they could be turned over to the PW cage. We traveled through Janze, Messac, Pipriac, and LaBacilly and LaGraive, a total of 71 miles to a bivouac area about eight miles east of Vannes. The 3rd Platoon took up positions guarding the approaches to the bivouac area. Everyone in good spirits and catching a bite to eat while on the move. The grateful French, wild with joy, line the streets everywhere, from early morn to long after dark, throwing flowers and kisses to us. There is also a generous supply of 'tres bon' cider which sure quenches our thirst. There is only one catch though, they all want cigarettes. The French are now rounding up large numbers of the Boche. Time was after 2300 when we finally reached our bivouac area.

August 6:

A very quiet day was spent in our bivouac area east of Vannes. The day was spent in care and cleaning of equipment, both personal and GI, and many much-needed baths were taken via the helmet method. We acquired a new soldier, a French Moroccan who had been a prisoner of the Boche for four years. We put him in a GI uniform and it looks like Lieutenant Bumpass has adopted him and

has him riding in the back of his jeep, along with Charlie Troy. Looks like the breather was only a one-day stand as it looks like a large day for tomorrow when we resume our travels and battles.

August 7:

The Company minus our Security, Kitchen, and Supply, left our bivouac area east of Bannes at 0545 and traveled through Vannes, a good sized city where, even it was very early in the morning, the enthusiastic people appeared in windows, doors and on balconies, attired in night dresses, pajamas, and what have you, to give us a rousing welcome. At Auray's, a few miles further on everything seemed peaceful, and at a halt in town, Sergeant Mullen got out to stretch, then all hell broke loose, with gunfire coming from all directions and the ping of the gunfire whizzing past too close for comfort. The 3rd Platoon fired a few rounds of 50 Cal. and brought about the capture of 25 Germans. Soon after we resumed our march and came across three Boche members of a gun crew, recently deceased, stretched grotesquely on the sidewalk. Further on we passed a burning ammunition dump and no one felt too much at ease with shells of all calibers whizzing over our heads and all around us. As we neared Hannebont we found strong resistance there, so we made a halt in an orchard for several hours, then resumed the drive to bypass the town. There was plenty of chance for action on this alternate road and the road was littered with burning vehicles, dead horses, and wrecked equipment. The civilians, ignoring the danger they were in, still lined the streets to greet us, and in many places they were rounding up the Quislings as we entered the town. A Frenchman who had captured a Boche officer was marching him along the road. He sure took care of him. We pulled into a bivouac area around 2100 and as shells were serenading us from all directions, we all dug in. Total mileage 51 miles. McGurk had his radio antenna neatly cut by an 88 while we were in column.

August 8:

Still in bivouac north of Lorient.¹⁶¹ We seem to be in the center of cross-fire from both enemy 88's, naval guns and friendly artillery and it's damn hard to tell at time which is which.. Someone is shelling hell out of Coudon and the shells are whistling over our heads. The destroyers took up fire positions at 2100 and John Green helped escort in a German Officer, whom the boys of the 53rd Infantry had captured. He said all of his 'Kamerads' took off. Fires still burning in Hennebont.

August 9:

Still in bivouac north of Lorient. Destroyers still in position. The enemy shelled Coudon heavily again this morning. It's still hard to tell which of the many shells soaring over our heads are enemy and which friendly. Some of the boys brought in three more prisoners, one wounded. Our Medics, Dan and Garnett, are kept busy patching up the Boche and French Civilians. The 3rd Platoon went to take up position to fire and around noon opened fire and knocked out enemy gun installations, 100 rounds were fired, knocking out four buildings in which valuable enemy supplies were stored. A damn good job well done. During the heavy shelling in the afternoon, of our area by the enemy with 88's, two of our men, Private William Graber and Private Charles Troy, from the 1st Platoon performed an act of heroism beyond the call of duty when they went through heavy enemy fire to carry to safety a wounded soldier from another outfit. We left our bivouac area at 1915 to return to a bivouac area near Headquarters in the vicinity of Vannes. Everyone hoped this would be a few day's stay for a much-needed rest but such was not to be. We traveled 43 miles.

August 10:

Company up at 0600 and left at 0930 on another long jaunt to the vicinity of Nantes, where we reached our bivouac area at 1840 after a rather tiresome ride of 92 miles. Nothing of any importance happened and it is hoped that our stay here will be long enough so we can catch our breaths and wash a few of our dirty clothes. We are in reserve so it may not be necessary for us to leave our area. T/4 Beaudin fell from the gas truck yesterday breaking his nose and he will be transferred.

August 11:

¹⁶¹ See main text pages 22-23 for his description.

Company up at 0700. Spent the day on care and maintenance of equipment and personal belongings. It was a quiet day with nothing of any importance taking place. During the evening heavy artillery could be heard now and then in the distance but it was too far away to cause us any concern.

August 12:

Company up at 0700. Another quiet day spent on care and cleaning of equipment. In the afternoon everyone was given the opportunity to go for a swim in a pond several miles away. The water, not exactly the cleanest we had ever seen, served the purpose as well as a crystal clear lake, as far as we were concerned. It was the first chance we had had for a bath, other than a steel-helmet bath, since our arrival in France a month ago today. Garrison regulations being enforced make us wish we were back on the push, dodging 88's and machine gun fire.¹⁶²

August 13:

Though this is Sunday and a beautiful cool morning at that, perfect for a few hours extra sleep, we were routed out at 0700 to prepare ourselves and our area for an inspection, due to take place by our Division Commander. Catholic services at 1100 in the Headquarters area.. Our Company a clerk at Battalion Headquarters Hoyt Lash has a swell new job as Sergeant Major with a Master Sergeant's rating, and is transferred to Headquarters Co. We were sure glad to see him get this wonderful break. Everybody who wanted to go for a swim were driven to the ole swimming hole, where we enjoyed a cool swim while the girls at the Chateau looked on with great interest.

August 14:

We left at 0800 on what proved to be a long tiresome road march, delayed time after time when the column halted. We rode through Cande, Sable, and many smaller towns, a total of 165 miles through picturesque and prosperous looking agricultural and wine country, along the River Loire. The enthusiastic French gave us a royal welcome. We were still dawdling around in column at 2400 and everyone was longing for their comfortable bed on the hard ground.

August 15:

Arrived at bivouac area just beyond St. Calais at 0600. One destroyer, sideswiped by a tank, dropped out and is not yet in. The Executive Officer's M20 had motor trouble and was towed for miles by the Battalion Maintenance, then ran out of gas, and was towed by Ferraro's T.D. and arrived at 0730. Everyone was dog tired and hoped for a long sleep, but this was not to be. We just got cleaned up, had breakfast and bedded down, when we learned we were leaving on another long push. Left at 1215, riding through St. Calais, Moree, Danze, many other towns. In the evening we ran into a heavy electrical stop and also a lot of enemy action. We were near the edge of a town, St. Jean De Colombe and could see the tracers and explosions from supply and ammunition dumps being blown up. All in all, it was quite a display of fireworks, with both the lightning and the tracers. As we passed through town there were several dead Krauts and a wrecked truck. We rode on through Gidy and bivouacked a short way from there, at around 2400. We are only eight miles from Orleans, the home of Jean De Arc. Total mileage 65 miles. Everybody very wet and damn sleepy.

August 16:

Left bivouac at noon and rode through Gidy to Saran where we were held up by a short skirmish. We stopped in a field to get off the road, and while there our M20 and the 1st Platoon Destroyer, which had been on the road for two days since their breakdowns, arrived. We left the area in late afternoon and went back through Saran and bivouacked for the night. C & K rations coming in so fast we can't keep ahead of them.

August 17:

Company up at 0600, even though we could all have used a little extra sleep and some much needed rest, this is never possible in combat. Care and cleaning of equipment must come first. We have lost Colonel Oden and several other Officers to the 35th Tank Battalion. Our new Battalion Commander

¹⁶² For Evans' commentary, see main text page 20.

is Colonel Bailey.

August 18:

A very quiet day. Still in the area of Saran near Orleans. The rest of the Battalion went back near Vendome with CCR and we are with CCA. Day spent on care and cleaning of equipment. A great many of our bombers flew over on their way to give someone hell. We have a new Company Clerk, Slate at Battalion Headquarters.

August 19:

Another quiet day spent in our bivouac area at Ceroettes near Saran. Everybody getting a much needed rest and nothing of any account happening. They are showering us with rations so we all have a good supply at last. Some of our men went to a movie in the evening.

August 20:

A quiet Sunday spent in bivouac near Ceroettes. Many of the fellows went to church and some of them were invited by the young ladies out to their homes. Sergeant Mullen and others accepted, and had coffee which they said was very good, but we surmise it was the cognac these French people put in their coffee.

August 21:

Company up at 0600 and hit the road again for a long, tiresome drive, the last part of which was made in a driving rain, that drenched everyone. We heard some firing and saw one dead kraut, the first in several days. We went through Feully, Des Aurais, Semoy, Trainou, Sully La Chapelle, Nibelle, Lorcy, and the large city of Sens which was our objective. We traveled 100 miles, then bivouacked a short distance from Sens, and the 2nd Platoon Destroyers went there and took up positions. Several destroyers fell out but came in later.

August 22:

Still in bivouac near Sens. Much heavy firing heard through the day and enemy mortar shelling reported in the next town but we received none of them. Maintenance of vehicles, radios, and all other equipment. It has cleared off and is quite warm.

August 23:

Company up at 0600 and still in bivouac near Sens. A quiet day except for a little flurry of excitement when several enemy planes flew over our bivouac area. They received a warm reception from our 50's, including the one on our Executive M20. Two unidentified planes were seen to go down not far from our position. The enemy planes were being chased by our P47's and it was later reported they downed six of them. Rain again.

August 24:

Heavy thunder showers with soaking rain all last night and through this morning but we kept quite dry. Still in same area near Sens and it is getting a little monotonous.

August 25:

Company up at 0530, left soon after 0700 to go to Troyes, our next objective. Traveled through Thorigny, Mauny, Traucault, Bourdenay, St. Flavy, and Echemines, then stopped in a bivouac area, while the engineers repaired several bridges that the Boche had blown out this side of Troyes. The 3rd Platoon went to Les Gres where they took up positions guarding the roads. Several enemy vehicles knocked out here. We left in late afternoon and went through Les Gres, La Mesmin to a bivouac beyond Feuges, which we reached in the early hours of the morning. Drove a total of 45 miles.

August 26:

Company up at 0600. Left soon after 0700 to go to Troyes, our objective.¹⁶³ At a halt, the 66th, FA was plastering Troyes with shells and our P47's were giving them hell. We got a good supply of leather jackets and sports jackets, compliments of the Boche. The 3rd Platoon still guarding the roads in town. Pulled into a bivouac area at about noon, 25 miles. No mail for a week nor *Stars and Stripes*.

¹⁶³ See main text pages 25-26 for Evans' commentary.

They sure would help. Corporal Floyd Eaton of Krewsky's section fired the 76 point blank at a Boche vehicle, loaded with Ordinance equipment, killing the three German Officers who were occupants and blowing the vehicle to bits. We stayed in our area near Charmont and rain fell again during afternoon and night. The Boche gave up Troyes.

August 27:

Still near Charmont not far from Troyes. Sergeant Tom Donovan brought in four Germans, mostly non-coms. Many of the fellows attempted to go to church but found services had been called off. 3rd Platoon returned from mission at noon.

August 28:

Company up at 0545 and left soon after 0700 to go to a point near Vitry-Le-Francois. Went through Chaudrey, Ramerupt, Grandville, and Dosnon. In one town we took four German prisoners and turned them over to the Free French, to take them back to the Infantry. Three more were captured by the crew of one of our 6 x 6's. We pulled into an area during the afternoon and while there watched our P47's do one hell of a good job of bombing. From the dense clouds of black some rolling skyward they must have hit their target. 2nd Platoon dropped out to take up positions guarding the roads at an intersection outside of Poivres. After we left the area near Poivres in early evening we continued on through Mairy, Sur Marne and St. Germaine and bivouacked at 2130 beside the Marne River at Mairy St. Germaine. The 1st and 3rd Platoons continued on across the river to take up positions. We drove 52 miles.

August 29:

Company up at 0500 and left at 0545 to advance to Courtesols near Chalons sur Marne. At one town there was still quite a lot of artillery shells being fired into the town. The 2nd Platoon at their position last night took 18 prisoners and took over a German one-and-a-half ton truck which the Infantry had knocked out. Our maintenance crew put a new body on it and made it into a very handy truck. The 3rd Platoon captured two Germans and Headquarters got one more. We took over a barn for our quarters for the night. Mileage 20 miles.

August 30:

Company up at 0600 and left at 0915 on a slow road march through Marson and Vitrey le Francois. It rained most of the way and we crossed the Marne River, fording it at a shallow spot. The bridge had been blown out. At Vitrey le Francois the French were helping a Quisling¹⁶⁴ drown in the canal. We bivouacked six miles west of St. Dezier. Twenty-nine miles today. Sergeant Paul Hatfield brought in a half-breed prisoner during the evening.

August 31:

Company up at 0600, left at 0730 on another tiresome drive through St. Dizier, Ancerville, Maulan, St. Aubin, St. Aire to Commercy, where we found much evidence of a lot of recent action. There were many prisoners and more wrecked vehicles, and debris of all sorts, also burning buildings. We bivouacked just beyond Commercy. We are getting ever closer to Germany and the rumors of peace are flying thick and fast. We drove 50 miles. Destroyers in position.

September 1:

Still near Commercy and destroyers in position. Field artillery shelling enemy positions. During the afternoon we were treated to some of the heaviest enemy action we have yet experienced when 15 or more enemy planes zoomed over our area, firing rockets all through our area. Plenty of excitement for a while, but we had no casualties. Most of the rockets hit in the area occupied by the 37th Tank, the 66th FA, the 94th FA and the 126th Ord. The casualties reported were five killed and 51 wounded but the Germans lost 21 planes during the attack, ten on the ground at Metz and 11 in this area. Several vehicles in the CCA area were hit. Soon after the planes had been driven off, a heavy artillery barrage commenced, and from our position on the hill, we could see the shells hitting in the CCA area

¹⁶⁴ Any traitorous individual, nicknamed after the founder of the Norwegian Fascist Party, Vidkun Quisling. He was considered a traitor for collaborating with the Nazis. Thereafter, any collaborator was called a "quisling."

and in the town below us. We again suffered no casualties, but other units of CCA received more casualties and we saw one M7¹⁶⁵ hit and burn. More rain.

September 2:

Another rainy and extremely uncomfortable day spent in bivouac near Vignot next to Commercy. 1st Platoon returned and took up positions with the rest of Company. A lone Nazi plane dropped a bomb at dusk. Rumors of war's end still persist.

September 3:

Sunday again, still near Commercy. The sun is shining briefly and all is quiet. Latrines have been dug, so it may be that our stay here could be longer than we anticipated.

September 4:

A quiet Labor Day spent in our area near Commercy. Sun shone all day for a change. In the evening we got word we were to move out at 2400 but plans were changed and we are still here. News looks good according to *Stars and Stripes* and even better from the rumors. Charlie Troy left us to go to hospital.

September 5:

Still near Commercy and it looks like we are going to break our record for staying in one place. We are on our fifth day here. We are getting plenty of rations.

September 6:

Another monotonous and rainy day near Commercy. Nothing to report.

September 7:

More rain. Still near Commercy. Wilber Shaw returned to the Battalion. Today was our first pay day since we arrived in France. We were alerted to move out at 1900 but plans changed. Red Cross Clubmobile visit called off.

September 8:

Rain again and it's getting damned monotonous as a seven day a week diet.

September 9:

Still at Vignot. Company allowed to go to movies at Commercy. Bing Crosby in *Going My Way*. Heinie planes over our area at night were fired on by anti-aircraft.

September 10:

Still at Vignot. More movies at Commercy. Esther Williams in *Bathing Beauty*. Rumors of peace are getting stronger and the picture looks brighter, we hope! Some of the men attended church in Commercy.

September 11:

Still at Vignot. Detail rumored from Periers with our duffel bags. At 0600 we were alerted to move out in half an hour and everyone was ready and raring to go at that time as this is our twelfth day here and it's getting a bit monotonous. We finally pulled out at around 1700 and drove 25 miles passing through Flirey and Limey. Scenes of battle from World War I. Old trenches and other signs of battle still remained. We bivouacked for the night and heavy enemy artillery across the Moselle River could be heard through the night, but none came into our area.

September 12:

Still in position, though we were to have moved across the river at 0600. Our T.D.'s took up positions during the morning for indirect fire and all platoons fired four or five rounds to target in. Enemy withdrew, so our fire was not needed. We remained in bivouac and will move out early tomorrow morning.

September 13:

We left soon after 0500 and pushed through the completely demolished towns of Mamey and

¹⁶⁵ M7 "Priest" self-propelled howitzer. A 105mm howitzer mounted on an M4 Sherman chassis.

