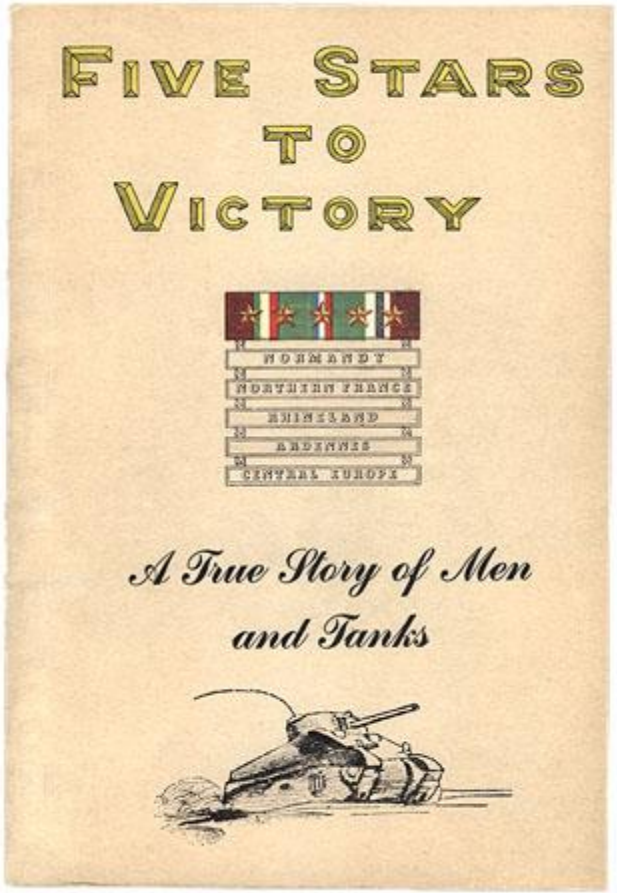
"FIVE STARS TO VICTORY"



The Commander:
Lt. Colonel
Wm. B. Lovelady

The Exploits of

Task Force Lovelady

2nd Bn. (Reinfored)
33rd Armored Regiment
3rd Armored Division
U. S. Army
in the

War Against Germany
1944 - 1945

By A. Eaton Roberts

Published By
Atlas Printing
Birmingham, Alabama
1949

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Note: A Medical Corps doctor and the Battalion Surgeon, Capt. Roberts administered to the sick and wounded of the Task Force throughout the five European campaigns.

THE BOOK'S DEDICATION

This brief tribute can only be dedicated to those who will never wear five bronze stars on their European Theater of Operations ribbon, indicating that they had fought in five major campaigns; for they are dead or crippled. It was their blood which traced a sanguine trail from the beaches of Normandy to the banks of the River Mulde. Their shattered bodies make the friendly soil of France and Belgium priceless to the few who remain alive and unmaimed to wear their decorations in memory of these, the fallen comrades of Task Force Lovelady.

PREFACE

The newest reinforcement soldier is proud, if not a trifle terrified, to be assigned to the Third Armored Division. Those who have been with it since its inception at Camp Beauregard in April of 1941 are scarce indeed. Theirs is a fathomless pride no less than love, born of watching and helping the division grow from infancy in Louisiana to puberty on the hot sands of the Western deserts; to adolescence among the fertile green hills of Virginia and Pennsylvania; to young manhood on the Salisbury Plains of England; to strong, courageous maturity in Hitler's *Festung Europe*. It is of this last phase of metamorphosis that the present account is written.

Any division is great or mediocre depending upon the calibre of its fighting elements. We believe that Task Force Lovelady is the finest combat unit in the division. We do not offend you in Task Forces Hogan, King, Richardson, Kane, and all the rest, because we realize that you think yours, too, is the greatest and has done the most towards attaining victory in Europe. That is as it should be and we are glad. Every soldier and every officer, believing that he is in the best outfit in the American army, has made the Third Armored a truly great division.

Nor do we wish to belittle the many infantry divisions who have been attached to us. Their brilliant work has often gone unnoticed by the more glamorous spectacle of tanks. We willingly acknowledge their tireless efforts.

This just happens to be a story about the tanks of Task Force Lovelady. It is written for the men who fought in them for ten months, for the men who were wounded, and the men who died in them.

A. Eaton Roberts
118 Monument Avenue
Malvern, Pennsylvania

ADDENDA

[from last page of book]

Task Force Lovelady wishes to acknowledge the complete cooperation, the sacrifice, the unswerving devotion to duty, and the superb combat behavior of the many units from within and from without the Third Armored Division, who were attached to it for greater or lesser periods of time throughout the five great campaigns in Europe.

Although the nucleus of the task force was the 2nd Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment, it is fully appreciated that oftimes this was only the nucleus, and but for its attached units of infantry, especially the 3rd Armored's 36th Regiment, Tank Destroyers, engineers, reconnaissance forces, artillery and anti-aircraft battalions, and other special groups, it could never have been an extraordinary fighting team.

We like to think that the spirit of the Task Force was the 2nd Battalion, its Commander, William B. Lovelady, its other officers, and the fine group of men who loved it, worked and fought for it, cheered for it and died for it; that the units who became attached to it brought their own and often equally high esprit with them, adding to it by absorption of the qualities which made Task Force Lovelady extraordinary.

May each of these units know that we are most grateful. May they be as proud to have been with us as Task Force Lovelady is to have had such elite attachments with them.

CHAPTER I

THE NORMANDY BEACHHEAD

In which Task Force Lovelady receives its baptism
in blood and learns to hate the German enemy.

Already it was D plus 15 and we were luxuriating in the most phenomenal English sun we had seen during our nine months' sojourn on that grossly overburdened little island. The warm white sand on the Bill of Portland filled our shoes until we took them off to wriggle our toes with childlike glee. Spring fever enticed some of us into the deep, blue-green waters beyond the dunes, and we dared to swim for seconds though the water was bitter cold.

Our tanks and half-tracks, peeps and six by sixes, rested in long columns, bumper to bumper, along lanes called hards. We knew that within days these weapons would be facing German tanks, that we would be pitting our skill against a foe we had not yet seen. Still, there were no outward signs of worriment, perhaps because we were anxious to get started and get it over with; more probably because we just didn't know what war was.

The harbor laid on the east side of the Bill. Here, a motley mass of ships pitched gently at anchor. There were LST's, LCT's, LCI's, freighters, and sundry types of smaller warships. There were multitudes of them, and each was being methodically loaded with vehicles, men, and all imaginable equipment.

We waited patiently for our ships to be ready to receive us. There were few of us with responsible duties, and the time was spent most pleasantly. For the first time since we arrived in the United Kingdom, we ate white bread. The meals from the large kitchens were well prepared, delicious, and in unheard-of abundance. Between meals, American Red Cross girls drove around in trucks giving freely of their famous wares, doughnuts, hot coffee, smiles and cheerful words.

On the third day we loaded. The whole procedure was so effortlessly and efficiently performed that the miracle of it never occurred to us. Great credit must be given these experts in the Transportation Corps who directed every vehicle to the most impossible crannies without a bit of confusion.

Without delay, turning engines set our craft slightly atremble. In the twilight of 22 June, 1944, anchors weighed, ships silently glided out of the harbor, assembled in an orderly convoy, prows pointed towards the East. We gathered round the rail, watching our sister ships, admiring the trim lines of the cruisers who accompanied us. In undertones we reminisced of England,

and wondered about the future. One by one the ships wrapped themselves in a cloak of darkness and we went to bed.

Minor incidents awakened some of us, but generally, the night was uneventful. It was not unpleasant falling asleep to the gentle swishing of waves against the ship.

Morning came, and after breakfast we again sought a place along the rail. Word was soon passed along that land had been sighted. We strained our eyes and craned our necks until it appeared to us, a thin green strip on the horizon. Gradually it took shape, became a wavy line indicating hills. Barrage balloons and myriad's of ships came into view. We knew that this was Omaha Beach. At 1100 hours, we anchored.

Hustle and bustle was evident everywhere. At first it seemed all confusion. Then definite patterns became apparent, until the whole amazing scene was comparable to the antics of a beehive.

DUKW's, the army's "Ducks," were swimming out to freighters, returning to shore and driving off on land. Bulldozers were keeping traffic lanes at least in a semblance of repair. High on the nearest hill were the tents of an Evacuation Hospital, and C-47 transport planes were coming and going constantly. It was an inspiring sight, and we thoroughly enjoyed waiting for the low tide which would let us onto the beach.'

Late that afternoon we started driving out of the yawning mouths of our ships. Suddenly, the weeks of arduous waterproofing became totally unimportant as we drove easily through inches of water onto the firm sands of France.

M.P.'s directed us along tortuous roads to our bivouac areas. For the first time we saw German equipment laying where it had been destroyed. We drove through the famous town of Isigny, shattered to rubble by naval bombardment. The French folk waved at us, gave the V-sign with their fingers, and asked for chewing gum and chocolate.

A steady rumble of artillery met our ears, and we could see the muzzle flashes as night approached. We were on the Normandy Beachhead and not so very far from the front lines.

The land looked as we had heard it would. Tiny fields surrounded by tall hedgerows growing on earthen fences several feet high. This was Bocage country. Even to our inexperienced eyes it looked like difficult terrain to fight on, and next to impossible for tanks.

These fields devoured our long armored columns, and with the aid of

camouflage nets, hid them admirably. Even from short distances it would have been difficult to guess how much material was concealed here.

Under these nets we pitched pup-tents and were directed to avoid unnecessary movement. For the most part, foxholes were already dug by the infantry which had fought through the region around Neuilly. All we had to do was empty them daily of the big black and yellow salamander's which would fall in.

Day after day we did little but become more accustomed to some of the noises of war. We were several thousands of yards from the front, and most of what we heard were our own guns booming away endlessly like a great symphony of kettle drums.

Those bivouacked with Task Force King were less fortunate. Every now and then several rounds of enemy artillery would burst nearby, and they were frequently driven to their foxholes. Listening to the ominous whine and terrifying bursts of these shells was educational if not fun, and we learned to quicken our reflexes and sharpen our ears. Looking back on it, we must have hit the ground or headed for foxholes much more often than we later found to be necessary. However, it has always been better to be safe than sorry, and no one was ever called a coward for taking available precautions.

A few administrative changes were made during these dull days of waiting. We lost one medium tank company, "F," to the First Battalion, and acquired one light company "B." We became a part of Task Force "X," commanded by Lt. Colonel Cockefaire with his Second Battalion of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, and with Lt. Colonel William B. Lovelady of our own Second Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment, next in command.

Colonel Cockefaire was a fine officer and always a gentleman. There were none who did not feel the loss of a good friend when he was killed early in August.

Soon after landing in France, we started eating 5 in 1 rations, a novelty then, which later wore off until meals became an essential part of living rather than a pleasant interlude. However, these rations were very satisfactory, and months afterwards when substitutions were made to prevent total monotony, their edibility was immensely enhanced.

This portion of Normandy was completely agricultural, devoted to dairying and abounding in apple orchards. Hard cider seemed a dietary mainstay and soon became popular with us. The horribly potent distillate of this was Calvados, which became known among us as "White Lightning," bringing nostalgic memories of "Mountain Dew" to men from the South. Real

cognac was scarce and mostly taken away by the Germans as they reluctantly gave way to the banks of the Vire River.

We had been hiding under our camouflage nets for fifteen days. Early in the evening of 8 July, Colonel Lovelady called the officers to his command post.

"Gentlemen, I always thought it would be something like this, but I didn't expect quite such a rat race."

Subconsciously, muscles tightened, pulses quickened. We knew that, finally, this was it. The colonel continued:

"We have five minutes for briefing before moving out, so we can't waste time with preliminaries."

The 30th Infantry Division had a foothold across the Vire River and a bridge had been constructed near the town of Aire, which would carry tanks. Quickly, the commander gave the route on our maps, then the Order of March and the location of our assembly area.

There was no time for questions and the colonel concluded crisply with "Synchronize your watches. It is 1925 hours. Move out at 1930. That is all."

Already, runners had notified the companies. Engines were being warmed up and last-minute packing completed. We began to move at the specified time. Though we had no inkling of it then, this was the actual commencement of nearly ten strenuous months of adventure, filled with excitement, the extremes of pathos and comedy, loss of blood and comrades, defeats and victories, which did not culminate until late in April of 1945 at the Mulde River in central Germany.

Hundreds of tiny fields suddenly stirred with life. One by one they disgorged tanks and half-tracks, peeps and trucks, until, at sixty-yard intervals, there was a column more than twelve miles long on the road.

Until the vehicles approached the bridge the march was uneventful. Then, an enemy artillery shell burst nearby, followed by another and another. This sporadic shelling increased until it reached the proportions of a barrage, forcing the column to halt. After midnight the shelling diminished, and we continued to roll through the occasional bursts of fire.

Private Avery, a motorcycle rider, crossed the bridge and could not be located for the rest of the night. In the morning his body was found, riddled by shell fragments. Thus, he was recorded as the first casualty in Task Force

Lovelady.

On our left and right there were the still smoldering ruins of the town of Aire. Chimneys and broken stone walls made eerie silhouettes in the flickering light of the fires.

It was nearly 0300 hours when our last vehicles moved off the road and coiled in adjacent fields. We learned immediately that this so-called assembly area belonged as much to the Germans as it did to us.

Before dawn, we became fairly accurate diagnosticians of certain German weapons. The ping of rifle bullets cut through leaves and hedges. The rapid, typewriter-like clackity-clack of machine guns annoyed us constantly. They sounded much faster than ours, and went "Brrp, brrrp, brrrp," until we called them "Burp" guns. The whine and startling crash of artillery made indelible impressions on our minds. The crunching mortars came in without a warning whistle and we came to fear them more than most other high calibre weapons.

As soon as we moved in, there were wounded soldiers from the 30th Infantry Division, unable to find their own aid station in the darkness. By dawn, our medics had already evacuated nineteen casualties, nearly all doughboys.

The rest of 9 July will always be remembered. Many of us quickly developed a fatalistic attitude which persisted through all the months that followed. All of us were frightened though few showed it. It just didn't seem possible to live through many days of that inferno. Fortunately or not, the American soldier has always retained his sense of humor, albeit a trifle grim at times. During these days a common greeting made us laugh: "My mother always told me there would be days like this, but she never told me it would be this rough."

At dawn the attack began, astride a narrow country road and in a southerly direction. Our two "D" companies (tanks and infantry) were on the left, and two "E" companies on the right. After nine hours, we had advanced some two thousand yards, through hedgerows and over rough ground.

Who will forget that first day? The bow-gunners joining the infantrymen to spray every tree from top to bottom; the platoon of tanks dashing a few yards to a confining bank which enclosed every field; the great lumbering lank-dozer carving a crude driveway into the next field followed closely by infantry lookouts who would peek around the corners to point out tank targets, crawling on their bellies and shooting snipers, real and imaginary, out of trees; the tanks pouring through the narrow gap to disperse hurriedly in the tiny field beyond monotonously like the ones they had just come

from; the piercing, urgent cry of "Medic!" when one was wounded. These memories, and more, come back today with a vividness that can be retained only by the frightful uniqueness of high adventure.

Without exerting one's recollections too greatly, the unearthly whine of the Nebelwerfer can still be heard above all the other din of battle. This German weapon, whose name was descriptively Americanized to "Screaming Meemie," hurled rocket-propelled projectiles whose crescendo screams could be heard for several seconds before they finally burst in a great ball of fire. We soon learned that the psychologic effect of their noise was the most dangerous part of them, for when the final score was counted, they had actually caused very few casualties. They were impossible to aim accurately and a large portion of their energy was expended in driving them to their destinations. They became a part of every day and every night just as the thrumming engines of German reconnaissance planes almost marked the time in the evenings and mornings throughout the months of battle. They became just another taken-for-granted part of war, like the endless sight of dead cattle, bloated and stinking by the side of every road; like burning buildings and machines and bodies; like blood and death and heartbreak; like all the little things that happened every day.

Wild tales of cunning snipers filtered back in all their variations, each story magnified and elaborated upon by successive narrators. Some of these would set off packages of Chinese firecrackers by remote control, thus encouraging our infantrymen to expose themselves while the actual sniper happily fired away from an unsuspected location. Another common fable was, "The Germans have Japs with them teaching them how to snipe!" This originated from the fact that the enemy used Russian deserters in their army and those of Georgian descent with Mongoloid features were occidental enough to remind one of the Japanese.

Admittedly, we were green, inexperienced troops. But we showed promise and got the job done, with all our mistakes. Lieutenant Lipman's "D" company platoon, together with some tanks from "E" company, performed exceptionally well by knocking out five Mark IV tanks almost before dawn of their first day in combat. In addition, they destroyed two enemy pillboxes, and killed several enemy soldiers. armed with bazookas. Only one of his Shermans was hit. This belonged. to Staff Sergeant Triola. It was quickly repaired and fighting again before the day ended.

By dusk we were very tired and felt that we deserved a rest. Task Force King passed through us to continue the tedious advances from hedgerow to hedgerow, while we welcomed a short respite at the place we started from. Little did we suspect that soon we would fight day and night, week after week, without thought of rest or relief.

The next day we were in a state of harassed flux, alerted for combat, moved out, and returned to our original site. The following day we actually were given an objective with the 30th Infantry Division. We advanced toward St. Jean-du-Daye, turned southwest along a road leading to Hauts Vents, our proposed goal.

We drove cautiously down a paved road marked on both sides by the skeletons of war: disabled and burning Sherman tanks, a burned "Weasel," German armored cars, several dead German soldiers with one officer, and one dead American, apparently an infantryman.

There was some sniper fire and scattered artillery. We remained roadbound, however, until passing the crest of a hill only two miles from the objective, when accurate enemy tank fire advised us to deploy. Enemy resistance stiffened markedly through the day. Late in the afternoon, as miles of our column halted along the road with a platoon of tank destroyers unwisely exposed on the crest of a hill, armor-piercing shells cut through the air at a rate which could be accounted for only by assuming that there were several enemy tanks firing at the same time. One of the tank destroyers and some of our other thin-skinned vehicles were set afire, and, for an interminable hour, hot steel was flying thick and fast in both directions. This determined resistance and part of a series of counterattacks had a meaning we did not know 'til later, for this was an attempt to split the Normandy Beachhead, and drive us back through Isigny into the sea. Eventually, we had the satisfaction of knowing that we had met the best of Hitler's troops in our early hours, and had given them a thorough trouncing.

There were a considerable number of casualties, especially among the doughboys and aid men, mostly from small arms fire and mortars. The advance continued and the first platoon of "D" company knocked out a Mark IV tank. By dusk, we were still 500 yards from our objective, and the infantry arranged their outposts for the night. Such attacks were destined to become more speedily and expertly executed. As we acquired experience, we became less cautious, more daring and ruthless. This was the first and nearly the last time we failed to reach an objective on time.

During the long twilight hours, the body of Lieutenant Petry of "B" company was brought to the aid station. He had been standing exposed in the turret of his tank when a sniper's machine pistol spurted a row of red beads around his heart.

The night of 11 July cannot be forgotten by Captain George Stallings (now Lt. Colonel), commanding "D" company. This was the first of a long series of examples of his leadership, devotion to duty, courage and cool-headedness. Rightfully, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for

his bold action.