Martincourt, where the fires in the buildings were still burning. We went on to Dieulouard where we crossed the bridge over the Moselle River, which the engineers had built and rebuilt several times under heavy fire. The shells were dropping too close to us for comfort, from the town. Many of our planes passed overhead while we were in column and while we were stopped, waiting to cross the bridge, we saw one P47 shot down and saw the pilot bail out. Heavy artillery fire met us all across the bridge and the 88's burst all around us, hitting one vehicle and caused some damage but no one was hurt. We passed several of our light and medium tanks still burning. We also passed several German Mark IV tanks, knocked out and abandoned along the way. One Yank Doughboy had been hit and lay dead along side of the road with his carbine still clutched in his hand. After we pulled into a field, to await further orders the shells from the 88's continued to burst all around us but, aside from one 6 by 6 hit and damaged, no other damage was sustained. The platoons left to take up positions and Reconnaissance. Co. met with a sad loss when Lieutenant Barfuss, who was working with us, was killed by bazooka fire as several Germans were coming out of the woods to surrender. Three of his men were seriously wounded, when hit by machine gun fire. This at St. Genevive. Our 1st Platoon with Sergeant Frank Orleno firing, knocked out a mortar and an amphibious jeep and the 2nd Platoon with Colonel Carl Dill firing knocked out a Mark V. Our Company killed 60 Germans and captured 30 more during the action. Many more were driven from the woods by our .30 and .50 caliber weapons. Shortly after 1800 we left for Chateau Salins, known to the Boche, as Salsburg and on the drive there through Heandelaine and other towns we saw many more fresh signs of the bitter fighting, burning vehicles, knocked out tanks, dead Heinies, some burned to a crisp. We saw burning haystacks with their recent Heinie¹⁶⁶ occupants burned and lying grotesquely among the ruins, also many burning buildings. One town, just before we reached Chateau Salins, was being heavily shelled by our artillery and the 88's were still pestering us. This was, by far, the roughest day we have yet seen. We saw all the action we wanted to see for one day. More rain at night.

September 14:

Company up at 0630. Rain still falling. Platoons still in position around Chateau Salins. Twenty Boche prisoners were hustled past our area while we were having breakfast and the rapid fire of our machine guns promised to flush many more out of the surrounding woods. The Company took 20 prisoners during the march from the vicinity of Chateau Salins to Arracourt, a distance of 20 miles, and after the platoons took up positions. We saw hundreds of German prisoners and a great deal of destruction along the way, vehicles, buildings, and haystacks were on fire all the way.

September 15:

Still in position at Arracourt. The Company had a big day, knocking out five vehicles, killing a number of Germans and capturing 25 prisoners. Reconnaissance. took one prisoner early this morning and the first brought in a lot more, then Corporal John Eidenschink, in Sergeant Pat Ferraro's gun crew, fired the big baby at a German supply truck at 800 yards and knocked it out with the first round. Later Corporal Floyd Eaton knocked out his second and third vehicles of the campaign, when he hit a half-track and a Volkswagon at close range. Even the noncombatant Headquarters, when somebody let loose with a .50 caliber and sent quite a few shells whistling past our heads. They were friendly troops but those shells sure as hell didn't sound very friendly. Action seems to be getting hotter and hotter every day. All members of Sergeant Steve Krewsky's and Sergeant Pat Ferraro's sections participated in knocking out of the enemy vehicles. All through the night a steady stream of .50 caliber shells whizzed past us.

September 16:

Still at Arracourt and platoons still in position. Sergeant Frank Orleno and his crew captured two Jerries. The 3rd Platoon captured nine Germans at Sergeant Ferraro's and Sergeant Krewsky's positions, during the evening. Two more horse drawn wagons, loaded with supplies were knocked out

¹⁶⁶ Nickname for the Germans

by Sergeant Krewsky's and Sergeant Ferraro's crews, several Jerries were wounded and two more prisoners taken. More rain to torment us.

September 17:

Another Sunday. Still at Arracourt and it is raining like hell. A quiet day with little action though plenty of enemy troops reported both here and on the way. Fifteen Jerries reported killed and 19 prisoners went past our position at breakfast time. Mail went out for first time since last Tuesday.

September 18:

Still at Arracourt and it is comparatively quiet today. It may be the lull before the storm. We are getting only K rations and have had no mail for a week. Three sacks of mail finally came in late this afternoon.

September 19:

Today will be a day we shall all remember. It started out to be just another quiet day at Arracourt, but the quiet didn't last long.¹⁶⁷ A few mortar shells landed close to us and more at CCA, then things really began to pop. The 3rd Platoon which had been guarding CCA moved out on what they thought was to be routine assignment to Rechicourt and Coincourt and ran smack into 60 Mark IV's and Tiger Tanks. A furious battle commenced with Corporal Frederick Stewart, Sergeant Stasi's gunner, knocking out two Boche tanks, before his T.D. was hit and put out of action. Private Richard Graham was instantly killed, Sergeant Emilo Stasi had slight leg wounds, Corporal Stewart, severe leg wounds and Private First Class George Knoblach, slight leg and hand wounds. Private First Class John Green, the driver, was the only member of the tank crew not wounded. Corporal John Eidenschink of Sergeant Pat Ferraro's crew accounted for three more Boche tanks, before his T.D. was hit and put out of action. In this tank, Corporal Valentine Folk received serious head wounds and Private First Class Henry Godwin, leg wounds. Corporal Floyd Eaton of Sergeant Krewsky's crew accounted for four more Heinie tanks, including a Tiger, before his T.D. was hit and put out of action. Corporal Eaton and the rest of the crew escaped uninjured. Corporal Dominick Sorrentino accounted for two more German tanks and Sergeant Edwin McGurk's tank of which he was the gunner, was the only 3rd Platoon TD tank escaping undamaged during the battle. While the 3rd Platoon was engaged in battle, the 1st Platoon spotted more Mark IVS and Tigers from their positions and Private First Class Frank Amodio, gunner for Sergeant Henry Hartman, for the first time, calmly knocked out five Boche tanks, while Corporal John Ewantisko of Sergeant Tom Donovan's crew knocked out three more. When the smoke of battle had cleared, our eight gun crews had knocked out 19 Boche tanks and killed an undetermined number of Jerries, with the loss of only three T.D.'s. One man was killed and five wounded, only two seriously. During the evening we got more bad news, when the 2nd Platoon which had been back with part of the 37th Tank Battalion to help CCR out of a hot spot, while the rest of the 37th was engaged in the tank battle. Private Patrick Ryan was killed by an enemy sniper. Corporal Joseph Tetrault and T/5 John Brabham wounded by 88 fire when hit by shrapnel. During this action the Commanding Officer of our Battalion since August 17 was killed and quite a few of the fellows wounded. We are all very proud of our tank crews, our fine Officers and all the men of our Company who took part in this furious battle and great victory.

September 20:

Company up at 0500 and alerted for battle. A large number of enemy tanks reported approaching. All platoons in position at 1100. We were alerted to move out at 1130 but it was afternoon before we finally left Arracourt. B Company pulled in before we left and they remained with CCR. We received some artillery fire while in column and proceeded a short distance before stopping in a field to allow another column to pass. We returned to Arracourt. Second Lieutenant Buss and Second Lieutenant Leiper promoted to First Lieutenants for their part in yesterday's battle. The Company was credited with saving the Division Combat Command from almost certain destruction. General George S.

¹⁶⁷ See main text pages 31-41 for Evans' commentary on Arracourt.

Patton observed much of the action.

September 21:

Still at Arracourt. During the morning we moved out and went up to Ley and took up positions where a terrific battle was taking place. The town, a few hundred yards to our right, was being heavily shelled and was burning. Heavy mortar fire dropped around our positions. The 1st Platoon brought in two prisoners. Late in the afternoon the enemy barrage increased, our 1st Platoon Security vehicle was hit and destroyed. Sergeant Gene Conners was killed and Ray Day, who was beside him, was hit by shrapnel. Our boy, 'Rochester' was also wounded. We moved out of this area fast, while under heavy fire, with shells dropping all around us. Shrapnel hit Pat Ferraro but luckily he wasn't hurt too bad. We moved back through Ley and the next town and bivouacked for the night. Enemy shells still hitting in the not too far distance. Purple Hearts were awarded today to Sergeant Emilo Stasi, Corporal Valentine Folk, Private Pat Conte, Private Braud, Corporal Frederick Stewart, Private First Class Henry Godwin, Private First Class George Knoblach and the Purple Heart will be sent posthumously to the parents of Private Patrick Ryan and Private Richard Graham, who were killed in action. This was another rugged day for all of us. We are getting replacements for the boys we lost but they can never really replace our good buddies.

September 22:

We expected to spend a quiet day in our present position, but the Boche upset those plans. Soon after breakfast enemy shells commenced bursting all around us and no one knew where the next one would hit, so there was little chance to take cover. A direct fire shell plowed the dirt up all around our CP and around the Maintenance, and we packed in a hurry and got the hell out of there fast, moving across the road to safer ground. Our T.D.'s took up positions and the shells continued to burst in large numbers on the road harassing columns, moving along the road. Shortly after noon, we moved back to Arracourt and started much needed maintenance on our equipment. The wrecker was out of action and was left for Ordinance to pick up and repair. Sergeant Walter E. Mullen was offered a battlefield commission as Second Lieutenant but he turned it down to stay with us. Purple Heart awards were made to Sergeant Pasquale Ferraro and Corporal Ray W. Day and to our boy 'Rochester' Koonasse Konan. We received five replacements.

September 23:

Still in Arracourt and you guessed it - rain again. It's might discouraging. Our new Battalion Commander is to speak to us today. Maintenance of vehicles continuing. Nothing of any note took place today. Too damn rainy.

September 24:

Arracourt. We were alerted to move out to meet expected enemy attack of a Panzer Division with 50 tanks at 0600, but didn't leave until mid-morning. We left in a driving rain, going through Moncel-O-Selle and Moncel Petteunon to the vicinity of Chateau Salins, where we were almost two weeks ago. We met plenty of hot action going on and took up positions in mobile reserve. The 88's burst regularly, not too far from us. A Company was in position and received several casualties, including Captain Ryan. Toward dark we moved further back down the road, but found it just as hot there.

September 25:

We stayed in position of mobile reserve until mid-afternoon when we started back to Arracourt. We gassed vehicles on the road, got a new blanket each, and PX rations, then arrived in Arracourt after dark. Battalion Headquarters is across the road. Still pouring.

September 26:

Company up at 0530 but it is pouring again and we might as well stood in bed! Maintenance of vehicles and equipment. We are hoping this could be a much-needed rest. Artillery being continually fired over our area. Thank God it is ours. Knoblach returned from the hospital. Also seven more replacements. Enemy shells hit in our area quite often, also machine gunfire close by.

September 27:

Arracourt. Everyone up at 0600. Cloudy, cold and more rain. At 0830 we pulled out and went to Juvrecourt near Xaurey but found the 602nd T.D. Battalion there, so we returned. During the night heavy machine gun fire was close at hand, our guard was increased. We were heavily shelled through error by our Division Artillery during the evening, but no one was hit.

September 28:

Arracourt. Company up at 0600 and at 0745 we left for Juvrecourt again and relieved the 602 T.D. Battalion. Heavy artillery and air bursts coming close to our area. The dense fog made observation of the enemy difficult. We directed several of our fighter planes to targets and their attack was something worth seeing.

September 29:

Juvrecourt. Company up at 0545 and it is quiet today except for heavy machine gun fire close by in the dense fog. Heavy artillery fire also came close to our area. At noon the fog and miserable weather of the past two weeks cleared and our fighter planes really went to work, bombing and strafing enemy targets all afternoon and right up until dark. Thick clouds of smoke which rose in dozens of places gave proof of their success. Henry Mengler went to a rest area for battle fatigue.

September 30:

Juvrecourt. Company up at 0545 and it is comparatively quiet, so I guess the Boche are licking their wounds, from the terrific pounding our fighter planes we gave them yesterday. The foul weather has cleared somewhat but closed in enough so planes cannot fly. I guess two days of good weather was too much to expect. We got plenty of excitement this afternoon when tanks of our 35th Tank Battalion came close to our area and the Jerries sent over plenty of shells. Shells were landing all around us and the shrapnel made things a bit uncomfortable. Two of our men in the 1st Platoon, Corporal Mike Bodinsky and Private William Downs were hit but not hurt badly. Even the boys in our Headquarters Section got their share of excitement, when several shells were fired at the tanks passing our CP. They hit all around us, hitting Sergeant Dlugosz, putting a large piece of shrapnel all the way through his arm. The shells also ripped several of our tents to shreds. Corporal Bodinsky, Sergeant Dlugosz and Private Downs were awarded Purple Heart Medals. Private First Class John Brickler went back to rest area.

October 1:

Juvrecourt. Company up at 0545 after a night of heavy artillery shelling from nearby. At 0800 Company came to replace us and we returned to Arracourt. Heavy rain started as soon as we reached there and it continued most of the night. Sergeant Steve Krewsky's crew made *Stars and Stripes* being applauded for their fine job of knocking out an enemy command car and killing four Officers near Troyes.

October 2:

Arracourt. Company up at 0545. Cloudy and plenty muddy. It cleared around noon but later hail fell. T/5 Miller and the driver of the 2nd Platoon Security vehicle were injured when they skidded on the muddy road and crashed into a pole, wrecking the vehicle. Private First Class Mengler returned to Company. Reports received that 500 planes hit the Siegfried Line today.

October 3:

Arracourt. Company up at 0545. A clear day for a change. Wave after wave of our heavy bombers flew over making us feel much better knowing that the enemy somewhere was catching hell. Other planes strafed enemy installations near our area. Van Landingham left the Company. We got four more replacements. Two of our 3rd Platoon TD's are back in action again. One still out.

October 4:

Arracourt. Company up at 0545. More rain. A large number of our boys, who did such a great job against the enemy during the tank battle on September 19, when they knocked out 19 Boche tanks, were rewarded with the Bronze Star. These included were: Sergeant Emilo Stasi, corporal Frederick Stewart, Private First Class George Knoblach, Private First Class John Green, Private Richard Graham (posthumously), Sergeant Pasquale Ferraro, Corporal John Eidenschink, T/5 Valentine Folk,

T/5 Salvatore Del Monico, Private First Class Henry Godwin, Sergeant Stephen Krewsky, Corporal Floyd Eaton, T/5 Mike Emenith, Private First Class James Martino, Corporal John Ewanitsko, Corporal Joseph Gadoury, Private First Class Keith Ingalls, T/5 George Kachline, Sergeant Henry Hartman, Corporal Frank Amodio, Private First Class Roy Endy, Private First Class Curtis Huguet, T/5 Joseph Kelly, First Lieutenant Own Bumpass, First Lieutenant Edwin Leiper, First Lieutenant Buss, Sergeant Edwin McGurk, Corporal George Phaneuf, Corporal Dominick Sorrentino, Private Charles Hill, and Private First Class Wilber Flegle. Today was pay day but who needs money here, so much of it was sent home. Planes over again giving Jerry hell and artillery still banging away.

October 5:

Arracourt. Company up at 0545, left soon after 0800 to replace B Company at Juvrecourt. Both Arracourt and Juvrecourt were heavily shelled during the morning hours. Sergeant Bronislaw Dlugosz returned to the Company today. The new German surprise weapon rocket is being used against us and against the famed 26 Yankee Division with whom we are working.¹⁶⁸

October 6:

Juvrecourt. Rather a quiet day except for a bit of excitement when bullets from small arms fire started flying around town near our CP. An artillery barrage landed a few shells in our area, shrapnel hit Captain Evans on the lip and Sergeant Paul Zamora was hit also by shrapnel but luckily received only slight cuts about his face. He will receive the Purple Heart.

October 7:

Juvrecourt. All quiet today. Boys of the 26th Yankee Division moved up here today and drew a typical welcome from the Germans, via heavy artillery shelling, all through the afternoon and night. At times it was a continuous barrage. Small arms fire also close. Bronze Star awards made to Staff/Sergeant Paul Hatfield, Corporal Louis Tramontano and Private First Class Davis.

October 8:

Juvrecourt. All quiet at first but later a large number of shells from the 88's went over and some hit close by. A warm, pleasant day for a change.

October 9:

Juvrecourt. A Company came to replace us a 0800 and we returned to Arracourt for what we hoped would be a well-deserved rest. Rain as usual, and during the early evening we got orders to prepare to move out to Moyenvic, to meet an unexpected attack. Much to our relief the alert was called off and we remained in the area.

October 10:

Arracourt. Another rainy and extremely unpleasant day. Our kitchen crew making preparations to start feeding us again after a long vacation from us, since we left Raids. Quiet prevailed for our own artillery.

October 11:

Arracourt. Day started off fair but it is clouding up again. Kitchen crew served us our first breakfast at 0800. Sergeant Stephen Krewsky awarded the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star already awarded him. Not much chance for recreation but it would sure help us at this time. Rain.

October 12:

Arracourt. Day started off well and all men who wanted to take a hot shower for the first time since we left Trowbridge, were taken to near Varanges. What a treat to get a good hot shower. Later rain started falling again to make life miserable. This weather is harder on the nerves than all the battles we have fought.

October 13:

Arracourt. Company up at 0545. Left at 0800 to take up positions for indirect fire. Guns were fired

¹⁶⁸ Most likely, the "rocket" described here is the second of Hitler's secret weapons, the V-2 missile. The V-2, although the forerunner of modern ICBMs, was in reality not a very effective military weapon. The 26th Infantry Division was a National Guard division made up of troops from the Northeastern United States.

to target in and to be ready to fire at night. Private Howard Privitt and T/5 John Brabham returned to the Company. Privitt had been gone two and a half months since Raids, Brabham about a month. Enemy planes flew over. All guns firing harassing fire at set intervals all night, firing 200 rounds.