The night was dark as his tank returned alone towards the front lines, following an officers' meeting. Without warning, a mass of fire belched down the hatch and all its occupants scrambled out, looking like human torches. The acrid fumes of asphalt filled the air, and they-realized that they had been attacked by flame throwers. Sergeant Lewis and Tec/4 MacHumphrey perished from their burns. Tec/5 MacLain and Corporal Miracle escaped and crawled back, wounded, to our lines.

Captain Stallings threshed the flames from his burning clothes and body, ending up head downwards in a deep wet ditch. Gutteral voices of the German tank-hunting patrol warned him to simulate death. Not daring to move, scarcely breathing, and with the pain of second degree burns on his forehead and arms, he lay motionless. The intruders gathered round, talking and examining their prize. Once they approached Captain Stallings, decided he must be dead, and after an hour, their voices dissolved in the chill night air. The Captain alternately crawled, walked, and ran back to the vicinity of our task force command post. He arrived at dawn, covered with black asphalt spots in his hair, face and uniform. He refused to be evacuated even though his eyes burned like fire. He remained on duty and retained his suggestion of cool dignity, which was to hold the respect and admiration of all who fought with him during the bitter months which followed.

Finally, the objective, a hill at Hauts Vents, was taken. Colonel Dorrance S. Roysdon personally led the attack with the infantry, carrying a tommy-gun, and shouting orders at the top of his lungs.

The following three days consisted of a holding action, during which mortar fire kept everyone confined to their foxholes and under their tanks.

Our brief experience had brought out the "bugs" in our organization. We changed units somewhat, and became Task Force #1, commanded by Colonel Roysdon. This was subdivided so that Task Force 2A was commanded by Lt. Colonel Lovelady and consisted of Second Battalion Hq and Hq Company, 33rd Armored Regiment, "D" company of the same unit, "D" company of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, a platoon from the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion, and a platoon of tank destroyers from the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion.

In the meantime, "E" company had been attached to the 119th Infantry Regiment in the 30th Division, and the 743rd Tank Battalion. They launched a stiff attack south of Haute Vents, knocking out four Mark IV tanks, and two anti-tank guns.

We had been fighting for eight days, and withdrew for rest and repair of

vehicles into the dark shadows of Bois-du-hommet. We received sporadic artillery fire which did some damage to "E" company, but we did catch up on our sleep, rearrange our vehicles, eat regularly, and enjoyed relative safety.

Task Force Lovelady had been baptized in fire and blood. Its sword was as the finest crucible steel, for it had been tempered in the flame of battle. We were warriors. We were beginning to hate the Germans. We knew that ours was a winning team. Greater tests would come, and we were confident that we would pass them all with flying colors.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF NORTHERN FRANCE AND BELGIUM

During which the staid, Victorian motto, "Always Dependable," is shed, and the Third Armored Division performs so admirably that the world calls her "Spearhead."

Rumors filled the air and vehicles filled the roads. The variety of markings on bumpers indicated several divisions must be in the area. Signs pointing to command posts read "Nostril," "Jitter," and all sorts of nonsensical words. This was the first we had seen the "Big Red One" of the First Infantry Division. We were aware that something was on the verge of happening, but we didn't know exactly what. One thing was certain. Large numbers of troops were concentrating in our wooded area north of Marigny.

Daily rains hindered visibility from the sky, made life completely miserable on the ground, and kept us waiting in suspense.

On one of these drizzly days, Colonel Boudinot, who had recently acquired Combat Command "B," held a meeting of officers in a small clearing near his command post. He had a faculty for appearing dapper in whatever uniform he chose to wear, and this one looked like a fisherman's rain suit. He carried a stick '(later replaced by a riding crop), which he used as a pointer on the maps tacked on hooded standards. Crisply, he outlined the plan while the officers made cursory notes in their pads.

"Gentlemen, even though it's raining we have a job to do. We're going to make a break out of this damned beachhead and it's got to be successful even if it means the annihilation of C.C.B." Such words didn't brighten the dreary day particularly, but it was an impressive introduction to the seriousness of our task.

"The first day there's two hours of clear weather between 1000 and 1400 hours will be D-Day. The greatest bombing in support of ground troops in the history of war will take place at that time. There's got to be a ceiling of 10,000 feet. Nearly thirty-five hundred planes, fighters, A-20's, B-24's, and B-17 Flying Fortresses will pulverize the land on either side of the road between here and Marigny." Colonel Boudinot indicated on the map exactly where that would be.

He spent several minutes telling us what units would be on our left part of the way; that our right flank would not be covered; that speed was essential; that we must by-pass all opposition that couldn't stop tanks; that we must get on our objectives quickly and hold on for dear life once we got there; that the entire First United States Army would be taking part in this push.

He then showed us where the 4th Armored Division would come down from the Cotentin Peninsula to meet us somewhere in the vicinity of Coutances. Thus a large pocket would be formed, theoretically, enveloping an entire corps of the Wehrmacht.

Reconnaissance Company of the 33rd Armored Regiment, led by daring, battle-hardened 1st Lieutenant James Cleveland, would jump off first, followed closely by Task Force Roysdon and Task Force Lovelady. A battalion from the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment would ride on our tanks and would not dismount unless very marked opposition warranted it. Behind us, and available on call, would be the 16th Combat Team of the 1st Infantry Division.

A flight of four P-47's were promised us, who would fly over the column prepared to bomb and strafe any targets which presented themselves.

We felt quite confident about the whole affair because of the vast amount of power which would be with us.

Colonel Boudinot traced our routes of march, told us our objectives. That we would proceed to Marigny (to be seized and secured previously by elements of the 9th Infantry Division), cut sharply west on the main road to Coutances, thence to Hill 177 which would be Objective Number 1, thence to Camprond, and two more objectives on the way to Coutances.

"Now I want to put this dope out to your men right away. I warn you, and I want you to warn them that this is 'Top Secret.' There can't be any slips anywhere along the line. Get your maps marked, and study them until every man knows exactly what's going on. This is 'Operation Cobra' and will be referred to by that code name from now on."

He ended the briefing as abruptly as he had begun. "Are there any questions?"

There were more questions in hearts than in minds. A few were asked audibly, many asked silently. All would be answered with resounding finality on the first clear day.

The twenty-fifth of July, 1944, was the fateful day. No general announcement was needed to tell us that. Hordes of bombers flew over like a locust plague. We watched in awe their sticks of bombs drop from gaping bellies, and felt the earth and ourselves tremble as by an earthquake. It seemed an endless process as flight after flight flew by for nearly two hours. Surely nothing would be living through the swath cut by these eight thousand tons of explosives!

Black puffs of bursting ack-ack contrasted sharply against the silvered fortresses, and several planes crumpled like paper, fluttering lifelessly towards the ground. Relentlessly, the bombers continued, never once losing their near-perfect formations of approximately thirty-five ships in each flight.

Casualties started coming in prematurely. We soon learned that some of the bombs had at first fallen short, killing and wounding many of our own troops. Ernie Pyle wrote vividly of this, since he was one who wished he were another eight hundred yards further back. That was the day, too, that Lieut. General John McNair, who came to observe the bombing, was killed.

The infantry was supposed to move out immediately. Their mission was to cut the St. Lo-Periers highway, then continue on to seize Marigny. Possibly due to the faulty bombing, this wasn't entirely accomplished. At any rate, a platoon of "D" company, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, was the first to enter the town on the following day. "D" company from our battalion was with them, and together they cleared the village just enough to get through it.

Task Force Roysdon, spearheaded by the daring recklessness of Reconnaissance company drove straight down the road into Marigny. It was suspected that the ancient church spire served as an observation post for enemy artillery, a suspicion which started practically a Standard Operating Procedure for church steeples. Several rounds from a "D" company 75 millimeter cannon soon discouraged whatever nuisance-makers were there.

Colonel Roysdon was talking on the radio constantly, encouraging, advising, scolding, and congratulating alternately, as the situation demanded. His theme was speed, and if the drive slowed down he wanted to know why. If he couldn't get a satisfactory answer via radio, he unhesitatingly went forward with the leading elements and stayed there until the problem was solved.

His favorite "pep" talk went something like this - and it worked:

"Now the longer you stop, the more casualties you're going to have. Keep moving and you won't give 'em a chance to get you zeroed in. We have a job to do, and we're going to do it, whatever the cost. We must throw caution to the winds and be completely reckless. When you have casualties and lose vehicles, keep right on going. If a company commander becomes a casualty, the second in command takes over immediately. As soon as you stop, in addition to wasting time, you're going to have more people killed and hurt. So whatever happens, absorb your losses and keep moving!"

Thus it went all day. Reconnaissance company and the "D" companies

behind them gained momentum, knocking out German vehicles and equipment hardly without stopping. The doughboys and aid men clung onto the tanks and wouldn't get off unless the column was halted by intense fire. Every now and then a medical aid man would jump off to take care of wounded and wait with them until a half-track ambulance arrived to carry them back to the aid station. Then he would hop back on any vehicle going forward and return, eventually, to his platoon.

They didn't even take time to send prisoners back under guard. All through the day, German soldiers were walking towards the rear, hands behind heads, many still shaken by the bombing, all frightened by the speed and power of our attack. By day's end there were some two hundred taken by Task Forces Roysdon and Lovelady.

Dusk blended into darkness. We dug foxholes and slept fitfully, if at all, until the first rays of dawn called us to another long day of action.

The tempo of march increased. Task Force Lovelady bypassed Marigny on the right, soon joining Task Force Roysdon along the paved road between Coutances and St. Lo.

Furiously, Reconnaissance company led us through fire and Hell in general, as the trapped Nazis desperately tried to escape. Thunderbolts tattooed the road and suspected strong points ahead of us, speeding our progress considerably.

We were fast getting into the spirit of a Blitzkrieg, losing the natural inertia caused by the instinct of self-preservation. We came to think more in terms of destroying the foe, and every hour we learned to be more aggressive and ruthless.

Turning north near LaChapelle, we approached Hill 177, our first objective. Enemy tanks fired on us until silenced forever by merciless strafing, which was so close that some of our own engineers and infantrymen were wounded.

In addition to destroying several tanks, self-propelled and anti-tank guns, many other vehicles were captured intact by both "D" and "E" companies. Among these was a motorcycle with side-car, appropriated by Captain Stallings, and several staff cars. In one of these a few cases of really good cognac were discovered.

Captain Jordan, commanding "E" company, spied a red flag flying from a hilltop benchmark. This, he thought, was being used as a base-point for the direction of enemy artillery. Of course it was a practically impossible target, but he insisted on firing at it with the 75 millimeter gun on his tank. This

probably relieved an itchy trigger finger, otherwise serving only to promote the chagrin of Lt. Colonel Lovelady, who finally asked a squad of engineers to eliminate it with a crosscut saw.

Soon after arriving on Hill 177, "E" company set up a platoon of tanks for indirect fire. No sooner had this been accomplished than two rounds of enemy red smoke, followed by distressingly accurate artillery fire, discouraged this, and they were not used.

Geologically, our first objective was a trifle difficult. It was rocky soil of gravel and clay, which made foxhole digging an arduous task.

We felt completely nude atop this bald summit which commanded the fields of Normandy for miles around. It seemed that the eyes of the Wehrmacht were peering at us from all directions.

Twilight found us on the edges of our hastily dug trenches counting our losses. Lieutenant Lipman and a reconnaissance officer from the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment had been wounded, twenty-five enlisted men had been wounded, and four killed. There are no bargains in war. The price is always high. But we had advanced several miles instead of a few hedgerows, and there were between fifteen and twenty enemy dead for each American.

However cold, damp, and animated by red ants our foxholes were, eyelids were too heavy to recognize such benign stimuli, and we slept until awakened by the rising sun.

There was time for coffee, K-rations, a brief morning toilet, and such habits of long standing that make one feel capable of looking another day in the face.

Stifling clouds of dust traced our column on dirt roads. We were traveling in a southwesterly direction towards Coutances. Mid-afternoon found us several miles along our course, and we were meeting practically no resistance. Instinct warned us that this would not last, and we felt that Pandora's box would soon be opened.

The drone of airplane motors lifted our eyes skyward to witness a group of black dots, like migrating geese, approaching. As they came closer, someone called, "My God! Look at the P-51's!" Reason enough for exclamation, for there were twenty of them and we had seldom seen more than one or two P-51 Mustangs at a time. Within seconds, black crosses under their wings revealed our delusion. Reflexly, muscles tensed, hearts quickened, necks shortened, eyes searched for prospective shelter along the sides of the sunken road. The terse message, "Prepare to disperse vehicles

on order," came over our radio sets. By then the Focke-WoIfe 190's were only dimly visible behind us, and we continued unmolested. Their reconnaissance must have revealed valuable targets, for the task force in reserve was severely bombed and strafed during the evening.

Suddenly, we encountered intense mortar fire which was being used to support an enemy infantry attack. Our own infantry quickly dismounted from the tanks and a counterattack was promptly launched.

Resistance subsided as shadows lengthened and once again we counted our losses. There were twenty-three wounded and one killed, all within a few minutes. This little crossroads was nicknamed "Purple Heart Corner" by "E" company of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, whose losses were the greatest.

The gayest news of the afternoon was Lieutenant Cleveland's message that he had established contact with the 4th Armored Division. He had indeed; and in the likeness of Major General Brooks, commander of the division!

In this war it has been impossible to evade the so-called "brass." They have joined the fighting troops on many occasions, even when the going was roughest. A man must respect these leaders who will share the hardships with those at the front.

Intelligence information suggested the probability of an enemy counterattack being launched from the southeast. Quickly, the mission was changed to avert this threat. Captains Jordan and Stallings convinced Colonel Lovelady that we should strike off on a compass course, rather than follow the circuitous route by country roads. This would have been good, except the terrain had been changed by heavy bombing since our maps were printed. We inched along through muddy, shell-torn fields at less than a snail's pace, sunk into bomb craters and even forded a stream. Those of us on the end of the column did not reach bivouac until six o'clock the next morning. Then to our great dismay, we found it was only a ten-minute drive from our starting point, on relatively good, hard-surfaced roads.

There had been little enough sleep for three nights and we were glad that at least today there were no new objectives. We moved to a bivouac area south of La Chapelle, replenished our supplies of food, gasoline, oil and ammunition, and performed what vehicular maintenance was necessary.

Many of us took turns riding Captain Stalling's motorcycle, while others drank freely of captured cognac and champagne, and some did both. By the gaiety, laughter, and general atmosphere of well-being, one would think it were carnival time instead of a long grim fight to death.

From Colonel Boudinot to our Corps' commander, C.C.B , composed of Task Forces Roysdon and Lovelady, were congratulated for an important job well done. Reconnaissance company will forever be famous for their relentless drive which spearheaded us all the way, and for their indefatigable, fearless company commander, Lieutenant Cleveland, who led them every inch. Colonel Roysdon manifested his extreme pride and appreciation by recommending him for the Distinguished Service Cross. "No one will ever deserve one more than that man," he remarked. Enlisted men and officers alike must agree with that statement. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Cleveland's life was to serve his country only a few more days, for he was killed early in August by artillery, as violently as he had lived.

Those of us who believed we would rest awhile were gravely mistaken. It was plain that the Germans were on the run, and we must keep them running. We were reminded that no matter how tired we were, the enemy was more tired. This added little to our strength. It failed to relieve our bloodshot eyes, and our muscles aching from lying in fox holes. But orders are orders and we moved the following morning.

This time we drove south along a blacktop highway towards an objective overlooking Villedieu les Poeles.

Crossing the Siene River was the most exciting part of the day, for the engineer's bridge was under heavy artillery fire. Some vehicles were hit by flying shell fragments but none irreparably, and there were no casualties.

On the next day, Task Force Lovelady relieved Task Force Roysdon, and started out for a new objective at five o'clock in the afternoon. The enemy had blown the bridge northeast of Villedieu les Poeles, and covered the sector with incapacitating artillery fire. It was dark. We withdrew for the night, "E" company having lost one Sherman tank and two men. We were tired, but progress had been so good lately that our spirits were light.

Now we were veterans of the Blitzkrieg, and we were destined to teach the Germans something about this not-so-gentle art. The taste of victory was sweet on our lips and we were just a little cocky. The next few days would temper our exuberance and we would know that the enemy did not intend to run forever in the opposite direction.

During most of the first day of August, there were no indications that we were about to pursue another objective. Men lounged about easily, doing whatever odds and ends they wished. Foxholes were improved and lined with straw. A prominent tree which seemed to be a base point for directing enemy artillery was felled. Sponge baths were taken; men shaved and tidied their clothes. Most of us took time to prepare 10-in-l rations, which reached

the proportions of a banquet after so many days of K-rations.

Late in the afternoon we received orders to move out with all speed. We were to bypass Villedieu les Poeles on the west, then cut southeast to seize and secure La Chapelle Cecelin. Later, the destination was advanced to St. Pois.

The attack progressed very well, and opposition was light. The moon was so full in a cloudless summer's sky, that we continued fighting during the hours meant for sleeping. This was a surprise to the Germans, who never could figure out the peculiar, impulsive military tactics of American tankers.

More than twenty enemy supply trucks were knocked out on the way. An unwary enemy motorcyclist rode blithely down the highway. Rather than shoot him noisily, he was knocked in the head by the butt of a rifle. The column moved on.

At La Chapelle Cecelin the church spire and grey stone walls of the village shops looked cold and lifeless in the pale moonlight. The tail of our column halted here and townsfolk gathered round our vehicles.

French patriots gesticulatingly informed Captain Blinkoff, one of our battalion surgeons and versatile linguist, that a German General officer lay sleeping in a nearby house. The doctor relayed this message through security channels to Major Travis Brown, who straightway organized a patrol to investigate. However, thirty minutes had elapsed, and we entered a very attractive white bungalow, to find a dishevelled bed, still warm, but no prized prisoner.

Task Force Lovelady closed bivouac on what is now the famous Hill 264, at midnight. Task Force Roysdon followed, and it was not until four o'clock in the morning that their last elements coiled in the tiny fields on the northern and western slopes of the hill.

The vehicles of both task forces were parked in the fields on the right side of the narrow gravel road. Due to high hedgerows, the available space was limited, and we were unable to disperse adequately. Most of us were well-nigh exhausted physically, making our thoughts blurred by the one overwhelming desire to close our eyes.

The two hours before dawn were dark indeed, for the moon had completely waned. Before the last vehicle crept off the road, others were plainly heard on our left. For the first time, some of us heard the metallic "clankety-clank-clank" of German tank tracks, maneuvering into position. Those of us listening to our radio sets heard gutteral orders being issued just as plainly as though they were coming from the mouths of our own commanders. Our

only hope was that somebody besides the Germans had a plan. Fatigue made the whole thing seem far away, intangible, realistically present, yet untouchable, like a dream. Individually, it seemed not to concern us, yet each of us subconsciously hoped that the man next to him was alert and would know exactly what to do. If we were sitting, our heads dropped forward on our chests. If we were already lying down under tanks and half-tracks, we were oblivious to all extraneous noises. "Sleep, sleep, sleep! Won't they please hold off their attack until we can catch a nap?"

Suddenly a red ball of fire split the thick, pre-dawn air like a bolt of lightning. Fast and deadly accurate at such close range, it pierced an "E" company tank, which started burning immediately.

Now we prayed for darkness but it was too late. As the scorching flames devoured the tank they also devoured the darkness. Looking up from the ground or shallow foxholes, where most of us were, every vehicle in the two task forces was clearly silhouetted by the leaping fire.