October 14:

Company up at 0700. Still in position for indirect fire. Several Jerry planes flew over but made no move to attack. We bedded down and expected a quiet night as FDC¹⁶⁹ said no firing probably, but at 2200 the 2nd Platoon was called on to fire 12 rounds. More rain. Bouthiet assigned to gas truck.

October 15:

Company up at 0545 and left at 0800 to replace Company at Juvrecourt and they came to replace us in our positions for indirect fire. We are back in the stinky old barn but the stinky old pig, but we do have a roof over heads so we can keep dry, unless the 88's take the roof off from over our heads. Sergeant Krewsky went to the hospital. We had a short flurry of excitement when about 15 ME 109's came over and did some strafing. At least two planes were shot down, one between here and Arracourt. Several parties took credit for shooting it down. Even our boys on the Maintenance vehicle claimed they shot it down. During the evening we had plenty of excitement when we received a heavy barrage of enemy shells at 2245. The second Platoon had one destroyer, Sergeant Romek's quite badly damaged. There were two slight casualties, T/5 Walter Bumbulis with slight head wounds and Sergeant Alexander Romek, cut about hands. These wounds were caused by shrapnel. One man from another outfit was seriously wounded and was treated by our Medics. Many shells hit in town and shrapnel hit all around our CP, knocking tiles off the roof. Sergeant Romek and T/5 Bumbulis received Purple Heart Awards. It is still raining, rain as well as shells.

October 16:

Company up at 0545. We received a heavy barrage of enemy shells, some of it fired from big guns, possibly from the railroad gun. More rain at Juvrecourt.

October 17:

Juvrecourt and all there is to report is that it is raining.

October 18:

Another quiet day in Juvrecourt.

October 19:

Juvrecourt. Another quiet, uneventful day. Major Fred Hammer transferred to Division Headquarters and Captain Llyn Treece has also left the Battalion. Heavy small arms fire during the night. Captain Evans got his new radio working.

October 20:

Juvrecourt. We moved back to Arracourt at 0800 and found a bivouac spot that was fairly dry near Battalion Headquarters. All quiet. Americans landed in Philippines.

October 21:

Arracourt. Nothing of importance took place until 1915 when we moved up and took up positions behind Rechicourt. First Platoon near Juvrecourt, second and third Platoons beyond Rechicourt, not far from the scene of our big tank battle of September 19. Heavy artillery fire from both sides during the night.

October 22:

Infantry attacked at 0600 and were successful. They brought out a large number of prisoners. Enemy shells landed around our positions. Pfc. Paul Baneky was slightly wounded by shrapnel and will receive the Purple Heart. Privitt went to the aid station. Godwin back at Battalion from hospital. Still near Rechicourt. Second and third Platoons advanced to positions closer to front lines.

October 23:

Rechicourt. Still in same positions. It is much quieter today as the 88's are hitting further away. The

¹⁶⁹ Fire Direction Center. All requests for artillery or mortar fire were routed through the FDC, which prioritized each request and issued authorization to fire to the appropriate artillery battery.

second Platoon, up nearest the front, are well dug in as 88's came their way pretty often. During the night heavy artillery was heard. Still raining hard. All quiet at first Platoon positions.

October 24:

Rechicourt. Still in same positions and rain still tormenting us. A quiet day with enemy shells at a distance. A great many shells came over us during the night.

October 25:

Rechicourt. Still in position and rain still falling, making outdoor living miserable. Not much activity but a large number of enemy shells hit not too far away. Our second Platoon Security vehicle hit a mine this morning near Moncourt. The Infantry had put it in during the night and it was left unmarked and unguarded. The vehicle was badly damaged and Pvt. William Cook was wounded. He will get the Purple Heart award. Shaw was driving and he and Pvt. Braud were not hurt. Godwin returned to Company today.

October 26:

Rechicourt. Heavy enemy barrages landed close to the third Platoon positions. Two 26th Division Doughboys killed in the draw between the third Platoon positions and our CP in the draw. Shells landed all around our area, bouncing shrapnel off the tanks and off us.

October 27:

Rechicourt. We finally started on our way to a rest area for a long-needed rest after 103 days of continuous, rugged combat and we are all happy at the prospect of a little relaxation. We bivouacked near Lennoncourt, not far from St. Nicholas and Nancy.

October 28:

Captain Evans, Sergeant Romek, Joe Litalien and Benny Dlugosz left for Paris this morning on leave. Twenty men went to a movie and others to Nancy on passes. We are allowed to send men to Nancy each day. General John Wood spoke to us this morning.

October 29:

Care and cleaning of equipment, passes to Nancy and movies. Red Cross Clubmobile served doughnuts and coffee.

October 30:

Lt. Solomon Haimowich left the Company today to go to the hospital. Care and cleaning of equipment, passes to Nancy and movies. Weather turned cold.

October 31:

Care and cleaning of equipment in preparation for Battalion inspection tomorrow. Passes to Nancy, also movies. Still cold.

November 1:

Preparation for inspection in a.m. Inspection by Major Alason at 3 p.m. Passes to Nancy. It is freezing cold.

November 2:

Care and cleaning of gear. Passes to Nancy and movies.

November 3:

Passes to Nancy, movies and routine duties. Pvt. Cook returned.

November 4:

No change, more rain, passes, and movies.

November 5:

No change, rain, passes, and movies. Romek made S/Sergeant.

November 6:

More rain, making life miserable. Passes to Nancy. Lieutenant Buss left the Company. Movies.

November 7:

Election Day back home. More rain, passes, and movies.

November 8:

F.D.R. re-elected. More rain, passes and movies. First Platoon moved out.

November 9:

Nothing new, just rain. Most men got bedrolls for first time. Passes and movies.

November 10:

Second and third Platoons prepared to move out this morning but didn't go. More rain, movies, etc. Radio operators assigned to Platoons. Sergeant Lundgren to first Platoon. Sergeant Macomber to third.

November 11:

Second and third Platoons still near Lennoncourt. World War I ended 26 years ago today but for us we shall always remember today as the day when we received our worst blow of the war. The first Platoon in position at Obreck was hit by a heavy mortar attack, and their Security was hit and destroyed by a direct hit. Lieutenant Owen Bumpass, Commander of the first Platoon was instantly killed, also Sergeant Joseph Gaboury, Tank Commander, who has been with our Company since March, 1942, Corporal Frank Panebianco, gunner for Sergeant Gaboury, a long-time member of our Company, Corporal Chester W. Besse of the security crew, who had been with us since March, 19142, Pvt. Joseph A. Heichelbech and Pvt. John Binkley, who came with us as replacements in September of this year. Others seriously wounded and not expected to survive were Pvt. 1st Class Manuel Hernandez, who had been with the Company since before we left Texas and Pvt. Chester Lane who came to us as a replacement. Badly wounded men were Sergeant Thomas Cartusciello, our Reconnaissance Sergeant, who was one of the original members of C Company and Staff Sergeant Paul Hatfield, another original member of our Company. Less seriously wounded were Pfc. Donald Stouffer, who has also been with the Company for a long period and T/5 Joseph Litalien, long with C Company, Pfc. Roy Endy who has been with us since Maxey received his second wounds of the war. Sergeant Ray W. Day with Security since start of combat, miraculously survived his second close brush with death, during the past few weeks, but was badly shaken by this tragic loss, as were all the men who survived. The third Platoon prepared to move out at dark but because of traffic snarls the move was not made.

November 12:

The second and third Platoons left Lennoncourt before dawn to act as a guard for CCA trains. An uneventful trip was made to Chateau Salins where we stopped for the night. The first Platoon under Sergeant Tom Donovan joined us after dark.

November 13:

The second and third Platoons moved out to support the 35th Tank Battalion near Hampton. Heavy artillery and small arms fire close by on all sides. The second Platoon under Sergeant Romek took two Jerry prisoners. Snow and sleet.

November 14:

Sergeant Ray Day hospitalized from his close brush with death of November 11. The third Platoon fired on a large number of enemy troops during afternoon probably killing and wounding many. They received return mortar fire but luckily no one was hit. Lieutenant Leiper and Sergeant Lavery narrowly escaped being hit when shells hit close behind them. One of our attached 704 Reconnaissance men was slightly wounded. In late afternoon Captain Evans and Lieutenant Leiper directed a very successful artillery barrage against a very large number of enemy troops, attempting to dig in and probably killed and wounded many. The first Platoon rejoined us toward dark and also the Security Sections.

November 15:

All Platoons still in position near Hampton. Enemy artillery came close but no one hit. Lieutenant Cole took over our second Platoon.. More rain and sleet.

November 16:

All Platoons in position near Hampton. A heavy barrage landed all around us at our positions but no

one hit. Lieutenant Baudo took over the first Platoon.

November 17:

The Company moved out at 0745 and traveled to Lubecourt over a road strewn with Heinie dead. This didn't make us too unhappy but what did make us sad were our own yanks dead by the roadside and our equipment destroyed along the road. Pfc. Manuel Hernandez died of his wounds received on November 11 at Obreck, making our total dead for that day, seven. We are under roofs and in rooms for the first time in over four months.

November 18:

Company up at 0700. Left at 0800 to travel to Nancy where we are billeted in former Jerry Air Corps barracks. It sure seems good to get under a roof again after all these weeks of rainy, disagreeable weather. It has sure been miserable. Lieutenant Edwin Leiper took over as the new Executive Officer. Sergeant Ray Day and Pfc. Howard Privitt returned to the Company today.

November 19:

Company up at 0700 and are busy getting settled in our new home. We can live very comfortably in the barracks where five can live in a room. Many fellows brought stoves and other furniture with them and almost all of us have a bed for the first time since we left England more than four months ago. Many of the rooms have stoves so it is really luxury living after all those weeks in the mud and cold. Many of the boys went to church and a movie was shown in the evening. Lieutenant Ray Oliver took over third Platoon. he was one of A Company's original members.

November 20:

Company up at 0700. Busy getting settled in our new home. Reveille at 0730 and breakfast cooked by our kitchen crew, served at 0800. Care and maintenance of equipment was the order of the day. We even have tables to eat on in some of the vacant rooms and hallways. Some went on pass to Nancy and others to movies. Pvt. Cook went to hospital.

November 21:

Reveille at 0730, breakfast at 0800. Corporal Edward Joyce and Corporal George Gamez were lucky enough to draw passes to Paris. Others went to Nancy. Cleaning and maintenance of vehicles continued. Movies in evening. More rain.

November 22:

Reveille at 0730. Care and cleaning of gear. Passes, more rain.

November 23:

Thanksgiving Day. Reveille at 0730. No work was the order of the day so we all relaxed and enjoyed the delicious dinner of turkey, white or sweet potatoes, bread and butter, and coffee.

November 24:

Five new replacements including Billy Talbot who had spinal meningitis while coming overseas on the Britannia. Inspection by Colonel Fickett at 1100 and he gave us an excellent report after his inspection. Passes and care and cleaning of equipment.

November 25:

Reveille at 0730. Care and cleaning of equipment continued. Passes to Nancy and movies here in evening. We got a new half-track and may get several more. We were all saddened when we got the news that Captain Thomas Evans was being transferred to Headquarters. He has been our Commanding Officer since August, 1943, and has ably led us through all the rugged combat we have faced. We could not have had a better commander. We are to get Lieutenant Winkhaus who has been with Reconnaissance Company but has been with us before.

November 26:

Sunday again, reveille at 0730. Some of the boys went to church. Lieutenant Leiper gave us an orientation lecture. Passes to Nancy.

November 27:

We received word that our too short days of comfort were over. Captain Evans left us and Lieutenant Winkhaus took over the Company.

November 28:

At 0700 we left Nancy and drove to Chateau Salins where we joined the Battalion. We are now assigned to CCB of the 4th Armored Division.

November 29:

We left at 1000 and drove to Eichweiller where our Platoons were split up and joined different units to make up special task forces. The first Platoon was assigned to the 51st Infantry Battalion. The third Platoon was assigned to the 8th Tank Battalion and the second held in reserve at the CP.

November 30:

The first and third Platoons in the vicinity of Berg both receiving heavy artillery fire.

December 1:

The CP moved to Berg where the second Platoon outposted CCB. No word on the first or third Platoons.

December 2:

Enemy shells hit near our CP. Lieutenant Winkhaus contacted the first Platoon which was taking a pounding from enemy artillery. At present, it has been impossible to contact the third Platoon. Sergeant Lundgren accidentally shot himself in the foot and was evacuated.

December 3:

The first Platoon relieved by the second Platoon at Rimsdorf. Still no word from the third Platoon but higher Headquarters report them alright.

December 4:

CP still at Berg. The second Platoon in position near Rimsdorf and they are receiving very heavy enemy artillery fire. Sergeant John Jesky's TD hit and put out of commission, at which time T/5 Joseph Massey received severe leg wounds and had to be evacuated. Lieutenant Cole and Pvt. Frank Heger were also badly shaken up. Later in the our Maintenance crew towed the tank to safety, while under fire. Radio operator, Macomber in contact with third Platoon and are far forward and working in deep mud and receiving such heavy shelling that contact with them is almost impossible. During the afternoon, Corporal Floyd Eaton of Sergeant Krewsky's tank was hit by mortar fire, receiving severe chest wounds, which caused his death while the 8th Tank Battalion Medics were taking him to the aid station. He was one of C Company's original members and will be missed by all of us. Three out of four of the third Platoon TD's were bogged down in the deep mud most of the day, making their positions extremely dangerous and uncomfortable. We made radio contact with Sergeant Hugh Lavery at 2000 and he reported no further casualties. Henry Mengler of Sergeant Shaw's second Platoon crew was sent back to Company CP for battle fatigue. The second Platoon under Lieutenant Leonard in reserve at Rimsdorf, after they were relieved, late this afternoon. Positions of our TD's are so impassable that no wheel vehicles can get to them and track vehicles have to be used to evacuate the casualties. Corporal John Eidenschink of Sergeant Pat Ferraro's tank knocked out a Mark IV Ferdinand at Vollerdingen.

December 5:

CP still at Berg. We made contact at 0815 with Sergeant Ferraro of the third Platoon. He reported they were alright but still bogged down. They were later pulled out and the whole Platoon moved up several miles. Lieutenant Winkhaus took Pat Raphelt up to the Platoon to ease the shortage caused by Corporal Eaton's loss. Corporal Eidenschink went over to fill Eaton's place and Raphelt went to Sergeant Ferraro's tank. Sergeant Taylor remained with the third Platoon to replace Sergeant Stasi, who had to go for medical treatment. The boys are having it rough up there as they are under almost constant shelling and are spearheading attacks much of the time.

December 6:

Lieutenant Winkhaus moved his vehicle up from Berg to Vollendinger and took Reconnaissance. First and second Platoons Security Sections and the third Platoon jeep there with him. We tried during the evening to contact the third Platoon by radio but found they were out of range up close to the Maginot Line.

December 7:

Lieutenant Leiper and his staff moved up to Vollendinger this morning. We got the good news that the 4th Armored Division, including us, was to be relieved by the 12th Armored Division and that we were returning to a rest area. During the early afternoon, Lieutenant Winkhaus with his driver and the third Platoon jeep driver, Robert Brunner and radio operator, Macomber, went up to Smithwiller to try to contact the third Platoon. We got a short way from the town, just past the village, but could go no further because of the deep mud and other conditions which made getting there in a jeep very impractical. Lieutenant Winkhaus, then went up to the Platoon in a light tank which the 8th Tank Battalion Medics were using. He gave the boys the good news about their relief and instructed the jeep driver and myself to remain in Smithwiller overnight to keep contact with the Platoon. It snowed quite a bit and was very cold. First and second Platoons in assembly area near Vollendinger.

December 8:

We were unable to establish contact with the TD's and found that the 8th Tank Battalion had moved out and as we had been attached to them, we felt that our TD's had returned via a different route, so we returned to Vollerdingen. Our CP was still there but no TD's of the third Platoon so Lieutenant Winkhaus had to return to locate them. The Company, minus the third Platoon TD's left at 1030 on the long ride to Guermange, our rest area for a while, we hope. Lieutenant Winkhaus, with drive Danny Lamay, finally made contact with the third Platoon tanks and the boys finally got started back, tired and exhausted, after their ten day siege, but happy to leave there. They started back at 1430 but were unable to reach Guermange tonight so stopped in Duss. The rest of the Company got settled in mid-afternoon in their new quarters mostly in homes with civilians.

December 9:

The third Platoon tanks finally arrived in Guermange during the morning. All had heavy beards and their faces were grim evidence of the terrific strain they had been under during those ten days of constant attack and danger while attached to the 8th Tank Battalion. They were unable to get out of their tanks at any time unless the reason was really urgent. We were awfully glad to see them back and very proud of all of them but sorry that Floyd Eaton was not among them. They were assigned to their homes and the town was theirs as far as we were concerned.

December 10:

Guermange. A day of rest and of getting better established in our new homes. The fellows of the third Platoon look a bit different today with clean shaves and a good night's sleep. The kitchen is being set up and will be in operation tomorrow. Phones were established between Company CP and the Platoons. There are many new faces in the Company as more replacements came to the Company while we were at the front.