The darkness seemed the more impenetrable towards the source of the firing, accentuated by the uncontrolled flames on our side of the road. We could see no enemy vehicles, yet here was proof supreme that they were there.

The startling suddenness of the onslaught brought us as quickly to our senses as though we had had eight hours' sleep. With fear and trembling, inhibited only by the necessity for instant action, we prepared a defense that would hold 'til dawn when we might. better seek out the enemy and destroy him.

Positions of enemy tanks were guessed at, and an "E" company Sherman knocked out a Mark V Panther before the first dim rays of dawn brought hope to our forlorn dilemma.

By the light of the first burning tank, two more were knocked out, followed by a T-2 Maintenance tank and two half-tracks.

Enemy infantry began their advance. The fluttering rapidity of their automatic small-arms slashed through the hedges, in a continous withering stream. Some of us, lying next to the hedge nearest the road, separated the twigs and were horrified to see German grenadiers creeping stealthily towards us.

It must be admitted that only their failure to advance boldly, prevented our annihilation. Fortunately, they were not exceptionally aggressive and apparently were afraid to cross the road.

The sky finally showed signs of giving birth to another day. The ferocity of the battle increased as we became oriented and started returning the enemy fire more fully.

Soon we had reduced the threat of being overrun, but after the remaining enemy infantry withdrew, well observed artillery fire was placed from time to time on our already uncomfortable position, the forward slope of the hill.

Major Gilkie, executive officer to Colonel Roysdon, was killed instantly when a shell hit his command half-track. Lieutenant Guthrie, and the colonel's driver, Peterson, were killed at the same time. Many men and officers from all companies were wounded, and to this day, Hill 264 is known only as "Purple Heart Hill" by most of us.

The two battalion aid stations were more than busy, and at times enlisted the aid of line soldiers to help carry litters. Staff Sergeant Thomas E. Brown wandered around the shell torn fields searching for wounded. To those of us who were able to enjoy the luxury of foxholes, he seemed entirely fearless. Later, Colonel Roysdon recommended him for the Distinguished Service Cross, but like so many well earned awards, it was disapproved somewhere along the channels of higher headquarters. Though no material reward was forthcoming, Sergeant Brown still lives, although he was seriously wounded in September, and he shall forever retain the profound gratitude of the multitude whom he served.

Vernacularly speaking, it was "tight biting" all through the day, and we would have given anything to have gotten off the forward slope of that hill. However, we held our ground tenaciously and, like so many times before and since, destroyed the enemy on terrain of his own choosing.

In addition to the Mark V mentioned previously, two more were knocked out during the day, along with six Mark IV's, one self-propelled gun, numerous trucks and command vehicles. Eventually, too, our artillery neutralized several batteries of the heavy weapons that had been firing on us since early morning.

The enemy had plenty of artillery and they continued to harass us mightily throughout the night and the following day. Our objective was firmly secured and we moved out to bivouac in a more quiet place for a few hours' rest. The move was made unpleasant because the Germans had the road well zeroed in, and we received sustained fire during the entire process.

Nerves were frayed and bodies tired. Our task force was somewhat depleted by the large number of casualties during the past three days. We were no longer the cocky, buoyant soldiers of a week ago. But we were unashamed, and proud that we had held out and turned what might have been a

disastrous defeat into a successful venture.

Until the seventh day of August our so-called rest was interrupted by daily or twice daily alerts, orders, promises of three-day rests, and recession of everything.

Then we heard of the attempt being made by the Wehrmacht to crash through from Mortain to Avranches, thus cutting off our forces on the Brittany Peninsula.

We were attached to the 30th Infantry Division with the mission of preventing this enemy breakthrough, while most of the rest of the First Army continued its southward drive.

That day saw our dusty column plying down the roads to Juvigny Tertra to stop the German flank from widening, and to cut through them from. south to north.

Bivouacking west of Juvigny because of the terrific shelling that Norman village was suffering, we moved into position just east of the town early the next morning.

The first platoon of "D" company, and the mortar platoon of Headquarters company represented what was then Task Force Lovelady in the actual fighting. They were attached to Lt. Colonel Cockefaire's group in the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment to assist in cutting the important artery leading from Le Mesnil Tove to Grand Dore. A successful night attack of about one thousand yards ensued.

Persistent artillery and rocket barrages exacted heavy tolls from our troops, who were canalized in a wooded valley, laced only with narrow, dusty lanes. Anything that moved enough to stir up the dust brought an immediate rain of heavy fire in the area.

Colonel Cornog, commanding the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, held an officers' meeting at his command post, an ancient stone farm house. As the officers' peeps drove nearby, they must have been observed, because even before they were all assembled, excruciatingly accurate artillery fire crept up, ladder-fashion, upon the doomed building. As the dust cleared, frantic radio pleas for medics indicated a disaster. Both Colonel Cornog and Lt. Colonel Cockefaire were killed; the "F" company commander, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, was killed; and several other key men were wounded.

At this point, Lt. Colonel Lovelady was called upon to walk into the valley of death and assume emergency command of the troops. This he did

unhesitatingly, though within himself he must have gone with reserved misgivings. Those of us who knew him well always felt better when he held the reins. To us he was the master of every situation, and his consistently cool, good judgment gave us confidence.

Until the twelfth day of August we played an exciting, tragic game of give and take. The final score was in our favor but individually it was a sad, expensive victory. Lieutenant Cleveland was killed by a shell fragment through his temple on the very day of his promotion to the rank of Captain. Captain John Pepin, surgeon for the First Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment, died of a wound through his heart. Lieutenant Jueling was killed and Lieutenant Wolpe from our mortar platoon was wounded. An assistant tank driver in "D" company was killed, and there were others. Those of us who lived, did so from minute to minute, fearful during the day that we would not again see the stars at night, and equally fearful at night that we would not enjoy the rising sun.

On our last night near Juvigny when the German force finally gave up the ghost and quit, we were bid a rumbling farewell by a few obstreperous Junkers 88's. At one o'clock in the morning they plastered our location with five hundred and one thousand kilogram bombs, several of which landed bitterly close. We were well dug in, however, and only direct hits could have killed us. S/Sgt. Stansell crawled out of his foxhole the next morning, shook the dirt from his clothes like a dog getting out of water, and calmly observed a deep crater whose nearest edge was not more than six feet from his carefully excavated retreat.

During the following night, the tanks of Task Force Lovelady unwound themselves and sprawled out on macadam roads in quest of more Germans who wished to die for their Fuhrer.

We had not long to wait, for there came to pass one of the great strategic opportunities of the war, based on an equally great military blunder by the German High Command. It was of sufficient importance to bring forth one of the rare Orders of the Day from General Eisenhower. We speak, of course, of the Falaise-Argentan Gap.

After an unexpected administrative march of more than sixty miles on the 12th and 13th of August, we began to encounter moderate resistance. We captured and blew up a number of enemy ammunition trucks. Prisoners began to march down the road in droves.

Apparently realizing they were fighting a lost cause, they would fire a few rounds or empty their clips, they give up as the great cordon of steel closed in upon them.

Anti-tank guns and tanks were strategically placed. The Germans were playing their well practiced rear guard action while their main body and elite units tried to escape through the fast closing trap.

Every movement the enemy made along the few roads open to them brought Allied airplanes to the scene until they were practically paralyzed during the daytime. Frantically, like cornered rats, they tried to escape anyway. On one such day the air corps destroyed 1500 vehicles.

Even before the vast encirclement was completed, American armor pulled taut its mighty ring and the pocket became smaller with each precious hour. Overwhelming air superiority, always in close communication with us on the ground, sped the march of devastation. Besides serving as cunning bird dogs to the fighter bombers, for whom we flushed many an enemy tank and convoy, we destroyed a lot of enemy material by ground force action alone. The German death toll mounted and the number of prisoners exceeded our expectations.

Thus far we have not mentioned the guardian angels that hovered over us from dawn to dusk throughout the war. These tiny, paper thin "Cub" artillery planes with their target observers, saved the day for us over and over again. The 391st Armored Field Artillery Battalion worked in direct support of Task Force Lovelady nearly all the way and for them we have, perhaps, the warmest memories of any unit that has ever been attached to us.

It seemed that every time the Cub came into sight, enemy artillery would either diminish or cease; and when they did let go a few rounds it wasn't many minutes before we would hear the friendly music of the 391st's 105 millimeter cannon singing a tune which would make the Germans dance.

At dusk, when these Cubs would return to their roosts, we would often be aware of a strange sensation of aloneness, as though a good friend had said good-night. Frequently, German artillery would dare to again, making the nights doubly long. At dawn, we were more than once awakened by the happy humming of these observation planes already looking for targets before we had considered beginning another day.

Throughout this hectic offensive, Task Force Roysdon and Lovelady worked so close together that it was like a single task force with double fire power. Most of. the time the tactical talents of these two commanders were combined. They were often seen together near the front and were constantly in radio communication with each other. Either they or their executive officers were invariably with the leading tank, companies. Both enjoyed executive officers who were never satisfied with running the show by radio

or from a location behind the fighting elements.

Since Major Gilkie was killed, Major John J. Crosby took his place with Colonel Roysdon, while Captain George Stallings left "D" company to become executive officer with Colonel Lovelady.

Years of garrison life had not altered anybody's opinion of Major Crosby. He came to the 33rd Armored Regiment a 2nd Lieutenant. Tall, lean, handsome, he had all the mental and physical characteristics of a fine officer. His conscientious efforts, natural military ability, fairness and friendliness, made him a favorite among soldiers of all ranks. He rose quickly to the rank of Major and had long been in Colonel Lovelady's 2nd Battalion.

No one ever doubted that he would be as good in combat as he had been in garrison. His fine judgment and keen senses would pay dividends anywhere. Through his eyes, a map became a living picture. No draw or hillock hid from him. The density of woods, the width of streams and height of their banks; the logical terrain features for enemy strong points, were easily read by him from maps. No minute detail eluded his sharp scrutiny. It seemed almost super-human the way he would be acquainted with the land he had never seen.

Major Crosby was young, agile, strong and alert. He was ready and anxious to perform his duties at any time of the day or night, good naturedly and with the utmost dispatch. During combat it was seldom possible not to find him at the scene of the fiercest action.

His aggressiveness and apparent complete lack of fear went far towards speeding the program of our task forces. Unfortunately, it was this same well-trained spirit of gallantry, intrepidity and devotion to duty which brought about his early death on the seventeenth day of August. No officer has ever been mourned or missed more by the troops he served than Major Crosby.

The fighting was bitter that day as we, the leading American forces, battled vigorously to finish those last few miles remaining between us and the British who were coming down from the north.

Early in the morning we captured a huge ammunition dump spread out in dense woods for untold acres. Driving relentlessly towards Fromental, we knocked out five Mark III's, one self-propelled and one anti-tank gun, killed a large number of enemy infantry and captured an additional sixty.

"E" company was losing tanks by direct fire. Lieutenant Pat Ryan, who had just returned from the hospital, commanded the company since Captain

Jordan was wounded a few days previously. With Major Crosby, they stood beside a tank, directing fire on the enemy. A returning enemy shell threw fragments at both of them, killing Major Crosby instantly, and critically wounding Lieutenant Ryan.

However bright the "Big Picture," the "Little Picture" was grim that day. "D" company lost two tanks and "E" company lost three; many fought for the last time, and several more were wounded.

Mr. Hice, our maintenance office, thinking the road into Fromental was clear, drove in his peep past a crossing and was wounded, along with his maintenance sergeant. He had lost a leg, but thanks to plasma at the aid station and a strong constitution, he was evacuated in good spirits. After several weeks we were saddened by the news that he died ten days later, apparently from a clot of blood which lodged in his lung.

The summer days were still long but it was pitch dark that night when we bivouacked half a mile north of Fromental, with a German tank still wandering around somewhere in the vicinity.

Sleep was restless and we started fighting early the next morning. Little more than an hour passed before the two medium companies had knocked out six Mark IV's, two self-propelled guns, and sent a goodly number of the Wehrmacht to their graves.

This was a day for history. At 1045 hours on the 18th day of August, 1944, Sergeant Ekdahl in the point tank of "D" company, crawled out of his turret, grinned broadly through the grime of many days, and shook hands with a British tanker from a reconnaissance force at the tiny village of La Fresny de Sauvage. Thus, the Falaise-Argentan Gap was officially closed by Task Force Lovelady.

We had another decisive victory under our belts, but, somehow, it didn't taste so sweet, with the many gone who should have been there to celebrate it with us.

With remarkable resilience that youth alone enjoys, the men and tanks of Task Force Lovelady licked their wounds hurriedly and became a highly efficient striking team in the course of two and a half days. Tanks were rejuvenated by new tracks, engines were tuned and repaired, replacement tanks were brought up, with crews to man them. Men shaved, bathed, washed their clothes, wrote letters. Morale was high among the living. We laughed and joked about the experiences which a few short days ago brought tears to our eyes and made us claw the dirt with our fingernails. The more horrible the instance, the closer the call, the funnier it seemed now. We knew without speaking of it among ourselves that the dead would want

it that way.

Due to the fluidness of the entire front, the rapidity of advance, the utter lack of knowledge of where the enemy was, we never knew beforehand what marches were going to turn out to be administrative, and what ones would be met by opposition.

Thus we started out on the twenty-second day of August, and for more than two hundred miles in four days we met practically no resistance.

Going first south and then east, we left the roses of Normandy, and sped across the fertile plains of the Paris Basin. Some were reminded of their own homes in the Middle West, with its gently undulating land, rich fields of yellowing grain, little herds of fine cattle and flocks of sheep, patches of beech and evergreen, bright warm sunshine in a clear blue August sky.

The further we raced, the more exuberant the French folk became. Through the villages and at every crossroad our paths were literally paved with flowers. Fresh fruits and wines were proffered so profusely that a general order had to be enforced, that we must refuse all drinks. Eggs were given by the dozen, along with the famous French-style double-cheeked kisses. Our vehicles could not halt without being pounced upon by well meaning friends, young and old, who, after four long years greeted their first liberators with tears, hugs, and warm kisses.

On the day Paris was freed, we reached the banks of the Seine River some twelve miles south of the capitol. This was beautiful suburban country with modern, prosperous towns, untouched by war. The people were gay and carefree, and seemed not to have suffered from the years of Nazi oppression. Their clothes looked new, neatly pressed and immaculately clean. Many spoke English here in Corbeil and would step up to us when we would stop for a minute, exchange a few pleasantries and pass on to the next vehicle.

We thought the German army might make a definite stand at the Seine, but the crossing at Tilly was entirely uneventful and we leaugered the night of the 25th of August on the Eastern bank.

The following day we knocked out four Mark IV tanks and four trucks and were driving hard over historic land, for we were approaching the Marne River, where American blood had spilled so abundantly during the First World War.

By starting our daily drives a little earlier, stopping a little later, and going a little faster, we were apparently straining the enemy's ability to coordinate his units and maintain his own lines of commmication. At any rate, even

their usually brilliant rear guard action was failing, for on the 27th day of August we captured, intact, two self-propelled guns, two armored cars, including their crews, knocked out several personnel carrying trucks and killed and captured many infantrymen. More important, we reached the Marne River at 1500 hours, crossing it on an unblown bridge which required only a few minutes to reinforce sufficiently to allow our column to thunder over it.

Here was demonstrated the practical willingness of the free French. Civilians brought the necessary lumber, nails and hammers, and set about adding planks to the bridge while we swiftly rolled across it. Without thought of danger, womenfolk held the nails, doling them out to the workmen as needed. Even when an Me-109 circled round and strafed haphazardly, they scarcely looked up.

Exhilerated by the lack of effective resistance at the river, we continued full speed, reaching the outskirts of the sizeable city of Meaux at 1700 hours.

Quickly planning an attack and rendering the essential orders, Colonel Lovelady and Captain Stallings drove into the city with the leading tank companies, seizing it immediately and securing it completely by 2000 hours.

The townspeople were as surprised as the enemy must have been. Their enthusiasm, laughter, tears and gracious hospitality knew no bounds. Local policemen helped to control the wildly happy throng. There were many public and private celebrations that evening, and early in the morning a band was assembled which marched through the streets playing the Marseillaise and other patriotic songs long stifled by the Nazi regime. The red, white and blue bars of the Free French flag were hastily printed on paper and glued to miniature flag poles. Nearly everyone grasped one of these tiny symbols of freedom, waving them gayly as they walked through the narrow streets. We were escorted out of the city early in the morning even more boisterously than we had been greeted.

Living more on good luck, nervous tension, universally high morale, the brilliant, indefatigable efforts of our supply team headed by Captain Dave Aldinger, and the jubilant gratefulness of the liberated French, than upon good food and good rest, we scurried along the fine paved highways toward Soissons.

One of our greatest bugbears was procuring maps. Before the proper ones could reach us, we were already half across another. Oftimes there would be none available, and we would jot down the names of the towns we should go through, trusting to luck and the full cooperation of the natives that we would reach our destination. There were no briefings, no detailed plans, no

objectives short of Berlin, as far as we were informed. It was just drive, drive, drive, day in and day out, hoping that supplies could catch up with us and that gasoline would come soon.

Hunting was fine indeed on the roads to Soissons, which we reached within twenty-four hours after crossing the Marne.

Behind us that day were sixty-nine miles of unbelievably brilliant fighting. We knocked out 3 Mark V Panthers, four Mark IV's, two self-propelled and two anti-tank guns, three scout cars, eight half-tracks, together with an uncounted number of trucks and smaller cars. The price we paid, in addition to two light tanks, were the lives of two infantrymen with eight others wounded, and three wounded tankers.

The seizure and securement of Soissons was no less historic than the crossing at the Marne, for here in the last war, the justly famous First Infantry Division was first committed to battle.

Civilian informants thought that the Germans would make some sort of a stand from the hills just beyond Soissons, for they were well dug in and had constructed a number of pill boxes. Apparently they did hold out there for some time, because when we were deep into Belgium we heard that there was still fighting near Soissons.

Through the night we were constantly harassed by high air-bursting artillery, some tank and anti-tank fire, and in the city itself there was much small arms opposition.

We had hopes of a couple of days' rest to permit supplies to reach us and to at least temporize on certain maintenance problems that were becoming serious. The following morning many of us washed long neglected laundry but we were destined to move out long before it dried.

As we tidied ourselves and rested, a lone Cub plane soared hawk-like above us. Suddenly out of the east came nearly twenty enemy fighter planes whose sole mission appeared to be the destruction of this lone observer. Swooping down upon it, almost in unison, they released a terrifying burst of fire. The Cub with its occupants disappeared in a puff of black smoke and fluttered listlessly to the ground.

Shortly before dark we were ordered to take the high ground beyond the city with the thought that we might bypass the permanent defenses, thus allowing us to continue our record smashing march.

For many days, we had had the dubious privilege of spearheading the entire First United States Army, and were frequently sixty miles ahead of the

nearest friendly units, with nobody on our flanks.

Those who remember that night on the 29th and 30th of August will recall "B" company tanks firing their 37 millimeter high explosive shells through windows at snipers, and Free French soldiers guarding the bridge, firing their ancient rifles at suspected enemy positions. They will recall the extreme darkness of the night, the long steep hill with woods on either side, every shrub a German tank, every shadow an enemy soldier.

We did not stop until 0430 hours in the morning, then only 'til dawn when we pursued our next objective, Laon.