December 11:

Guermange. First call at 0700, breakfast at 0730. The day spent checking ordnance and other equipment, care and cleaning of vehicles, radios, and all other gear. The first and second Platoons each sent two men on pass to Nancy and movies were shown at 1800 and 2000 at a barn in town.

December 12:

Guermange. Day spent cleaning and checking vehicles. Passes to Nancy and movies.

December 13:

Guermange. Day spent taking much needed showers and cleaning equipment. Lieutenant Winkhaus read a letter of Commendation of C Company by the Commanding Officer of the 6th Cavalry, Colonel Fickett, to the Company. It was also endorsed by Major General Eddy and gave high praise to the Company. Passes to Nancy.

December 14:

Reveille at 0700, breakfast at 0730. All security sections, jeep drivers and radio operators went out and fired 30 caliber guns and bazookas. Passes to Nancy and movies in the evening.

December 15:

First call at 0645, breakfast at 0700. Gunners, Assistant Gunners and Tank Commanders went out to

fire the 76's. Passes to Nancy and movies.

December 16:

Guermange. Four of our men left at 0400 this morning on passes to Paris. Company spent day on maintenance of equipment. Passes and movies.

December 17:

Guermange. Physical inspections. Many of the boys went to church services. In the evening we got the unwelcome news that we are alerted to move out tomorrow. Oh well! C'est le Guerre.

December 18:

Guermange. Advance billeting party left at 0700 and went to Gros-Rederching where they waited for the rest of the Battalion. During the afternoon, Lieutenant Winkhaus, Lieutenant Oliver and Lieutenant Leonard went up through Rimling to Erching and were shown positions which our destroyers were to take up. Heavy artillery fire came in while we were there. We returned and took the Company up to their positions for the night. We are now assigned to work with the 87th Infantry Division.

December 19:

Plans again changed and we left during morning to return to the 4th Armored Division. We arrived back in Guermange to find our location changed to Cutting where we remained for the night.

December 20:

We hit the road again at 0740 starting a long march to Belgium, on the first Army front, where a 20 mile breakthrough by the Germans had taken place. We covered 125 miles during the bitter cold ride through snow laden trees along our route. We passed through Longwy, through Arlon to Vrange. The first and second Platoons left to take up positions at 2300 and the third Platoon attached to the 25th Calvary got in position at 0200. People seemed friendly here.

December 21:

All Platoons in position. Third Platoon posting near Vrange. Our Company CP moved back to vicinity of Arlon. All quiet so far but enemy tanks reported approaching our positions.

December 22:

The CP and first and second Platoons moved to Viville which is two miles north of Arlon. They outposted the town. This battle is well dubbed as the Battle of the Bulge.

December 23:

The first and second Platoons in same positions. The third Platoon with the 25th moved several miles to Fauxviller, where heavy artillery is coming in. Many enemy prisoners are coming in. The Germans are putting their men in GI uniforms from dead and captured GI's in an attempt to infiltrate and confuse our troops.

December 24:

All Platoons in same positions. Several ME 109's shot down over Fauxviller. One P47 also shot down by heavy Jerry anti-aircraft fire. We will always remember this Christmas Eve spent in the bitter cold, trying to keep warm with a smudge pot in an old building with a cement floor. Our only Christmas decorations, the tracers from very heavy machine gun fire. While I was on guard, a large group of GI's from an Infantry Division wiped out at the start of the breakthrough, were guided to our kitchen. It was late at night and they were hungry and exhausted after all those days and nights trying to get to friendly lines. They had been without food and in every danger of death for about a week, so they were some happy GI's when they reached the outpost of the 25th Calvary. The 25th received several casualties but we came through unharmed. A few Christmas packages arrived to help our morale.

December 25:

Company CP with first and second Platoons moved to Viville and joined Battalion. Third still in Fauxviller. The 25th Calvary still receiving some casualties but we are okay. A bitter cold Christmas Day. Godwin and some of the boys found a fir tree and put a few decorations made from ration foil on it. Improvised church services held in woods beside our CP.

December 26:

Company CP also first and second Platoons moved to Petite-Rosiere and the first Platoon went into position two miles north of town and the second Platoon outposted the town. The third Platoon moved several miles from Fauxviller. While monitoring our Platoon radio, I heard Colonel Abrams leading his men into Bastogne to break the siege of the surrounded and battle worn first Airborne Division. The foul weather for the past many days lifted enough to allow our C47's to fly badly needed supplies to the men at Bastogne. It was a sight we will never forget to see these many C47's parachuting supplies to the men.

December 27:

Corporal Michael Bodinsky of Sergeant Orleno's crew knocked out a Mark V at 1600 yards. This makes number 25 for our Company. Our third Platoon still with the 25th Calvary between Fauxviller and Remiville.

December 28:

Company CP, first and second Platoons still in same positions. The third Platoon moved to Remiville, a town almost demolished with many dead Germans still lying in the streets and where they fell.

December 29:

No change. All Platoons in same position.

December 30:

The third Platoon with the 25th Calvary moved several miles forward to Hompre, close to Bastogne, where one section outposted town while the other section went to guard the main highway to Bastogne, several miles away. Hompre shows evidence of the recent vicious fighting, the streets strewn with enemy dead and the houses badly wrecked. First and second Platoons and CP still in position near Petite-Rosiere.

December 31:

The Company moved to Remoiville, where the first and second Platoons are in reserve. The third Platoon still outposting Hompre and the Bastogne Highway, receiving frequent enemy fire, besides some screaming meemies. Bitter cold weather, with much snow on the ground is making outdoor living miserable. A gloomy New Year's Eve enlivened at midnight by heavy artillery fire by both foe and our artillery. While on guard during the night, one lone Jerry observation plane flew over me so low that I could see the pilot. It was a great temptation to fire at him but we were under orders not to fire.

1945

January 1:

Company still in Remoiville. French money exchanged for Belgian Francs. Pay day at front. Pfc. Baneky returned to Company from hospital. The second section of the third relieved the first section at their cold spot on the Bastogne Highway. Several enemy planes over but they did not attack.

January 2:

Company and first and second Platoons still at Remoiville, no action. Men are cleaning guns and vehicles. Second Platoon still in position at Hompre and are receiving quite heavy enemy artillery at times. Turkey for dinner, a big improvement on 10 in 1's.

January 3:

Company and all Platoons in same positions. All quiet. Usual combat duties. Very cold.

January 4:

Started out just like another day but our Liaison Officer arrived with news we were to leave as soon as possible to join 101st paratroopers. Our Company received instructions and we were placed on a 15 minute alert. Third Platoon still in position near Hompre. First and second Platoons with Company drive 11 miles through Bastogne to Savy and joined the 506 paratroopers, First Battalion.

January 5:

Much to our surprise the two platoons were not committed. Two hot meals are being served us daily by the 506th, who appear to be a good outfit to be attached with. Received word at 1700 we were to relieve 811th TD Battalion. This we did and our two Platoons took up positions one mile south of Longchamps. A very quiet night was spent, though it was cold as hell, sleeping in the snow. Now attached to 502nd Paratroopers.

January 6:

With the exception of a few enemy shells everything was quiet. One shell landed 40 feet from our CP at 0100 resulting in the Company's M20 and Medics jeep being damaged and windows broken in the CP but no one hit. Third Platoon still in Hompre and at Bastogne Highway are receiving heavy enemy artillery fire with shells landing all around the third Platoon CP.

January 7:

First and second Platoons still in position one mile south of Longchamps. Quiet day except for a few shells hitting a few hundred feet from Company area in Savy - no damage. More snow and colder than Greenland. The third Platoon still in same positions with first and second sections alternating position every three days. Plenty of rations.

January 8:

The second Platoon was alerted at 1500 but plans changed so they remained in position the rest of the day. First and third still in same spots. Savy, where our CP is located, received quite a heavy shelling at 0300, resulting in the reconnaissance jeep being damaged.

January 9:

No change. The second Platoon and Captain Winkhaus CP, located at Monville, received very heavy fire. Lieutenant Harry E. Doughty was wounded and evacuated. The third Platoon still at Hompre and at Bastogne Highway and are receiving frequent artillery barrages.

January 10:

First and second Platoons relieved from assignment to the 101st Airborne and were assigned to CCR. Left Savy at 1030 and proceeded to Hompre to join the third Platoon. This is the first time in over three weeks we have all been together. Bivouacked for night.

January 11:

First and second Platoons with CP left Hompre at 0900 and drove 45 miles to Volmerange where we expect maintenance and reorganization. Third Platoon still with 25th Cavalry to Mondorf, Luxembourg, where we were billeted in the Palace Hotel. It is strictly a summer resort hotel and colder than hell. Can still hear artillery in distance. *NOTE: This Palace Hotel is same one where leading Nazi War Criminals were held prisoners after war ended.

January 12:

Maintenance, preparing to operate mess once more. Third Platoon still in Mondorf..

January 13:

Care and cleaning of vehicles and equipment, maintenance of radios, etc.

January 14:

Something new, whitewashing vehicles, (winter camouflage). Two M18's need new tracks at once. Several tanks whitewashed then ran out of whitewash. Better luck tomorrow. Two movies at 1800 and 2000. Curfew at 2300 for all. Third Platoon in Mondorf..

January 15:

Plenty of maintenance. Nine M18's in all new tracks. Cleaning vehicles and clothing [our heads]... just like another day but our Liaison Officer arrived with news we were to leave as soon as possible to join 101st paratroopers. Our Company received instructions and we were placed on a 15 minute alert. 3rd Platoon still in position near Hompre. 1st and 2nd Platoons with Company drive 11 miles through Bastogne to Savy d joined the 506 paratroopers, First Battalion.

January 16:

Our maintenance about completed, all tracks which were bad, replaced and radios in good order.

January 17:

Snow. Red Cross girls were here today for a visit, stayed for dinner and seemed to enjoy it, as did we. Captain Winkhaus somehow got a radio electrician, Douglass Marsh, transferred to our Company from Signal Corps. 3rd Platoon still with the 25th Calvary in Luxembourg.

January 18:

Everything running smoothly until 1600 when we received word we were alerted for movement. A wild scramble took place and we were ready in half an hour. At 1630 plans were changed so we aren't leaving until tomorrow. 3rd Platoon relieved from assignment with 25th Calvary, rejoined the Company at 2030.

January 19:

The Company left at 0700 with Battalion. Drove 25 miles to Anzeling where the platoon leaders selected routes to our positions. So far, everything in good order with all platoons together.

January 20:

Mess is in operation so we are all enjoying that. Platoon leaders still reconnoitering positions.

January 21:

Captain Winkhaus, Sergeant Mullen and Sergeant Taylor went to Saarlauvern, which at the present time is half occupied by Germans. Their first trip into Germany. All platoons still in Anzeling.

January 22:

Artillery falling not too far away. We are trying to figure just where it is coming from. Lieutenant Baudo, Sergeant Edwin McGurk, Sergeant John Ewanitsko, T/4 William Nold and T/5 Willis Price left at 1100 for Paris. All quiet.

January 23:

Another quiet day with usual combat duties performed. Captain Winkhaus, T/4 Gordon Freeman, and First Sergeant Walter Mullen took a ride to Metz, the once impregnable stronghold. The first trip there. A nice city filled with GI's.

January 24:

At 0100 Lieutenant Dolan arrived with news that we are leaving Anzeling and are attached to the 94th Infantry Division located at Ober-Perl, Germany.¹⁷⁰ We left at 0900 and drove 25 miles where we joined up with the 94th. The 2nd Platoon went into positions at Tettingen, Germany. This is our first action inside the German border.

January 25:

The CP, 1st and 3rd Platoons at Ober-Perl. All is quiet. Captain Winkhaus went up to the 2nd Platoon positions and found them okay. A few shells fell in the town but no one hurt.

January 26:

Good and bad news combined. Corporal Lyndon Stephenson, gunner for Sergeant John Jesky, knocked out a pillbox and a machine gun nest. Later their tank hit a mine and T/5 Costanzo received severe leg wounds and had to be evacuated. Sergeant Jesky, Corporal Stephenson, Private First Class Heger and Private Tripodi were badly shaken up. Lieutenant Leonard, Reconnaissance Officer attached to our company, stepped on a land mine and received serious leg wounds and was evacuated. All men awarded the Purple Heart. The other two platoons on outpost report little activity. CP still at Ober-Perl.

January 27:

The 2nd Platoon moved to Butzdorf in support of Infantry. They received extremely heavy artillery fire but there were no casualties. T/Sergeant Willard Fox, our new Maintenance Sergeant and his crew went to Wacheim, and tried for two hours to retrieve Sergeant Jesky's tank, but was not successful. The 3rd Platoon at Besch and Nenning moved one section to protect a crossroad near the Siegfried

¹⁷⁰ See page 42 of main text for Evans' commentary.

Line, South of Nenning, received heavy fire, but there were no casualties. The 1st Platoon still in Ober-Perl, alerted at 1900 but did not move.

January 28:

The 3rd Platoon withdrew the section which was in position south of Nenning, so the whole platoon is now in Besch. The 2nd Platoon is still in Butzdorf, where they are getting heavy artillery fire, with shells hitting dangerously close. No casualties. The 1st Platoon again alerted but did not move.

January 29:

2nd and 3rd Platoons still under heavy artillery fire. 3rd Platoon moved to Nenning where one section took up positions with the Infantry in the dense woods. The woods are littered with dead Germans and many of our Infantry men lost their lives. Private Donald Williams evacuated to a hospital for treatment.

January 30:

A rough night for the Maintenance men. At 1800 the 2nd Platoon was being relieved when, 200 yards from Butzdorf, Sergeant Paul Zamora's TD broke down, and Sergeant Fox and his crew started after it. Reaching Tettingen, they hit a mine and blew one track off. On orders from S3 they worked until 0400 and finally succeeded in repairing the wrecker, which they brought back. 3rd Platoon still in position at Nenning, first at Warlbach and second, with one tank, at Besch.

January 31:

No change. All platoons in same positions.

February 1:

All platoons in position. The section of the 3rd Platoon in Nenning were heavily shelled at 0700, otherwise all quiet.

February 2:

Second section of 3rd Platoon relieved the first section which had been on the line for three days.

February 3:

No change. All platoons in same positions. Day for pay.

February 4:

No change. 1st and 4th Platoons still have one section each in position.

February 5:

No changes.

February 6:

Rumor we are returning to the 4th Armored Division. Executive Office Leiper went to check and returning gave us the good news that we are leaving tomorrow. At 1800 the 3rd Platoon was relieved and returned to the CP.

February 7:

All platoons assembled at Ober-Perl and Company left at 0915. We rode 40 miles to the Luxembourg town of Bettembourg, where we were all assigned to very comfortable rooms in the homes of families in the town. It seems to be the best setup we have yet had. Movies and a band at 1900.

February 8:

Bettembourg. The mess in operation this morning and our Company CP set up at the Cafe in town. Some setup for whoever gets detailed to CQ, with beer and everything. Phones installed between Company CP and platoon CP's. Movies at 1900, *Show Business*.

February 9:

Bettembourg. Our "Life of Riley" probably too good to last. We have been alerted so will probably be on the move again.

February 10:

Bettembourg. Didn't move. Nothing new but everybody happy. Movies this afternoon and evening. Most of us enjoying a few beers, etc. A real luxury after all these past weeks.

- February 11:
Bettembourg. Most of the fellows went to church today. It is rumored that we are to have ice cream for dinner after all these months without any. We are with the 4th Armored Division.
- February 12:
Bettembourg. All quiet, no change. Some of our men went on pass to city of Luxembourg.
- February 13:
Bettembourg. Passes to Luxembourg, movies in the evening. Guard duty as usual.
- February 14:
Bettembourg. Everything same. Movies in evening, a war film in French, so not too good.
- February 15:
Bettembourg. A swell day, no change. Movies.
- February 16:
Bettembourg. Another swell day. Captain Miller is the new Battalion Executive Officer. Movies in evening.
- February 17:
Bettembourg. Foggy today. Passes discontinued. Movies in evening, after civilian movies in afternoon.
- February 18:
Bettembourg. This is proving to be the best rest we have had. Many of the men went to church. Movies in afternoon and evening. Sergeant Lopez and Kilpatrick went to B Company.
- February 19:
Bettembourg. Meeting of Sergeants. Radios were checked and were okay. A GI show at the Cafe today, movies in afternoon and evening. Private First Class William Graber and Private First Class Wilber Flegle are back from the hospital.
- February 20:
Whole Company played tag football this morning. Movies in evening.
- February 21:
Bettembourg. Company played football and basketball in the morning. At noon we found that we are to move with CCB and are alerted to move at any time. 1st Platoon with 10th Infantry Battalion, second with the 51st Infantry Battalion, and the third with the 53rd Infantry Battalion.
- February 22:
Company left Bettembourg at 0900 and drove through Wallendorf past Biestroff to a point near Gechlingen. Everything okay. Platoons moved out during night and are receiving some enemy fire.
- February 23:
Platoons moved up three miles beyond the starting point. Artillery fire still coming in. Lieutenant Edwin Leiper went to Battalion as Motor Officer, replacing Captain Burkett, who lost his life. Lieutenant Fieux came to C Company from B Company. Sergeant McGurk's TD in Ordinance.
- February 24:
All platoons moved up to Sinspelt. Everything all right. Still getting artillery fire. Many prisoners being taken.
- February 25:
Tanks moved up again behind the fast advancing Infantry. Corporal Dominick Sorrentino of Sergeant Stasi's crew knocked out an SP and fired at other enemy positions, expending 16 rounds. Things really broke wide open during the afternoon, when all platoons took off behind CCB's big advance. Prisoners being taken by the thousands and the advance so swift that some of the towns have escaped the total destruction of the past few days' drive. Our Company CP moved almost 20 miles forward today, is now well up at the front at Koohdorf.
- February 26:
All platoons still working with the elements of the Division continuing the attack.
- February 27:
Still with CCB. We left Koohdorf as a Company and proceeded to Rittersdorf, a distance of ten miles,

taking up positions on the high ground north of the city. We suffered a tragic loss today when Sergeant Frank Orleno, who was one of C Company's first members, was killed while directing fire. Corporal Michael Bodinsky went to his aid and was also killed. He had been with our Company throughout most of our training. They were both among the very best of our men.

February 28:

We moved up to Nattinhaus and took up positions on the high ground. Took several prisoners without firing a shot. Everything going well so far except for yesterday's casualties.

March 1:

All platoons in position. Prisoners being taken by the hundreds. Seem to be giving up with little resistance. There are increasingly more very young boys and very old men. They report very little resistance between here and the Rhine. Some enemy fire hitting close to our positions. Rain still hampering air activity and making outdoor living miserable.

March 2:

All platoons on various missions, guarding flanks, outposting, etc. Prisoners still being taken by the hundreds. Enemy fire still coming in but not as regularly as they were yesterday. The weather continues to be rainy, foggy and miserable, more helpful to the Heinies than to us. Planes cannot fly because of the very poor visibility.

March 3:

All platoons in position, outposting, guarding flanks, etc. During the day all platoons moved to Bitburg area where they made ready to take off on important missions which should take us to the Rhine River. 3rd Platoon was originally assigned to accompany Colonel Abrams and his 37th Tank Battalion but was later assigned to C Troop 25th Cavalry 1st Platoon with the 37th.

They were assigned to platoons. 3rd Platoon Security got three men, including Don Williams, who returned from hospital.

March 4 and 5:

All platoons left Bitburg area during the day. 1st Platoon with 37th Trains, second with CCB and the third with C Troop of the 25th Cavalry which left the assembly area and moved up 13 miles. They took one town during the night going in with all guns blazing. Security up with First Sergeant Mullen and C Troop, half tracks found themselves up beyond enemy front lines but moved two miles back into town. All platoons engaged.

March 6:

All platoons on plenty of missions. 3rd Platoon guarding CCB columns and taking towns. Fired many rounds, both 76's and .50 caliber at tanks and personnel. 3rd Platoon Security with C Troop half tracks fired on by two Mark V tanks and burp guns but received no damage. 3rd Platoon finally moved to Daun where they outposted the town. Heavy concentration of "Screaming Meemies"¹⁷¹ fired at us but no one hit. 3rd Platoon knocked out two Mark V's plus one SP. Other platoons just as busy with missions. Many high Ranking German Officers, both Army and Naval captured in houses here.

March 7:

All platoons on mission after mission, guarding column, taking towns and capturing Germans. 3rd Platoon left Daun and moved up to Kervig, protecting the CCB and also screening for CCA. Colonel Abrams with CCB pushed through to the Rhine River, which he reached at 5:15 p.m. after only 58 hours of continuous attack. 1st and 2nd Platoons had similar missions as the third. The 3rd Platoon spent night at Kervig where they outposted the town. Company CP at Andernach.

March 8:

Company CP at Andernach. All platoons on numerous missions, guarding columns, outposting and capturing towns. The 3rd Platoon with C Troop of 25th Cavalry captured two towns including Krufft

¹⁷¹ Probably rockets fired from multiple-tubed mobile batteries called *Nebelwerfer*.

and were instrumental in capturing 300 Germans and some small vehicles. Lieutenant Oliver acquired a Jerry jeep. The 1st Platoon knocked out three vehicles and took 25 prisoners. Entire Company including the CP moved up to Krufft, where all platoons took up positions outposting town. The 3rd Platoon guarding many prisoners.

March 9:

Company at Krufft. At 0530 3rd Platoon Security captured two German vehicles which came barreling into town unaware of any Yanks around. The vehicles were loaded with guns, ammunition and supplies; also 23 Jerry enlisted men and one officer. There was one large mortar burp gun. Best of all, 15 five-gallon jugs of Five Star Cognac. Corporal Albert Cardenas fired his grease gun¹⁷² to stop them and Private Donald Crise, one of our new replacements, and Corporal Rupprecht were in on the capture. Company moved out and later went to secure a Moselle River bridge, then went to Molzig.

March 10:

The Company is in Molzig, except for 2nd Platoon which is in next town. Sergeant Hartman's TD at Ordinance and 3rd Platoon Security vehicle at Battalion Maintenance. Platoons moved out on mission to protect the engineers while they built a bridge across the Moselle River. Cold, rainy weather. 3rd Platoon Security had some excitement when several enemy planes flew over Polch. They were driven off by our .50 caliber fire.

March 11:

The Company moved to Brachtendorf this afternoon and moved into several houses. The mess is to be set up so perhaps we will get a short break from our strenuous schedule of the past two weeks. PX rations for now. Several tanks at Ordinance. Most of us celebrated our first night in over two weeks away from rugged combat by sampling a bit of that Beaucoup Cognac from the supply so generously contributed by the Jerries we captured at Krufft. Staff/Sergeant Paul Hatfield now in charge of the 2nd Platoon and Staff/Sergeant Romek replaced him in Headquarters.

March 12:

Brachtendorf, our stay here of short duration as we are to leave here tomorrow. Most of us took showers. All but three tanks went to Ordinance. We are to get new TD's.

March 13:

Company had breakfast in Brachtendorf and left during morning, riding through Hambuch, Kaiser section to Gillenbeuren, where we once more disposed the Kraut families and moved in. Mess truck served supper. Company getting six new M 18's. The weather cleared and it is warm and quite comfortable. Drivers and assistant drivers are to go to Metz to pick up new TD's.

March 14:

Gillenbeuren. Another pleasant day. Kitchen crew serving chow. Most of the fellows went to take showers but had to return without them when they found a line a mile long waiting. Arriving back at our billets, we found, to our disappointment, our stay here is over and we are off to war again after a far too short stay. It has been a most trying and hectic two weeks. *Stars and Stripes* full of glowing praise for the brilliant accomplishments of our division. At 1600 we moved 12 miles and bivouacked for night. Many planes over during the night but otherwise quiet.

March 15:

Company got up at 0600, moved out at 0900 and drove to an assembly area where we joined C Troop. 25th Calvary moved out. We have six of our new M 18's and two security sections. We passed through Brachtendorf and crossed the Moselle near Burgen, then through Macken where we met a strong barrage of 88's. We traveled 25 miles today, much of the drive through virgin enemy territory. We pulled into a field and waited for our tanks to come up. We left this area after the enemy artillery ceased and pushed on for ten more miles over a road strewn with wreckage of enemy equipment, mostly horse drawn, dad Jerries, and dead horses. We also took hundreds of prisoners. We captured

¹⁷² An M3, .45 caliber, small automatic weapon. So-called due to its uncanny resemblance to a lube gun.

and Executive Commandant's CP at Lauback and found intact a well-stocked supply room, from which we got several dozen brand new watches, both wrist and pocket. The tanks with security outposted the town and one section had to move at midnight to a new position to protect the engineers. We have bypassed the large city of Coblenz. Captured 50 Jerries today.

March 16:

Company up at 0600, moved out at 0900 to Simmern and took up positions to outpost the city. There were many burning buildings. Sergeant Mullen and others took four ranking German Officers from a cellar, all got coveted Lugers and P 38's. Weather continues clear. At 1530 we moved out with the trains, traveling through Reisweiler, Tierenbach, Winterburg, Bockenhan, Sponheim, Rudeshe into Weinsheim where we stopped for night and our TD's took up positions. Many prisoners were taken. Lieutenant Oliver got a jeep that the Heinies had been using. Sergeant Lavery took that over.

March 17:

Weinsheim. Company up at 0600. The remnants of the once proud Luftwaffe kept circling over. Five or six ME 109's, but they made no attempt to bomb or strafe. Our .50 caliber gunners fired at them but they kept well out of range. Later they returned and our gunners in the area brought down two of them. At 1830 we moved out through Niedershausen, Oberhausen to Wackenheim, a distance of 21 miles. We met no resistance and bivouacked for night at 2200. There were many burning enemy vehicles, also houses along our route today. Also, we took many prisoners. Lieutenant Oliver's jeep run into by one of our TD's in the dark.

March 18:

Company up at 0600. A heavy enemy barrage came in soon after daybreak but a large number of P47's broke that up fast. We witnessed the best piece of strafing of enemy troops we have yet seen. Sure glad we weren't on the receiving end when they let go with their .50s and rockets. Lieutenant Oliver's driver went back to Weinsheim, where Battalion moved yesterday to get a jeep. We took 13 prisoners last night when they came in to our positions. We moved out at 1010 and took up positions at Furfield where we saw much activity throughout the day by P47s strafing enemy troops. We suffered no casualties but our C Troop, 25th Cavalry had two killed and five wounded. In early evening we moved to new positions for outpost and remained for night. Our security outpost was fired on during the night by burp guns. Lieutenant Oliver killed three Germans with grenades during the afternoon near our outpost where they had Private Castello pinned down.

March 19:

Company up at 0600. During the morning we watched our Infantry advance on enemy positions. Some enemy artillery hit close to us. Around noon we moved to new positions. Sergeant Krewsky's tank went to Ordnance for repairs. Later we moved to positions on a mountain where we saw one of the best battles we have yet witnessed. Our P47s strafed the road and town below us, then our artillery laid a heavy barrage down on the town of Wonsheim. Directly after the barrage was lifted, our tanks advanced across the open ground toward town, with their .50s blazing, then when closer to town, they opened up with the big guns and blasted hell out of the town. An anti-tank gun hit some of the crew in one medium tank, but was knocked out by Sergeant Stasi's and Sergeant Jesky's gunners. In early evening we moved out through Wolstein and Grubbsheim. Just after passing Grubbsheim, Sergeant Stasi's tank hit two mines which blew off both tracks and otherwise damaged the tank. The crew was badly shaken up but not seriously wounded. The remaining four tanks continued on through to high ground and with the 1st and 2nd Platoons, Security took up positions for the night.

March 20:

Company up at 0500 and moved out at 0530 through Grubbsheim. We then attacked and captured several towns, including Nack, Offenheim, Wolheim, and Friemersheim. We took many prisoners and killed many of the enemy. During this attack one of our own tank Battalions spotting our new M 18's with the muzzle breaks and thinking we were enemy tanks, fired on us. They knocked out one of our 25th Cavalry M 8's, killing one member of its crew and wounding two. It was an understandable

mistake because these new tanks sure look like the enemy tanks. We were fired on by enemy tanks and by snipers but there were no casualties. our TD gunners in Sergeant Jesky's and Sergeant Zamora's crew, knocked out one Jerry SP and one light tank. The 25th took care of many more. In the evening we took our positions for outpost, refueled, filled our ammo tanks and got rations. Captain Winkhaus and Private First Class Modlin left on furlough for the good old USA, the lucky guys. We were glad to see them get the break. Lieutenant Richard Baudo is acting Commanding Officer. Lieutenant Charles Callaway, Executive Officer, Lieutenant Harry Doughty has the 1st Platoon and Lieutenant Feaux the 2nd Platoon. We stopped at Nieder-Florsheim putting 26 miles on the vehicles today. Sergeant Willard Fox and Danny Lamay put on a one-man blitz and took about 50 prisoners, eight pistols, Lugers, etc.

March 21:

Company up at 0600. We received several visits from the Luftwaffe. They were out in large numbers attacking us with 20 mm guns and bullets landed a few feet away, but luckily no one was hit. One ME 109 flew so low we could almost reach up and touch him. Sergeant Stephen Krewsky shot down one ME 109. We moved out of Niederflorsheim at 0930 and passed hundreds of prisoners loaded on trucks, on their way to PW cages. The 11th Armored Division came up on our flank and are also going to beat hell. We attacked and took four towns in rapid succession, meeting little resistance, and taking only 20 prisoners. The towns were Ibersheim, Hamm, Eich, and Gimbsheim. We halted at Gutersblum and waited until the elements of the other attacking columns met us. We returned to Eich and took over houses for the night. We are along side the Rhine for the first time. Pfc. Andrew Csuma went to the hospital. Brunner and Devine back from Maintenance. We got mail. Sergeant Fox and Danny Lamay in one jeep, Sergeant Robert Taylor and Corporal Perrine in another were returning to find the company after performing Maintenance on some of the vehicles when they captured three Jerries. They were hunting for a PW cage to turn them over and drove into Worms, thinking the city had been taken and there would be a PW there. Were they ever surprised to finding nothing but Kraut's there, plenty of them. They took off, but fast, expecting to stop lead any minute. They got safely out of there and found our Company at Eich. Fox said they were searching for foxholes in their jeeps.

March 22:

Eich. First call at 0700. Another beautiful day. Last night we heard boats on the Rhine and trains on the other side of the Rhine. We got a little chance to relax today while it was fairly quiet. We soaked up the warm sunshine, caught up on letter writing and the mail. *Stars and Stripes* came in.

March 23:

We were up at 0600 and were to move from Eich after breakfast. The 26th Yankee Division arrived in town so we are to take over other billets. Plans were changed so we did not leave Eich. During the afternoon Sergeant Krewsky returned from Ordnance with his TD. In late afternoon we received one of the heaviest artillery barrages of the present campaign. Fired across the Rhine. It shattered windows in our billets and everyone took to the cellars. Shells landed close to our tanks, but luckily hit none of them. We got the rest of our new M 18's, complete with muzzle breakers. Sergeant Stasi, who lost his tank, also got one of the new ones. The 2nd Platoon moved to new positions. Elements of the 11th Armored Division arrived in town and they also had a company of Tank Destroyers. Private First Class James Spradlin went to the hospital for a hand injury. Private First Class Donald Crise, took the place of Barney Modlin, who has gone home, in Sergeant Krewsky's crew.

March 24:

Eich. Up at 0600 but didn't move out to the assembly area until 0950. We now have seven of the new TD's plus five of the old ones. We drove to Guntersblum where we waited until 1510, then pulled out, traveling through Ludwigshohe, Dienheim to Oppenheim, where we crossed the Rhine River without incident or opposition. A heavy smoke screen protected us and the Fifth Infantry Division has secured a large sector here. Armor was streaming across both Pontoon bridges which the

engineers had built. We pushed on through Geinsheim, passing about 1000 prisoners, including more than 50 high-ranking officers, between Geinsheim and Leeheim. We went on to Wolfskehlen and into the town of Stockstadt, where we encountered our first opposition of the day. The town was full of Boche, so we had to fire to convince them we meant business. Several ME 109's came over but were driven off. We left Stockstadt soon after 2100 and traveled over the Auto-Bahn Highway to the Gernsheim Woods, where we took up positions protecting the column.

March 25:

We received a slight enemy barrage at 0700 and shells hit close to our positions in the Gernsheim Woods beside the Auto-Bahn Highway. No one hit. We moved out before noon and traveled over 40 miles through Hahnelein, Jugenheim, Seeheim, Ober Beerbach, Schmal Beerbach, Wurzelbach, Allertshofen, Ernstooften, Ober Modeau, Neider Modau, Oper Ramstadt, Reinheim, Spachbrucken, Habitzsheim, Semd, Richen, Kleestadt, Schlierbach, Schaafheim, and Grossotheim, where we refueled and hoped to stay, but we moved out again at 1830 and went to take up outpost positions at the road junction. We took a few prisoners. Later we saw many enemy planes strafing and bombing our troops.

March 26:

Grossotheim. Enemy planes continued bombing and strafing throughout the night. Shortly after 0100, eight of ten enemy tanks and SP's attacked our 1st Platoon outpost, knocked out and burned Sergeant George Kachline's and Sergeant Pat Mascara's TD's. Private First Class Erwin Lanzendorfer, who came with the Company just before we left the States in February 1944, was instantly killed, Sergeant Pat Mascara, a new replacement to the Company in December lost a leg and suffered other severe wounds. Corporal Michael Dawda, who has been with the Company since 1942 and Private First Class James Kingery, who came with us shortly before we left the States, were severely burned. Corporal George Zeljac, who came with the Company in 1942, received serious wounds when he was machine gunned. Corporal Aita was also wounded. He was one of the new replacements. Private First Class Fred Wright, who came with us in November 1944, was slightly wounded. The Security vehicle was also hit at 0200 and Private First Class Albert Gordon was mortally wounded, living only a short time. He came with us in September 1944. Private First Class Horace I. Marshall, the Security vehicle driver, was instantly killed. He was one of our newer men. Sergeant Bronislaw Dlugoss, who has been with us since 1942 was wounded, for the second time, during the past six months. Both the 1st and 2nd Platoon Security vehicles were disabled, also Lieutenant Feaux's jeep. Corporal Dreiswerd hit by shrapnel. Corporal Stephenson, of Sergeant Jesky's crew knocked out one self-propelled vehicle. Private First Class Solomon Tone was also wounded today, but was not evacuated. At noon we moved out and took up new positions for outpost in a woods near Grossotheim.