Laon will remain a vivid memory to Colonel Lovelady and "D" company tankers, because two of their tanks were knocked out before they had time to realize that what they saw was not a friendly half-track. However, they recovered from this initial shock and soon had destroyed a dual purpose Eighty-eight, three armored cars, two half-tracks, five trucks and two command cars, in addition to killing many enemy infantrymen and capturing more than forty prisoners.

In "Mission Accomplished" our action was described in these words: "On and on, beyond the Aisne, past the ancient fortified city of Laon, the advancing VII Corps dashed - the Spearhead (3rd Armored) Division leading, closely followed by the 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions and screened on the south flank by the Corps mechanized cavalry. So quickly did these flying columns move that the German command did not know where to expect them next. Motor convoys were overtaken trying to escape to the east. Even railroad trains, loaded with troops and supplies and operating in what their crews believed to be the safety of rear areas, were surprised and destroyed by our armored spearheads. Everywhere in France the German army was in chaos, and there seemed no safe place to reorganize it short of the German border."

The last day of August saw the speed and force of our attack unslowed by the bitter, grueling days gone by. We were nearing the French-Belgian border, still refusing to falter at the desperate actions of the disorganized German army.

These were mad days. There were no two of them alike. Each was filled with new thrills, new adventures. These were Panther hunting days, and it was unusual if we didn't knock out two or more of these massive German tanks, along with smaller Mark IV's, armored cars, trucks, command cars, self-propelled guns and dual-purpose 88's. Almost daily we would capture forty or more prisoners, and now we were beginning to contact many horse-drawn vehicles of enemy cavalry.

On the second day of September at 1600 hours, Task Force Lovelady crossed the Belgian border to the frantic delight of the villagers who plied us with the best beer we had tasted since leaving the States, along with the usual gifts of fruits and flowers. A departure from French food, and one which followed us across Belgium, were little semi-sweet cakes made in the shape of waffles. Tobacco, too, was apparently more plentiful, because we were startled at being offered cigars and cigarettes instead of being asked for them.

Crossing the border and beginning the much publicized Battle of Mons occurred on the same day. A month ago we were on "Purple Heart Hill" far away in Normandy. We wondered if every great fight came on the second day of each month.

Nearly every element of the division took an active fighting part in this fracas. The supply trains had to fight their way to the elements they supported. Task Force Lovelady had a real field day by knocking out more than a hundred horse-drawn vehicles, capturing more than two hundred and fifty prisoners together with much equipment. Germans were trying to escape in all directions, behind us, around us, through us. For them it was a bitter massacre, for us a brilliant victory.

Among the prisoners were forty-five wounded whom we could not evacuate because large convoys of German troops had severed our arteries in the rear, preventing the forward movement of supplies and reinforcements and at the same time precluding any attempts to establish contact from front to rear. Thus it was that a youthful Nazi medical officer, his aid men, and captured medical supplies were aggregated with the wounded within the circle of light and warmth of a burning hay barn. Working through the night, emergency treatment was rendered, pain was deadened, German lives were saved with American plasma, and some were lost in spite of it. The mortally wounded were segregated from those who would live and, as these died, their bodies would be quietly removed into the shadows.

During the night our guards struck up a conversation with an ardent Nazi who spoke flawless English. He had lived in Kansas City until 1937, claiming he had come to Germany because he could not find work in the United States. There he had voluntarily coined the Wehrmacht, sharing their early victories and dreaming of his share of spoils after the contemplated defeat of the democracies. Wistfully, he spoke of his aunt in Kansas City, then hopefully asked if he would ever again be allowed to return as a citizen. We were repulsed by this traitorous nomad whose colors changed chameleon-fashion with his changing fortune. We hoped that he and others like him would never be allowed to insinuate themselves into a decent society. We hoped, too, that we could help make the peace more just by

being permitted to utilize the wisdom we were gaining by waging war.

There were just too many enemy units asking for destruction to permit us to drive our steel wedge deeper into Belgium the next day. By staying where we were and making a reconnaissance in force into the city of Jamappes, Task Force Lovelady accounted for more than one hundred enemy gun pieces, plus tanks, trucks and cars, and captured upwards of three hundred prisoners.

Again quoting "Mission Accomplished," which analyzed our predicament in the opening paragraphs of Chapter V, there appears the following account:

"While the 9th Division and the strongly reinforced 4th Cavalry Group swung east to probe crossings of the Meuse River, the attack of the 3rd Armored Division was temporarily halted near Mons by lack of fuel for its vehicles. The supply lines which furnished food, gasoline, and ammunition to the troops dashing across Europe were getting longer and longer, and in spite of every effort to move these very necessary items up more quickly, the trucks on the 'Red Ball' highways could carry only a portion of what was needed. Units had to economize in using their vehicles, troops fed on captured German rations. So the Spearhead was stalled while the Corps collected the gasoline to move it."

"As Major General Clarence R. Huebner's Fighting First Division moved north to relieve the armor around Mons, it encountered large numbers of enemy troops marching east, apparently unaware of American forces in the area. Long columns of motor vehicles and horse-drawn equipment approached from the west, and both the 1st Infantry and 3rd Armored Divisions were heavily engaged. Here was the German Seventh Army, retiring under orders to occupy the Siegfried Line and to keep the American forces out of Germany. During the next three days the carnage continued. Our road blocks and hastily constructed field fortifications stopped the enemy movement to the east, and in the fighting the disorganized enemy suffered heavy casualties, both in killed and wounded. Our artillery and airplanes pounded the long columns on the narrow roads, and the German retreat became a smoking ruin. Elements of twenty enemy divisions were captured or slaughtered as they moved straight into the fires of our troops!"

On the 4th of September, supplies were finally able to get through to us, medical and other evacuation was once more functioning, and Task Force Lovelady unleashed its might along the road to Namur.

Darkness settled but still we did not stop. Passing through the large city of Charleroi in the dead of night we were waved and kissed on by crowds of cheering civilians including an admirable number of attractive mademoiselles. Driving hard all night in hopes of finding a bridge intact

across the River Meuse, we assembled in the outskirts of Namur at 0530 hours in the morning.

Reconnaissance showed the bridges to be blown but we did knock out some enemy equipment and suffered a few casualties ourselves.

During the next 24 hours, Captain Conally with his 23rd Armored Engineers and similar units from the VII Corps constructed two-way pontoon bridges across the River Meuse. As soon as they were completed we roared across them to dash northwest toward the heart of Belgium industry, Liege.

No sooner had we crossed the bridge than a lone enemy plane appeared through the mist and strafed the tail of our column at several points. Three of our men who were riding in half-tracks were slightly wounded. Otherwise no damage was done and the Germans were more than repaid by losing to us one anti-tank gun, one half-track, three trucks and a busload of infantry.

Shortly before entering Huy, our leading elements observed an unmolested, beautiful concrete bridge across the river. As they approached it, a German staff car drove nonchalantly in front of our column. A single round from a tank destroyed the vehicle throwing its occupants upward and outward in a fountain of fire. Examination revealed that they were coming to blow the bridge, which was already set with heavy charges of dynamite. We regarded this as one of the most valuable prizes ever to be seized by Task Force Lovelady in all its fast-moving, unpredictable exploits. The ever-increasing burden on 1st Army's supply lines would now be lessened the desperately needed little bit that might carry us closer to Berlin before they snapped completely. Throughout the European Campaigns so few really important bridges have been captured intact that we were the more proud of this unusual achievement.

Had the enemy found time to organize defenses they might have hindered our advance considerably with a minimum amount of men and equipment. Rising from the narrow road along which we pressed were sheer rock cliffs towering more than a hundred feet in the air. We were precariously canalized by the river on one side, the cliffs on the other, precluding dispersion of vehicles and their deployment on more than a one tank front, should the necessity arise. However, no more action ensued than just described, and we bivouacked northwest of Huy for the night.

Realizing that to continue along the same road tomorrow would certainly mean deadly resistance because the Germans would surely be waiting for us, Colonel Lovelady received permission from the Combat Commander to take an overland route to Liege. This unexpected change of events surprised

the enemy hopelessly, and we moved onto our objective late in the afternoon of the 7th of September. Enemy artillery fire was intense at one point, but our attached unit promptly neutralized the four bothersome batteries, while our leading elements ran the gauntlet, their only thought being to reach their objective.

High on a hill overlooking Liege we established road blocks and surrounded the city with a net of steel.

Fierce fighting continued during the night and harrowing adventures were experienced by many of the men. Our road blocks scooped in fifty enemy vehicles ranging from tanks to motorcycles. A staff car tried to run the blockade and was stopped by a direct hit. This one held a prize, but he was dead: Lieutenant General Hendrik. There were more than one hundred and fifty prisoners taken by midnight. Chaos reigned for the Germans, and the very madness of it all was somewhat confusing to us.

In the evening, First Lieutenant Bill Farrington, commanding "E" company, was wounded, suffering a broken arm from shell fragments.

Like Mons, there was simply too much fighting to complete in Liege to warrant further movement the following day. Thus, Task Force Lovelady accounted for twenty more vehicles and captured another hundred prisoners.

On the 9th of September, we started a trek towards Verviers, adding many pieces of enemy material to our already long list. The move was not without loss, the least being three of our medium tanks. Three of our men were killed and twelve were wounded. Among the wounded was Lieutenant Colonel Garton, commanding the 391st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, who was much too far forward for an artillery battalion commander.

It was plain that the enemy planned to make a desperate stand in the Verviers-Eupen sector in a final bid to prevent the tramping of his "sacred soil" by American troops. This he would have to do in sufficient force that he would be delayed long enough for him to bring troops into his prepared fortifications of the Siegfried Line. The debacle at Mons, the fateful beleaugerment at Liege, made such a stand impossible now and he could deter us only slightly by crude, hastily wrought methods. Great craters in the roads, hastily laid mines, and blown bridges over every stream was an engineer's nightmare, which slowed our advance until we finally coiled into the fields for the night. Shortly before dark, P-47's shot down two Focke-Wolfe's 190's, and destroyed a Mark V tank for us. At dusk, the Luftwaffe again came to life, dropping bombs among us, without effect.