March 27:

We were up at 0600 and left our outpost positions at 1145, traveling through Schaafheim, Babenhausen, Dudenhofen, Juggesheim to beyond Hainhausen, where we halted at 1200 in a field. The men from the 1st and 2nd Platoon Security vehicles which were knocked out are riding on the tanks and in the 3rd Platoon Security vehicle. We remained here for the night without further incidents. Sergeant Henry Hartman's TD went to Ordnance. We bypassed the large city of Frankfurt. Sergeant George Phaneuf went to the hospital.

March 28:

Company up at 0330, left at 0400 to Hanau where we crossed the Main River at 0520 without incident. We then outposted near Hanau and Wilhelmsbad until 0830, when we left and traveled through Millelbuchen, Kilianstadten, Windecken, Heldenbergen, Kaichen, Ilbenstadt, Bruchenbrucken to Ossenheim, where we outposted Friedberg. Private First Class John Vrenay, assistant driver in Sergeant Ferraro's tank, with our Company since 1942 was hit and slightly wounded when our Infantry fired through the woods, near the road, while cleaning out our Jerries. Sergeant Krewsky's TD to Ordnance. We left during the afternoon and guarded trains through Dorn-Assenheim, Weckesheim, Wolfersheim, Wohnback to Lich, where we outposted town for the night. The 3rd Platoon captured a supply vehicle and two prisoners, making 50 for our Company for the

day. The road was strewn with wreckage today, also many dead Germans. The Fourth Armored Division took 23,000 prisoners it was reported today. Traveled 48 miles, meeting little resistance.

March 29:

Lich. We moved out at 0830 and traveled through Nieder-Bessingen, Harback, Gobelrod, Baltersheim to Lumda where we took up outpost positions for a while and captured 10 Bochs. Leaving at noon we drove through Atzenhain and Merlau, through dense woods, where a large quantity of Jerry gasoline and oil was concealed. We went to Kupperteurod, where we halted once more. We then continued on through Ermenrod, Gros Felda, Windhausen, Storndorf, Wallenrod, Neblos, Rimbo to Launterbach, where we saw around 1000 prisoners. We then went to Angersach and to Landenhausen, where we took up outpost positions for the night. We traveled 50 miles today over roads strewn with wrecked vehicles and wagons. There were many dead Germans. We captured 30 more Jerries in evening, when they came in, heavily armed.

March 30:

Landenhausen. We moved out at 1430 after several false starts. We traveled through Laulterbach, Udenbausen, Wallersdorf, Hatterode, Breitenbach, Ober Jossa, Neider Jossa, Niederaula, Betershausen to Kerspenhausen, where we took up positions for the night. Several towns to our front were being attacked and burning. We passed hundreds of prisoners. T/5 Keith Ingalls went to the hospital, Sergeant Lawrence Toohey, also in hospital, many have appendicitis.

March 31:

Up at 0345 and moved out at 0430 through the woods to Odensachsen, through Sieglos, Ober Haun, Unter Haun, to the edge of Hersfeld, then traveled over the Auto-Bahn for a short distance. Signs read 357 kilometers to Berlin, which is around 225 miles. We left the road and took up positions of outpost. Later we continued on the Auto-Bahn, several miles, meeting only slight resistance. Corporal John Eidenschink of Sergeant Ferraro's crew knocked out 3 Mark IV tanks and one towed gun. The highway was blocked by a blown out bridge so we detoured on a side road and went to Honebach. This town was in flames but was cleared. We continued on to Kleinensee and outposted the town for night. Sergeant Krewsky's tank got back at 2200.

April 1:

Easter Sunday, but instead of a world at peace, war goes on just the same. We were up at 0500 and moved out at 0600 through Kleinensee and Grossensee, to the Auto-Bahn, where we traveled over 15 miles on this road, then cut across to the other side and continued through the woods and through Willershausen. We destroyed one, almost new Mark V tank which we found in running condition and abandoned. We continued on through Ifta and Scherba, into dense woods. We were almost to the bridge and out of the woods, when the bridge was blown out and all hell broke loose. The woods were full of German Infantry and machine guns, small arms, and Panzerfausts opened up on us. 3rd Platoon Security had seven Boche Prisoners on the half-track, which had a trailer hitched on the back and when a shell from their Bazooka roared past the trailer, loaded with ammo, those Jerries hit the ditch in a hurry. I guarded them in the ditch while they got the half-track turned around. The crews of our tanks and other vehicles fired all their weapons into the woods while the column got turned around on this extremely narrow road. The Jerry prisoners were as anxious as we were to get out of there, so I didn't have to persuade them to get back on the vehicle. The hot shells from our .50 caliber, firing above my head were dropping around my neck. Rifles, pistols, grease guns, and anything handy was being fired as we fought our way out of the dense woods and it was only a miracle that none of us were hit. Our huge Maintenance vehicle was at the rear of our column and they came within inches of being fired on by our tanks as they appeared out of the darkness. We also had three wounded Jerry prisoners, including a Captain on the Security half-track. It was one of the most tense and dangerous situations we have yet been in. So ended our "peaceful" Easter Sunday.

April 2:

We outposted the town of Ifta last night and spent a quiet night after all the excitement. Early today, about 20 planes of the Luftwaffe zoomed over, but we received no damage. At least four and possible

more, were shot down. Hartman's tank back from Ordnance. We remained in this area all day and the only action came with Jerry planes. It was later reported that 23 of them were shot down in all. In the afternoon one section of TD's and half the Security Section of the 3rd Platoon went to outpost on a hill near town. It rained all day, making life miserable. The entire Fourth Armored Division has been awarded the PRESIDENTIAL CITATION. We are only the second entire division to be so rewarded. The other division being the 101st. Airborne Division which we assisted at Bastogne. This award was for the Belgium Campaign, Bastogne, the rapid push to the Rhine river and the swift drive through Germany. Dominick Sorrento of Sergeant Stasi's crew went to Headquarters Section temporarily today.

April 3:

Up at 0400, getting to be habit. We left at 0600 and crossed the pontoon bridge near Kreuzberg, where the city as burning furiously, then traveled through Berteroda, Bolleroda, and Grossen Gehringer. We took many prisoners and saw hundreds more PW's in the towns we passed through. We then passed through Fredrikswert, Brunheim to Aspach where we halted for some time. Sergeant Edwin McGurk's crew knocked out an SP or half-track. The 1st and second at one end of Aspach, 3rd Platoon with units of 25th Calvary at other end of town. C Troop, 25th and our 3rd Platoon fired at three motorcycles, capturing same and killing or wounding the Jerry riders. Also captured a truck with seven Jerries, including an officer. We have pushed 300 miles since crossing the Rhine ten days go and pushed over 700 miles through Germany in about one month. We outposted Aspach and remained for night. Our Executive Officer, Lieutenant Callaway and First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen, Jr., who went to lead the 3rd Platoon to their positions early this morning, have not returned and we are all worried that they have been killed or captured. The 3rd Platoon had moved out early so they probably could not have located them. They should have been back some time ago. The Luftwaffe strafed some of our columns today on the road, burning some vehicles. They are getting bolder and more desperate every day.

April 4:

Up at 0600. Left Aspach at 0800, traveling to Hochheim where the 3rd Platoon outposted town. The 2nd Platoon met bazooka fire in the next town and we retaliated with a lot of impressive 76 fire. This was at Westhausen. We finally continued on through Warza to Gota, a large city and a very important objective. We passed an airport where many Heinie planes, bombers, and fighters remained on the ground, neatly camouflaged. We met no opposition here so we continued on through Tuttleben, Seebergen to Wandersleben, where we outposted the town. We met very little resistance but took a large number of prisoners. First Sergeant Mullen and Lieutenant Charles Callaway still have not returned and are missing in action. We are hoping that they are all right. Sergeant Mullen was an original member of C Company and First Sergeant for two years. Lieutenant Callaway came with us from Reconnaissance Company in January of this year.

April 5:

Up at 0530, left Wandersleben at 0830 and traveled through Gros Rettbach to Cobstadt where we set up outposts and were assigned to billets, all hoping our stay will be for a few days. We took several prisoners, including one who dressed in civilian clothes, remained in our billets until Sergeant Romek gave him the third degree and discerned he was a soldier and hustled him off to the PW cage. Lieutenant Laurence Dolan gave us an orientation talk. Several Jerry planes came over but were driven off and one shot down. Sergeant Joseph Lopez, one of our original members, who was recently transferred to B Company was killed while they were taking their tank to Ordinance. They were ambushed and the crew machine gunned. No word about Lieutenant Callaway or Sergeant Mullen.

April 6:

Up at 0530. TD's left at 0700 to go to Erfurt, met fairly strong infantry and artillery fire so returned. CP moved from Cobstadt at 1030 and Headquarters Section met TD's and continued on. We moved into the town of Wechmer, where we got billets and outposted the town.

April 7:

Up at 0600. We moved out in p.m. but at 1530 we received an urgent call to rush to help a Signal Corps Unit which was surrounded in a nearby town by German Infantry. C Troop, 25th Cavalry and our TD's moved out fast to rescue them. We found they had already been taken prisoners. Still no word of Lieutenant Callaway or Sergeant Mullen. The 89th Infantry and also the 80th Infantry Division moving in here. Our 25th Cavalry and 3rd Platoon tank rescue crew sent to aid the Signal Corps. Found only two men, both dead. The others had been already taken away. They fired many rounds of 76 mm and .50 caliber at the enemy foot troops, killing an undetermined number. War correspondent was reported to have been with group, Robert Allen, who has been with Third Army throughout most of our combat.¹⁷³ The entire Company moved to Guntersleben and took over billets in town. Sergeant Stasi and Corporal John Green suffered concussion from the shell blast from the 76's.

April 8:

Guntersleben. Company up at 0700. Spent day cleaning guns and other equipment. Sergeant Rocco Bruges came with badly needed clothing. The vehicles were gassed and ammo racks filled with ammo. Sergeant Stasi, Corporal Green and one of the newer replacement went to hospital. Jim Spradlin returned from hospital. A quiet day spent and it sure seemed good to relax for a little while. Some Jerry planes flew over and some were shot down.

April 9:

Guntersleben. Our mess truck in operation for first time in weeks, hot cakes and bacon, what a luxury. A clear, warm day. No word yet about the fate of Lieutenant Callaway or Sergeant Mullen, so after almost a week, with no word about them, our hopes grow dimmer. The artillery set up close by are pounding hell out of the Kraut's somewhere. We were taken to the German Concentration Camp near Gotha to view the atrocities committed by the Germans.¹⁷⁴ It was the most horrible, gruesome sight we had ever seen. Prisoners, so emaciated, they were mere skeletons, had been shot and lay in the yard where they fell. In one building over a hundred naked bodies were piled in a heap and covered with lime. We went through the chamber where they were gassed. A Russian captive worker told us that at another camp close by, 1500 prisoners were burned each month and that here, 3500 a month were killed and burned. It was such a sickening and unbelievable sight that it made us sick to our stomachs. The Company got two month's pay, in German invasion Marks, today and most everybody sent most of it home. No place to spend it. Lieutenant Charles R. Oliver, who has had the 3rd Platoon is our new Executive Officer and Lieutenant Harry E. Doughty, took over the 3rd Platoon. Sergeant Hugh Lavery took over in Sergeant Mullen's place. Still no word about either Lieutenant Callaway or Sergeant Mullen. Sergeant Robert Taylor took over the 3rd Platoon. Movies in evening, *Meet Me In St. Louis*.

April 10:

Guntersleben. Chow at 0730 in the kitchen. Another swell day, warm and clear. C Troop, 25th moved this morning. Sergeant Edwin McGurk went to hospital to get new GI teeth. Some of the fellows who missed the gruesome sight at the concentration camp at Ordhruf, were taken there to see for themselves the horrible sights. Movies in the evening.

April 11:

Company up at 0430, left Guntersleben at 0600 with D Troop, 25th Cavalry and CCB. Sergeant William Dellevigne took over Sergeant Stasi's tank temporarily with T/5 Albert Cardenas driving until Corporal Green returns. Sergeant George Kachline took McGurk's place, until he returns. The only remaining 1st Platoon tanks went with the 2nd Platoon and Headquarters Section. We drove through Friemar, Alach, and Schaderode halting twice to await orders. We then proceeded through the large city of Erfurt, population 144,000 where we outposted the city while Division trains went through. In the afternoon we went to Grossmolsen, taking that town and going on to an assembly area, where we

¹⁷³ Colonel Robert S. Allen, author of *Lucky Forward: Patton's Third U.S. Army*.

¹⁷⁴ For Evans' commentary, see page 47+ in main text.

stayed until 2040, when we moved out with the trains and drove until 0100, then outposted town. This detail, guarding trains, one of the most monotonous assignments.

April 12:

Up at 0600, moved out at 0630 and took the towns of Grossromstedt, Hermstedt, Stobra, Nerkewitz, Stiebritz, and Zimmern without opposition. Sergeant Ferraro's gunner fired 11 rounds of HE at Heinies working on bridge demolition and an undetermined number of same are now dead. We moved to an assembly area to wait once more. We stayed in this area for rest of day and took a large number of prisoners. At 2030, we moved out, crossing the Saale River on the pontoon bridge, built by the engineers. In the town, 600 prisoners were taken without a shot being fired. We had prisoners all over our Security vehicles. We received the sad news while in column, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt, passed away at 0615 today.¹⁷⁵

April 13:

Company up at 0530, left at 0630 and moved rapidly through the towns of Lehesten, Golmsdorf, Beautnitz, Graitschen, Kischlitz, Kammereitz, Grosshelsdorf, Rudeldorf, Ahlendorf, Krossen, and Dietendorf with no resistance. At Dietendorf we passed four Heinie bazooka men recently deceased. We continued on through Katerdobsdorf, Gossra, Breitenbach, Ossig, Dossdorf, and Nedissen. Between Nedissen and Kleinporthen our 25th Calvary and our TD's fired at installations. We went on through Polzig Brockau, Wernsdorf, Neundorf to Dobitschen where we halted for some time, and then continued through Schwauditz, Kosma, Burkensdorf, Lehdorf, Zehma, Mockzig, and Iorsdorf, then sat in the vehicles waiting throughout the night. Sergeant John Jesky and Sergeant John Ewantisko's gunners knocked out two anti-Aircraft Installations. We took over 100 prisoners today and passed hundreds more along the route. Corporal John Green returned from hospital today. We crossed two rivers today, the Elser at Grossen and the Plesse, where we found both bridges intact.

April 14:

Up at 0600, continued on way through Wolkenburg, where we went in an assembly area and remained for some time. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons in position, the second guarding a bridge. We later traveled through Penig, Muhlau, to Hartmansdorf, which is only five miles from the large city of Chemnitz, around 350,000 population. We remained here for night and TD's are in position. We have covered over 150 miles these past four days. Berlin is only a very short drive from here and there doesn't seem to be any reason why we can't take it without any trouble.

April 15:

Hartmansdorf. Company up at 0600, after a quiet night. All platoons still in positions. During the afternoon our 3rd Platoon had a little action when they went to the aid of a light tank in trouble beyond our position. Our tanks fired over 60 rounds of 76's and several hundred rounds of .50 caliber, killing an undetermined number of Krauts and doing a pretty good job of demolishing the town where the resisting Jerries were. T/4 Mike Emineth went to the hospital. Corporal Arthur Sonsonko took over as driver of Sergeant Krewsky's tank. Sergeant Green took over the Security Section.

April 16:

Hartmansdorf. Company up at 0600. Moved to new positions in the same town during afternoon. Company assigned to billets. A quiet day spent. A rumor that Lieutenant Callaway and Sergeant Mullen may have been wounded and hospitalized, so we hope, they were not badly wounded and will soon be back with us.

April 17:

Hartmansdorf. Company up at 0600. Nothing new. Sergeant Krewsky's tank to Ordinance. In the p.m., we moved to another town and took up new positions and are living out in a field. We got 17 new replacements and are to get some new vehicles.

¹⁷⁵ President Roosevelt died at his Warm Springs, Georgia home. He was succeeded by Vice-President Harry S Truman.

April 18:

Up at 0600, moved to new positions in support of the 76th Infantry Division during the morning. We are close to the Auto-Bahn to Dresden. We didn't remain there long and moved back to our positions in town in the p.m. Sergeant George Phaneuf returned from hospital. We are to move out tomorrow and are attached to the 17th Airborne.

April 19:

Company up at 0700, moved out at 1130 and drove 34 miles, much of the drive over the Auto-Bahn to Beerwalde, where we were assigned to comfortable billets.

April 20:

Beerwalde. Up at 0700. A quiet day with little to do. Plans for moving are indefinite. We seldom get mail these days and it is sure missed. Philip Devine made T/5 and is a regular driver of the half-track. George Phaneuf is to be Reconnaissance Sergeant and John Green, the permanent Security Sergeant. Mail finally arrived, also *Stars and Stripes*.

April 21:

Beerwalde. Company up at 0700. Cleaning of guns and all other equipment. Albert Cardenas not T/4 and Corporal Joseph Gadoury has taken over in Sergeant McGurk's tank. Private First Class Paul Colangelo is now loader for Wilber Flegle, who is Gadoury's gunner. Several of the new men were assigned to the TD's. T/5 Robert Brunner is driving Sergeant Krewsky's TD until Emineth returns. Private Herbert Morrone is his assistant driver. T/4 Macomber driving Lieutenant Doughty's jeep.

April 22:

Beerwalde. A quiet day, until like the breath of spring, Lieutenant Charles Callaway and his fellow ex-prisoner of the Germans walked in, First Sergeant Walter E. Mullen. They had been missing since April 3 when they were taken prisoners by a large force of Jerry Infantry which had closed in after our early departure from Creusberg. Their experiences during the time they were prisoners from April 3 until April 17, when they made their escape, are something they will never forget. They were marched from place to place, as our forces advanced and often walked more than 12 miles a day. Their only food was bread and cold coffee, plus what Red Cross packages they were lucky enough to get. After their escape they passed many enemy troops at night, the only time they dared to travel, so they were ever in danger of being recaptured or killed. They finally came onto a town where the white flags of surrender were flying, only to find on reaching the town, that our troops had left there two days previously. Soon after they sighted one of our medium tanks and made their way to a Sixth Calvary Company where they were well taken care of by Colonel Fickett who had commended our Company at Nancy. Moon said he swiped some butter off a window sill of a civilian house where they were prisoners and that caused an uproar of major proportions. Their captors tried their damndest to uncover the culprit. We sort of figured all along, that two sly foxes like Lieutenant Callaway and Moon could take care of themselves pretty well, but nevertheless, they were very lucky to be alive after the hail of bullets which was directed at them while trying to escape capture by the Kraut Infantry. We are sure happy to see them back, even though it is rumored they will be flown by C-47 to the good old USA. Movies in the evening.

April 23:

Beerwalde. Another quiet day and heavy rain falling. We are inside so do not mind. Most of the men took showers and we had movies in the evening.

April 24:

Beerwalde. Company up at 0600, left at 0830 to make a long march to a new area. We rode 110 miles, much of the distance over the Auto-Bahn Highway. It was a tiresome and cold ride as we halted on the road so much. It was 1130 before we even left the outskirts of Beerwalde. The ride was uneventful except for our Liaison Officer, who was towing a 25th Calvary vehicle man was badly hurt about his face and may lose an eye. We were assigned to billets at Gorsnitz.

April 25:

- Girsbutz. Company up at 0700. We are getting some chance to relax today. Maintenance of vehicles and equipment. Several of the men took this opportunity to have much needed dental work done.
- April 26:
Gorsnitz. Company up at 0700, another quiet day. The kitchen is to be set up. Corporal George Knoblach went to hospital. We were all happy to see T/5 Valentine Folk, who has been gone since September 19, when he was wounded in the big tank battle at Rechicourt. He looks good and has put on weight.
- April 27:
Gorsnitz. Company up at 0700. Sergeant McGurk returned from hospital. Knoblach flown to Paris in C-47. Movies at 1400 and 1800. McGurk only came for visit, has to return for his new CI teeth. Our Company Clerk Slate was over to see us today.
- April 28:
Gorsnitz. Company up at 0700. Not much doing. Movies at 1800. There are still Krauts in the vicinity and there were some GI casualties today.
- April 29:
Gorsnitz. Company up at 0700. We went out Kraut hunting and searched the woods assigned to us diligently, to no avail so it turned out to be a long uphill hike. A rather steep, wooded mountainside was included and most of us were puffing like "Fulton's Steamboat" when we reached the top.
- April 30:
Gorsnitz. Company up at 0700, had breakfast and then, I guess somebody decided after our puffing and lack of wind that we were out of condition. Anyway, we had calisthenics for the first time since we started combat. Everyone enjoyed these. War news all good yesterday. *Stars and Stripes* reported that Reds and Yanks meet. Hitler's Bertchestgarten retreat has been bombed further into the ground. Mussolini has been executed, Marshal Goering reported dead from heart failure and Herr Hitler reported dying of a heart attack. That would be too easy a death for the monster who ordered the atrocities we witnessed at Ordhruf, but we should be happy if those rats are exterminated. We got paid today then worked on maintenance of equipment. It snowed quite hard during morning. One section of our 1st Platoon went out 10 Kms. to clean out an enemy machine gun position where 17 Jerries are holding out. The TD's could not reach their position so return without accomplishing the mission. Sergeant Faldo Mazzola and his crew and Sergeant Dellevigne and his crew returned from Ordnance without their tanks which have been evacuated. The USO put on a show at Bayreuth and movies were shown in evening. We are alerted to move out tomorrow.
- May 1:
Gorsnitz. Plans changed, did not move out, now scheduled to go tomorrow. We got more shots today which smarted a bit. Movies in evening.
- May 2:
Gorsnitz. Company up at 0345 ready to leave at 0430, left at 0455. We had a long, cold ride of 155 miles to Hengersberg along the Czechoslovakia border. We crossed the Blue Danube River. Hartman's TD threw a track and Krewsky's and Gadoury's tanks also dropped out. We were assigned to very comfortable billets. The ground is white from a heavy snowfall. We passed thousands of Heinie prisoners, including many high ranking officers.
- May 3:
Hengersberg. Reveille at 0730. Chow served by our mess crew. Movies at 1330. The news yesterday sounded very good. Hitler reported dead. All German opposition in Italy and in Western Austria ended and Von Rundstedt was captured. Berlin is completely taken. All TD's back. Movies.
- May 4:
Hengersberg. Reveille at 0730. T/4 John Dawson left for French Riviera on furlough. Maintenance of vehicles. Movies in p.m. and evening. We are alerted to move out.
- May 5:
Hengersberg. Reveille at 0730. Company prepared to move out at 1200 to follow D Company of the

37th Tank Battalion on a push through dangerous mountain country on way to Prague, Czechoslovakia. CCB on one flank and CCA on the other. We pulled out at 1050 and went to an assembly area but after waiting until 1145 we returned to our former positions and billets. Needless to say we were all very happy about the change in plans, as there was a heavy downpour of rain. Movies in the evening.

May 6:

Hengersberg. Company up at 0430, left at 0600 in a driving rain. We crossed the Czechoslovakia border shortly after noon and were given a royal welcome by the crowds along the way. We never saw so much pastry in our lives and had to duck to keep from getting hit with bread, cakes and pies. We rode 95 miles to the small town of Lnare where we got billets and took up positions of outpost. The excitable Czechoslovakia got us out of bed at midnight with the rumor of Heinie tanks and 3000 Krauts supposedly on the edge of town. We spent the rest of the night waiting but nothing happened. A dance being held in town broke up in a hurry.

May 7:

Lnare, Czechoslovakia. Company up at 0600. Rumors have it that the war ended at 0700 this morning but fighting in Prague still rages. Twenty Heinies came in and gave up. Our Warrant Officer was over checking our time in the Army. It is rather quiet here and not much to do. Mail has not been in for over a week.

May 8:

Lnare. Company up at 0600. War is rumored to be over and perhaps it is but there is no celebrating, no jubilation, because even if it is over, so what, there is still war in the Pacific, or Army of Occupation, so it means very little to us here. We all hope for the sake of all the persecuted people of Europe that the rumors are true. Your scribe should at least be celebrating his 38th birthday. John Perrine went to get the mail. The Czechs of the town, lined up five arrogant SS Troopers and shot them this evening. All hostilities supposed to end at 2400.

May 9:

Lnare. Company up at 0600. All vehicles were washed in the local pond. No definite announcement of the war ending as yet. Fighting still reported in Prague, where it is said the Germans have killed many Czechs. The local Czechs prepared to execute two more SS men caught in civilian clothing. They had the ex-Supermen digging their own graves but the CA officers stepped in to thwart their execution. During the evening a never-ending column of surrendering Heinies passed through town. They handed us their rifles, Panzerfausts¹⁷⁶ and weapons of all sorts. Their vehicles consisted of half-tracks, Volkswagens, motorcycles, and broken down chariots of all sorts. There were many SS Troopers, and the arrogant attitude and smirking faces, made us wonder just who did win the war. Many prisoners asked, "When are you going to fight the Russians?" It's a pity that the Russians, Czechs, or Poles couldn't have dealt with these brave killers of women and children, as it's doubtful if they would have been riding arrogantly through town without our protection, our hands tied. They couldn't get here fast enough to surrender to us. They knew the Russians would show them no mercy. There were movies in the evening and many of the Romeos attempted to become acquainted with the local girls.

May 10:

Lnare. Company up at 0700. 3rd Platoon moved to Hvozpany where they were given the difficult assignment of outposting the town and keeping the never-ending columns of Jerries and the Russian columns moving peacefully through town. The SS Supermen obeyed the orders to disarm better than did the Russians. The long columns streamed through town all day. There were horse drawn wagons of all kinds, autos, bicycles, motorcycles, and soldiers on horseback. During the evening a column of High Ranking SS Officers arrived in town. They refused to move through to the PW point, passed the

¹⁷⁶ Shoulder held anti-tank rocket. Hitler especially ordered these to be issued to thousands of young boys for use in the suicide defense of Berlin against the Russians.

Russians, unless we went along as an escort, so Lieutenant Harry Doughty, his driver Valentine Folk and radioman Macomber, escorted them in our jeep, passed fields and ponds, where the Russian soldiers and the girls they brought with them were bathing nude in the ponds. We will be glad when the last of these surrendering Heinies and their Russian adversaries pass through here. The rifles, Pan-derfausts, and weapons of all sorts are piled high after we disarmed these soldiers. We received the first definite radio announcement and agreement of Germany's unconditioned surrender on May 8 at Rheims, France, where General Jodel, signed the surrender. 1st and 2nd Platoons still in Lnare.

May 11:

Lnare. First, 2nd Platoons plus Headquarters remain here. 3rd Platoon still in Hvozday. A very quiet day compared to yesterday. Many of us went for a welcome swim in the local pond. We had Russian Generals, including Marshall Zukorf, Colonels, Majors, and on down here today, all hilariously exuberant over the war's end. They were saluting our men, from privates on up. The Russian soldiers were offering vodka and Czech money but wanted our luxury Russian Tanks and equipment also another luxury item, bacon, THAT they did not get. A lot of dubious looking Russian tanks and equipment also came in.

May 12:

Lnare. Company still here except for 1st Platoon which is outposting a nearby town. The third still in Hvozday. More visits from the Russians. A real hot day so many of the 3rd Platoon again went swimming in the local pond.

May 13:

Lnare. Another quiet day in Czechoslovakia. Company Headquarters and Sergeant Hatfield's platoon still here. Sergeant Donovan's platoon at a nearby town and the third still in Hvozday. It is very hot and humid weather right now but there are ponds all around us so we can enjoy a cool swim. During the morning our 3rd Platoon moved back to Lnare. The first still in position in nearby town. The 2nd Platoon Security went to Germany to the place where we are to be billeted. Not much to do but the local folks had a dance in the park which we attended.

May 14:

Lnare. All quiet today. 1st Platoon still in position. During the afternoon thousands of surrendering Heinies and refugees streamed through town in vehicles and on foot under guard of the 37th Tank Battalion. Many Russian soldiers in town or nearby. No movies or other entertainment, however, we did get a keg of beer we rolled out the barrel in the local park. Most of us went swimming and everybody busy trying to figure out their points and trying to make them stretch into enough points to enable them to go home. Many of the newer men who have wives and children, bronze stars, and purple hearts, now have enough point to be able to be among the first to go home. Eighty-five points are needed according to the point system announced. Not too many except the old timers or the young married men with children have the needed points. Corporal Jack Garnett, our Medic turned down a rotation furlough offered him.

May 15:

We all went through the rugged physical examination like the one we were given before we came overseas, here at Lnare today. Captain Buchanan¹⁷⁷ and his aides conducted the exam. I am certain he didn't find any 4 F's among this rugged fighting outfit. Another swell day with more swimming for most of us.

May 16:

Lnare. More swimming and a lot of our fellows went to a nearby Jerry prison camp and came back with beautiful saddle horses to use while here. Lieutenant Baudo, Lieutenant Doughty, Moon Mullen, Gordon Freeman, Ed Joyce, Henry Godwin, Don Crise, and many others got horses. They are getting a kick, plus plenty of blisters and kinks from this new exercise.

¹⁷⁷ Richard R. "Doc" Buchanan, M.D., 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion Surgeon.

May 17:

Lnare. Sergeant Paul Hatfield left the Company for the States today. He went to Battalion Headquarters and will leave May 21 for the good old USA. He is the first in the Company to leave for probable discharge since the war ended. Sergeant Stephen Krewsky took over the 3rd Platoon. Staff Sergeant Robert Taylor took over the 2nd Platoon and Sergeant John Eidenschink took over Sergeant Krewsky's place. We went swimming and horseback riding. Moon Mullen inveigled me onto his horse behind him, then coaxed the horse into a gallop, scaring the living daylights out of me. These Kraut horses don't know what 'whoa' means. They are sure beautiful horses.

May 18:

Lnare. Company up at 0700. We lost our saddle horses when a mare broke out of the paddock and the gentlemen horses all took off after her. We left at 1300 and traveled to the town of Horadzovice where we pitched tents in a pine grove, and as always when we set up outdoors, it poured all night. T/4 George Zeljac, who was wounded in March, returned to the Company. Movies in town at 2000.

May 19:

Horadzovice. A quiet day spent in the pine grove where we are bivouacked. the weather cleared so it isn't bad living out in the wide open spaces. A few poker games going on but most of the fellows are broke or badly bent. T/5 John Dawson returned from his trip to the Riviera. Movies in the evening.

May 20:

Horadzovice. Another quiet day. It rained some, church services at 1400 and 1600. Movies in the evening.

May 21:

Horadzovice. Lieutenant Harry Doughty, Corporal Dayle Cullins, and T/5 Salvatore Tripodi left for Paris on furlough this morning. A cool windy day, spent in our bivouac in the pines. Movies in evening in town, otherwise, not much to do. T/4 George Zeljac was evacuated to the hospital for an operation for appendicitis.

May 22:

Horadzovice. Another rainy day spent in the pines. Movies in the evening.

May 23:

Horadzovice. Nothing new. Weather still cool and rainy. Movies in evening. Everyone wondering when his turn for furlough home for discharge will come. Not too many with needed 85 points.

May 24:

Horadzovice. No change. Some of the boys went back to Lnare to visit their friends. Movies in the evening.

May 25:

Horadzovice. Still bivouacked in the pines. Movies in evening.

May 26:

Horadzovice. Awaiting orders to move. At 1600 we moved to Suscie, where the Battalion assembled.

May 27:

Susice. Company up at 0600, left at 0800 and traveled to Landshut, Germany, a distance of 107 miles. We were assigned to comfortable barracks, formerly occupied by German soldiers, sharing the building with B Company. We have rooms with five or six men to a room. The entire Battalion again together for the first time in over four months. We will doubtless remain as a part of the Army of Occupation. Some of us hope to go home soon. Sergeant Dellevigne and Sergeant Smith off to Paris on pass.

4th A.D. Unit Guards Fabulous Treasure

From *Armored News*, Vol. 5, No. 50.
Monday, August 20, 1945, 1

A TREASURE OF FANTASTIC HISTORICAL VALUE and estimated in hard cash to be worth about \$10,000,000, claimed by White Russians as the property of their church, is being guarded by troops of the 704th TD Battalion, attached to the 4th Armored Division, at division headquarters in Landshut, Bavaria.

With a history dating back to the Czarist regime in Russia, before the Revolution, the treasure of gold and silver service sets, glassware, gleaming ikons, coins, jewelry, chalices, the Czar's Army Banners, has been carried on an odyssey involving three capitol cities of intrigue-torn Europe. Once the valuable pieces were taken in a three-day battle between SS troops and the Russian Guards, but before it was over, the SS men were wiped out and the treasure retaken by those who brought it to this camp.

The tale of how the famous collection came to the 4th Armored Division begins in the days of Czar Alexander, of Russia, when, according to the White Russians, the pieces were scattered among the Russian churches of the Czar's empire. With the coming of the Russian revolution, the treasures were collected at Belgrade in 1918 and kept hidden by the Czar's forces opposing the Communists. They finally deposited the material in a bank in Vienna for safekeeping. Meanwhile, the white Russians formed what they called an independent army which, when the war between Germany and Russia began, entered the conflict with the Nazis against Stalin's forces, hoping that a Nazi victory would again bring them to power in Russia. This army, in 1944, had the treasure moved to Berlin where it was believed it would be safe.

At the time Stalin's forces began closing in on Berlin, the White Russians feared for the safety of their valuables, decided to move the material to Salzburg, in Austria. SS troops, apparently not in sympathy with this move, cut the route of the Russians as they drove southward in a long convoy of horses, wagons and pedestrians with the treasure in twenty huge boxes on the wagons. The SS troops took the valuables in a surprise attack, but the White Russians reorganized and in a fight lasting three days and nights and costing 1,900 Russian lives, they recovered everything.

Somewhere on this trek, where, they do not know for sure, a colonel and a captain who were in charge of the convoy and guarding the treasure absconded with several boxes of jewelry and gold coins, among the most valuable of the possessions.

After recovering the material from the SS troops, the Independent Army received word from its commander to head for American lines and turn the stuff over to American or British troops for safekeeping.

According to Captain Thomas J. Evans, S2 of the 704th TD Battalion, Greensburg, PA, the White Russians still keep a close eye on their precious holdings, furnishing their own guards to stand with the Americans. Captain Evans, in charge of the guard detail, said the White Russians told him the material was to be used for the propagation of a new White Russia in the years to come and that some has already been used to establish schools in foreign lands.

Plans are to move the treasure to either a Landshut or Munich bank, Captain Evans reported, while final disposition is made of ownership or whether it falls into the category of bounty taken in war.

Working with Captain Evans as interpreters are WOJG Walter L. Praglowski, Burlington, NJ and T/Sgt. Karl

H. Stevens, Ridgewood, NY.

The History Of The 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion

From D Plus 36
To V-E Day

704 TDS M-18S Strike Again

704 TD Battalion Association

Walther C. Righton

Dedicated to the Memory of A Fine Commander

Lieutenant Colonel Bill A. Bailey

Prologue

THE 704TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION is probably better known to the Germans than to the people back home. Yet to us as members of the Battalion the numbers 704 have a significance which reaches into the depths of Man's virtues and draws forth courage and determination. The 704th has achieved a name in the memoirs of outstanding units, and the men who made the name can be more than justly proud of the fine record and outstanding service rendered to their country during World War 2.

Let us go back to the time the Battalion was first activated on December 15, 1941, at Pine Camp, New York and trace its excellent record to Landshut, Germany; the last stop in the ETO. The nucleus was formed from "D" Battery, 22nd Field Artillery Battalion of the Fourth Armored Division and was attached to that famous division for training. The first commander was Lieutenant Colonel Cameron who relinquished his command to Lieutenant Colonel Sears. While still at Pine Camp the 704th had two more commanders, Lieutenant Colonel Storck (Black Lou), a fine officer, and Major Oden, who soon received his promotion and commanded the Battalion until Orleans, France. After receiving basic training, the Battalion packed their equipment in September of 1942 and proceeded to Table Rock, Camp Hood, Texas, to expand chests and harden biceps in a rigid physical training schedule which lasted three months. At the Camp Hood Unit Training Center the Battalion gained a fuller knowledge of Tank Destroyer tactics. It was here that apprentices developed into specialists. The men were now ready to test their skill and abilities under simulated battle conditions. This was done in the California Desert in maneuvers with the Fourth Armored Division from January to August of 1943.

The next stop was Camp Maxey, Texas, an Army Ground Force conditioning camp where hikes predominated, and where, after various tests, the Battalion was declared fit for the supreme test - Combat. On February 18, 1944, the outfit left for Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts, the springboard to England. Boarding the British ship, Britannic, on February 27, 1944, the Battalion sailed for the United Kingdom and arrived fifteen days later at Liverpool. From there it entrained for Tilshead and then to Trowbridge where, for four months, last-minute training was carried out on the Downs of England in final preparation for the job ahead. For over three years this Battalion had been shaped and molded and tempered and emerged with men of steel, tough and confident, an unbeatable team for an unbeatable army.

Combat History

On July 11, 1944, the 704th left the marshalling area and boarded LCT's Southhampton. The following day the first contingents of the Battalion landed on Utah Beach on the Normandy Coast of France at 0930 hours. On the morning of July 17th, 704th tank destroyers, along with the mighty power of the Fourth Armored Division, left St. Mesnil Martin, France, to speed inland and take up their first combat positions, indirect fire on the enemy in the vicinity of Raids. The next day they got their first taste of counter-battery fire from the highly publicized "88," an undesirable introduction to an acquaintance which was to molest them for many months to come. It was here that the first man in the Battalion paid the supreme price. Private First Class Robert A. Nicholas of Company "B" was killed by shellfire on the 23rd of July, 1944. They were shelled intermittently during their stay here, but their "76s" coughed "outgoing mail" constantly, giving little rest to the enemy. Jerry was busy with his aircraft. ME 109's, scouring low from out of the sun, strafed and bombed the gun positions, but .50 calibers spoke harsh and defiant answers.

It was during the stay here that the Battalion learned what war really was. It learned the things that are not mentioned in field manuals, that there is much more to war than just shooting guns and receiving medals, that

there is tragedy and humor in every day. It was in the Hedgers of Normandy that the men became familiar with such things as “incoming mail,” “burp” guns, and the advantage of a deep, convenient foxhole.

July 25th, 1944 was an unforgettable day to the men of the 704th, the start of the Normandy breakthrough. Forts, Liberators, Marauders, Mustangs, and Thunderbolts filled the sky, a sky filled with the black balls of bursting “ack-ack.” But they flew steadily on and spilled tons of bombs that shook the ground on which we stood three miles away from the target area. Three thousand planes were involved, and when the last one had finished its work, the Fourth Armored Division with the 704th attached, plunged out through the dazed enemy, cutting down, and over-running anything that presented opposition — the situation was no longer a static one. “B” Company under Captain Falloon was attached to CCB, “C” Company under Captain Evans to CCA, and “A” Company under Captain Ryan, with Headquarters Company under Captain Tanner went to CCR. Reconnaissance Company under Captain Horn had platoons out with each line company. They rolled to Coutances and assembled to refuel.

Snipers and small isolated groups of Germans caused minor delays, but they were wiped out in short order. Moving on to Avranches, “A” Company had its first opportunity to carry out its primary mission. Several well-camouflaged German tanks opened fire and knocked out five halftracks. Lieutenant Addison of the 2nd Platoon of “A” Company roared past the column with two guns to flush the Jerries out. Sergeant Joe Shedevy, tank commander spotted the enemy tanks first, T/5 Bleemel Beck, driver, whipped the tank around into firing position, Private First Class Manuel Alviso shoved home a 76 mm APC, the breechblock snapped shut, Corporal Clinton Threet laid the crosshairs on the center of the swastika, and the first round fired at an enemy tank by an M 18 of the Battalion tore through its mark. Before the Hell Cat had stopped rocking, another round was in the chamber and Threet was traversing the tube with swift coolness to another tank partly hidden behind a hedgerow. The Jerry, already laid, fired and missed which cost him his life for the second round from Shedevy's gun left the Kraut tank burning. Two other tanks in the vicinity saw the action and, panic stricken, tried to escape and exposed their positions. Four more rounds were expended, and two more enemy tanks were stopped in their tracks, a holocaust of flame. The battle was won and confidence in men and machines was secure. Lieutenant Addison, instantly killed in this battle, was the first officer of the Battalion killed in action.

The Tank Destroyers moved on to Rennes¹⁷⁸ on August 3rd where SS troops were defending the city, determined and arrogant men who fought with zeal and cunning. The Battalion was ordered to feint an attack on the city to distract attention from a task force which was to race around and attack the city from the South. Here the Battalion lost its first tank destroyed by enemy action. Although the tank was hit repeatedly, with one man killed, two missing, and one evacuated, Sergeant Roger Turcan continued to load and fire the gun until he had exhausted his ammunition. The city fell the following day.

On August 7th, “B” Company, while enroute to Lorient, was pounded by a heavy artillery barrage. Without warning shells rained in on the column, getting several direct hits, and instantly killing the Company Commander, Captain Falloon and his Liaison Officer, Lieutenant Kelly. The Company showed superb coolness, immediately deployed and took action to settle the score. The 1st Platoon by evening had destroyed tow anti-tank guns, one lorry, one O.P. and two heavy machine gun emplacements.

There were many towns and little villages liberated by the Battalion, some by exploding shells and some by wine bottles. The town of Vannes was a typical wine bottle affair, the Krauts had pulled out, and our column, which had been racing down the road since 0200 hours in the last phase of snapping shut the pincers on the Brest Peninsula, entered the town without a shot being fired. As the tanks rolled in early in the morning,

¹⁷⁸ For Evans' commentary on Rennes, see page 23 of main text.

windows flew up and doors flew open and the people flocked into the streets, laughing and crying, cheering and yelling. Flowers, eggs, wine, cognac and apples poured into the dust-begrimed hands of the men. It was a welcome that will never be forgotten, a compensation for blood and sweat. "Le Boche caput"!

The Battalion was moving fast now, miles of liberated France fell behind the clattering tracks, imprinting an undisputable claim to victory. In the mad dash across France, generally through Orleans, Sens, Troyes, Chalon sur Marnes, Commercy, the men exerted themselves to the maximum, fighting briefly and savagely, over-running the enemy, sleeping and eating at odd moments, but always pressing relentlessly on into the rear of a dazed, staggering enemy. At Orleans, France, Lieutenant Colonel Bailey assumed command of the Battalion. The Companies, spread throughout the Division, had their individual engagements day after day, shooting up towns and villages, knocking out gun emplacements, destroying fleeing vehicles, supporting dismounted infantry attacks, outpostting towns, crossroads, and bridges, cleaning out small pockets of resistance, protecting flanks and securing main supply routes. Each platoon had its experiences which in the big picture were relatively small and unimportant, but which were to each individual the most important thing in the world, involving life or death. Minor operations go unheard of and many heroes go unacclaimed. Many have gone, wounded and killed, with their praises unsung in a fierce battle or because of a stray shell, or an undiscovered mine, or a lone sniper behind the lines. These men play an unheralded role in the final reckoning.

Through September, our tanks beat a steady tattoo on pavements and gravel roads. Haroue, Luneville, Arracourt are never to be forgotten places that soaked up the blood and sweat of fighting men.

The city of Luneville is an undesirable memory to many men of the outfit. It was here that Colonel Bailey, Battalion CO, fell in action, and it was here that "B" Company chalked up a record to make him proud of them. Eight German Mark V tanks, supported by infantry, made a counterattack to regain a foothold in the city. The 3rd Platoon fought it out at close quarters. A bridge across the railroad tracks just south of town proved to be the bottleneck for the Kraut attack. Sergeant Mankin maneuvered his tank into position, fired point-blank and destroyed an enemy tank, traversed rapidly, fired again, and reduced another track laying pillbox to a lifeless hulk. Sergeant Monaco and Czytajlo accounted for three more tanks, the latter getting two in fast, furious action. The counterattack was beaten off without the loss of a tank and with only five shellfire casualties. The next day dawned cold and we and with it came a concentrated, continuous pounding by guns and mortars that caused fourteen casualties. Enemy infantry and tanks got into the town from the East, and street fighting raged throughout the night. "B" Company knocked out a Ferdinand (SP) and a heavy machine gun. "C" Company sent in a platoon to help and promptly KO'd a Mark V tank.¹⁷⁹ Relief by the Sixth Armored Division was welcome. But the relief was out of one hot spot into another, the Arracourt area. Lieutenant Colonel Hyde took the Battalion for a short period, received orders for home, and relinquished command to Lieutenant Colonel Alanis.

The period of 20 September to 7 October, 1944, marked a tank battle that again knocked the German 11th Panzer Division back on its heels. The Battalion had contacted the 11th Panzer earlier in Normandy, but never had it shown itself in full mass strength as it did around Arracourt. The German High Command threw the 11th Panzer into battle in a desperate attempt to stop the Famed Fourth, "Patton's Butchers." The Fourth sustained losses, but when the 11th Panzer put its tail between its legs and ran, it left three-fourths of its strength battered, useless, steel-walled coffins on the battlefield. Tank battles raged in the dead of the night and in the thick, blinding fog of early dawn. The green-white tracers of German AP crossed in the night sky the fiery trails of the American shot. There would be a sudden spatter of sparks, a blinding flash, and a pillar of flame would mark the pyre of another enemy tank. "C" Company in moving down into the Arracourt area with CCA ran into trouble around St. Genevive and in the vicinity of Chateau Salins. The 3rd Platoon of Reconnaissance

¹⁷⁹ Panzerkampfwagen V, also known as the "Panther."

sance Company lost Lieutenant Barfus and Private First Class Solomon through bazooka fire in some Jerry held woods near St. Genevive. Staff/Sergeant Proto, Private First Class Brower, and Private First Class Destfano held off the Krauts until "C" Company brought up their tanks. They knocked out an AT gun, killed nineteen Jerries and captured twenty-six. "C" Company moved into Arracourt thinking of a rest, but was sent out on a routine mission near Rechicourt. The 3rd Platoon under command of Lieutenant Leiper came face to face with what seemed to be all the armor of the German army. Guns instantly flamed into action and Corporal Stewart, gunner for Sergeant Stasis, knocked out two Kraut tanks before his tank was hit.

Tank Destroyer Employment

As a result of operations on the European Continent during 1944 and 1945, the following lessons were learned and conclusions were drawn:

1. The towed tank destroyer gun was found to be unsuitable for any mission other than that of static defense. All towed tank destroyer battalions should be converted to self-propelled.
2. Small unit tank destroyer tactics, as conceived and taught in the United States have proved sound. At least two destroyers must work together to take full advantage of their mobility and high velocity fire power. The only satisfactory method of selecting destroyer positions was foot reconnaissance. Small unit training for future operations should be based on the principles which were taught for this operation.
3. In the employment of the tank destroyer battalion, tactics as taught in the United States were changed in this theater because our forces were usually not faced by large numbers of German armored vehicles in mass. The employment of tank destroyers by company or platoon was, with one exception, found to be entirely satisfactory. This one exception was that after months of combat against small elements of German armor, tank destroyer units were thoroughly scattered when the Ardennes breakthrough occurred and, as a result, no one battalion in Third US Army could be committed against the bulge as a massed unit. It should not be forgotten in future operations, if the enemy possesses the capability of massing his armor and if we continue to use divisional tank destroyers by company and platoon, that there should be more tank destroyer battalions available than the present allotment of one battalion per division.
4. As an accompanying gun in close support of infantry, cavalry, and armored forces, tank destroyers proved more efficient and were used to a greater extent than had ever been envisioned in the planning stages in the United States. Future training should lay more emphasis on the tank destroyer as a close support gun, so that tank destroyers will not be idle when there is no threat from enemy armor.
5. Frequently the small unit leaders of an infantry division, newly committed, did not understand armored employment. Most new infantry outfits insisted on directing every movement of the attached tank destroyer unit, rather than assigning the tank destroyer commander a mission and allowing him to make use of his special knowledge and experience. There should be an intensive program of combined training to acquaint small unit commanders with the capabilities and limitations of arms other than their own, in order to avoid the needless mistakes and losses of the past operation.

The Tank Destroyer

Lessons learned and conclusions drawn about the self-propelled tank destroyer were:

1. The 76mm Gun Motor Carriage, M-18, suspension and power system and the mobility resulting therefrom made this vehicle the finest piece of tracked equipment in the US Army. the ideal tank destroyer should have a suspension and power system similar to that of the M-18.

2. The three-inch gun with its present highest velocity ammunition is inadequate. A 90mm or larger (not to exceed 105mm) gun with a higher velocity ammunition (at least 3600 to 3700 foot/seconds) is needed.
3. Armor heavier than that now on tank destroyers is not necessary, but a cover for the turret is a definite requirement. Future destroyers should be modified to have a turret top which will give overhead protection, but, at the same time, permit horizontal vision in all directions.
4. Although the M-18 was frequently the only combat tracked vehicle which could negotiate mud during the bad weather of the past winter, its tracks are still not wide enough. Rubber tracks were found ideal for long distance movements and ordinary weather; however, cleated tracks are a "must" for icy weather. Track width should be increased to give minimum ground pressure, but the track should not be made so wide that the destroyer's high maneuverability is materially reduced. All vehicles should come equipped with rubber tracks. For icy weather, complete replacement sets of cleated steel tracks or a better type of grouser should be provided.
5. Because tank destroyers were so frequently used in close support of infantry, the lack of a bow machine gun is the greatest single deficiency of any type tank destroyer at the present time. All tank destroyers should be equipped with a bow machine gun and, in addition, a mount for the anti-aircraft machine gun which will enable that gun to fire forward at ground targets.

Equipment

Lessons learned and conclusions drawn on the equipment other than the tank destroyer itself were:

1. The ammunition trucks and trailers provided by the present tank destroyer tables of equipment were intended for three-inch ammunition. There is not sufficient carrying capacity for 90mm ammunition. Battalions equipped with a 90mm or larger gun should be given additional trucks and trailers to provide the carrying capacity for this larger sized ammunition.
2. Tank destroyer gun companies and reconnaissance platoons, when attached to infantry and armored units, have frequently been separated from battalion headquarters by large distances, and have been without adequate means to communicate with tank destroyer battalion headquarters. A 506 radio is needed for each tank destroyer gun company and each tank destroyer reconnaissance platoon.
3. Tank destroyers habitually work closely with infantry or armored units, but have no means of communicating with these other arms. In addition to the 600 series radios now organic with each tank destroyer battalion, there should be three 508 and twelve 510 radios issued to each tank destroyer battalion operating with an armored division; and twelve 300 series radios issued to each tank destroyer battalion with an infantry division.
4. Tank destroyer gun and reconnaissance platoons frequently were engaged in fire fights with enemy infantry and had no high angle of fire weapon to drive the enemy from emplaced positions. In addition, tank destroyers have no means of sending up illuminating flares to detect enemy patrols or enemy tanks at night. Each tank destroyer platoon, both gun and reconnaissance, needs one 60mm mortar as a support weapon against enemy infantry by day and as a means of illumination at night.
5. The Car, Armored, Light, M-8, and the Car, Armored, utility, M-20, have proved entirely unsatisfactory for the purpose for which they were provided. A half-track or a light full-track vehicle is needed to replace the M-8 and the M-20.

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