We reached Verviers on the 10th of September and continued the next day to Eupen. We were close enough to the German border and the Siegfried

Line that the International boundary showed on our maps.

From the friendly hysteria of Belgian greetings, there was a sudden change in Eupen. Though people dared the streets in small numbers when the fighting passed on, they either disregarded us or just looked on curiously, or with sullen disdain. We imagined that many of them even appeared hostile. Most of the civil population here spoke German. There were no flowers, no tidbits, no hugs or kisses. We thought to ourselves, "Soon we'll be greeted from the windows with scalding water and hand grenades, instead of green apples and attractive mademoiselles."

Signs of high endurance were beginning to line the faces of tankers and infantrymen alike. There had been practically no physical rest and certainly no mental rest since the very day of our commitment, early in July. Our vehicles were beginning to feel it too. They lugged and chugged, and tossed and turned like old men with bad stomachs. Still, they were faithful. They plodded on with their masters, the men of Task Force Lovelady, and with them, seemed to become almost human with an insatiable desire to trample the "sacred soil" of Germany.

CHAPTER III

RHINELAND

In which Task Force Lovelady becomes the first Allied unit to capture a German town, pressing onward relentlessly into the teeth of the world's most formidable man-made barrier, the Siegfried Line; catches its breath to punch another hole in it, expediting the First United States Army's drive to the Roer; writes a chapter within a chapter during a black interlude in the Ardennes; finally returning, triumphantly reaching the banks of the Rhine in front of all other units of General Hodges' army.

Task Force Lovelady had gained momentum during two months of whirling combat across France and Belgium. They had long since won fame within the 3rd Armored Division and VII Corps. Their daring exploits during the Breakthrough; their stubbornly courageous stand on Hill 264; their brilliant role in closing the trap of Falaise; their unprecedented sweep from the Seine to Mons, where the climax to the relentless drive paid overwhelming dividends, literally destroying the elements of the German army which were supposed to retreat and man the Siegfried Line; the bitterly contested forfeit by the enemy of their greatest industrial region west of the Ruhr Valley, Liege. These events in themselves were enough to justify to posterity the existence of Task Force Lovelady.

We were too tired, too dirty, too busy during those two months to consider past accomplishments. Our interests, wishes, and prayers lay in the path ahead. Each man knew in his heart that his job was not finished, that there was no such thing as having done one's share so long as there was life and breath in one's body. We knew that Task Force Lovelady would go on and on until the last German soldier laid down his arms or died.

The same unfaltering will and faith that carried us so many miles toward victory, rode with us into the teeth of the Siegfried Line.

Early in the morning of that memorable day, the 12th of September, 1944, reconnaissance in force set out to find a suitable route across the border. Bogged down in muddy forest trails, another group selected our path.

By noon we were on the way, most of us hardly realizing that we would sleep that night in Germany.

At the bottom of a winding hill lay a railroad track and station, beyond them, a village. On the western side was a farmhouse, the red, yellow and black Belgian flag flying from an upstairs window. On the eastern side, hastily improvised white flags of surrender fluttered listlessly, resignedly, from the houses. Then we knew that here was the International boundary line, that we were going into Germany.

At 1451 hours, a platoon from Reconnaissance Company, 33rd Armored Regiment, led by Lieutenant Burroughs, crossed the border, followed instantly by the main body of Task Force Lovelady. We were entering Roetgen, the first town in Hitler's doomed fatherland to fall into Allied hands.

When this startling report reached Combat Command "B" headquarters, Brigadier General Boudinot could not restrain his elation. In anticipation of the event, his command post was filled with news reporters. Those of us who tuned in on the task force radio channel heard General Boudinot speak to the operator.

"Tell Lovelady he's famous! Congratulate him and tell him to keep on going!"

Most of the civilians stayed in their houses. Those who were outside and those who looked inquisitively from their doorways wore the half-frightened, dazed mask of surrender. We breathed a sigh of relief that they did not plan to defend this first German town house by house and stone by stone.

Warily approaching the eastern edge of the village, its only exit, reconnaissance stopped at a large crater in the road, hurriedly blown to delay us longer.

Lieutenant Burroughs dismounted to examine it further, and was shot dead by an enemy rifleman.

Days were getting shorter now and nights were crisp as autumn approached. We must remain in Roetgen until dawn.

During the night, Lieutenant Hall crossed the crater with his company of infantry and met the same fate as Lieutenant Burroughs. While the infantry defended the obstacle, Captain Conally's engineers filled it with rock and gravel.

No sooner had we started the next morning than our eyes witnessed the first elements of the Siegfried Line. The only trail led steeply up a hill, with impassably steep cliffs on the right side. On the left, where tanks would be able to deploy, were carefully constructed "Dragon's Teeth." These were pyramidal concrete structures, perhaps three feet high and reinforced with steel. They were close together in several rows, offset one from another, making it impossible for even the smallest vehicles to drive through them.

Straddling the road, midway up the hill, was a sturdy iron gate, strong L-beams of steel angled into the ground to increase the effectiveness of this

barrier.

Looking down on us from above, and obviously placed to protect the elaborate defenses against any who might molest them, were two concrete pillboxes, expertly camouflaged. Any movement by the infantry brought a withering hail of machine gun fire.

The tankers lost no time firing directly at the tiny apertures, their 75 and 76 millimeter guns blazing for several minutes. This discouraged the occupants of the pillboxes and they emerged one by one, about thirty in all, and willingly surrendered.

Now the engineers were able to blow the gate with T.N.T., while the girders were pulled out of the ground by hand.

Continuing up the hill, we were only slightly delayed by mines laying fully exposed on the road. Cautiously sliding these to one side, the single file of tanks approached the summit. We had successfully opened the first barriers in the most formidable defense line ever built by man.

Knowing that we must come to the top of the hill in single file, the Germans waited for us and had a field day of their own for awhile, costing our task force four Sherman tanks and a half-track but wounding surprisingly few.

The enemy had not long to revel in his early success, for by late afternoon the tables turned and we knocked out a Mark V Panther, two 88 millimeter dual purpose, three anti-tank and seven well dug-in 20 millimeter ack-ack guns.

We were headed downhill now, looking into a long, narrow valley. On our left, a Panther crept stealthily toward us. Sharp eyes caught it, lurking in the long afternoon shadows of evergreens. S/Sgt. Stanko (later to be honored by a battlefield commission) expertly trained his new 76 millimeter gun on the target, firing a round of high-speed, armor-piercing ammunition at the enemy colossus. True as an arrow the missile found its mark, incapacitating the offender by penetrating under its final drive. Firing six more rounds in rapid succession, Stanko with his crew of veteran tankers left the Panther burning. Little did he realize that stars were watching him. Major General Rose and Brigadier General Boudinot were nearby, having come forward to help plan the next days' operation. Both of these commanders had seen at first hand the type of marksmanship that helped make Task Force Lovelady a great team.

On that first day in Germany, we were suddenly popular with news correspondents and commentators. Wandering along the column and among our vehicles coiled in the fields was bean-pole Dick Tregaskis, author

of*Guadalcanal Diary*. Shoulders slightly bent, he seemed older than his less than thirty years as he talked casually with the fighting men of Task Force Lovelady. With him was Gordon Fraser, National Broadcasting Corporation's earnest, conscientious commentator.

We bivouacked that night a few hundred yards short of Rott, an important supply base for this portion of the Siegfried Line, accounting for its stubborn defense. In the darkness we heard the now familiar sound of German tanks, trailing away on our left as they sought short refuge in the next valley.

Our friends, the P-47 Thunderbolts, became less helpful as the clouds and rain of early autumn appeared. Visibility was seldom adequate for them to find targets at high speeds. We learned not to expect them for days at a time and became more and more dependent upon the "Eyes of the Artillery," the little "Cubs."

Moments of leisure were scarce. With rain nearly every day and earlier nightfalls, there was not much opportunity to write. However, most of us wrote at least one letter on, or soon after, September 12th, and below the dateline where a year ago we indicated "Somewhere in England," two months ago "Somewhere in France," and a week ago "Somewhere in Belgium," we noted proudly, "Somewhere in Germany."

Already, we held a strong foothold encouragingly deep within the Siegfried Line. We did not intend to be pushed out of it. The enemy held equally firm intentions that we would not continue to penetrate it. Fanatically, they were fighting against time, while they reorganized their sadly disarranged armies and rushed reinforcements to plug the hole we were rapidly expanding in their precious concrete barriers. Their pillboxes, manned by second-rate troops and covered by too little artillery, would fail to slow our pace, so they blew every bridge, of which there were so many, crossing every stream as they meandered back and forth, themselves seeking the path of least resistance through the same valley that canalized us.

Every day, the 23rd Armored Engineers with Task Force Lovelady would have to build at least one bridge, and oftimes they had scarcely escorted our column across one than they were called upon to build another.

Breaking camp at eight o'clock in the morning of the 14th of September, we crossed an engineer bridge and rolled rather smoothly for several miles when the combat commander ordered us to halt in order that we might divert part of our force to relieve a situation which had developed in the sector on our left.

By afternoon the left flank was more secure. We uncoiled from the fields of

Venwegen, drove hard through Breinig to Breinigeberg. Here, the task force bivouacked while reconnaissance elements continued forward, finding another bridge demolished near Stolberg.

Enemy artillery fire was increasing in intensity, indicating to us that they were improving their organization, bringing up more men and material, viciously trying to seal the ever enlarging leak in their main line of defense, and last hope for the salvation of Germany west of the Rhine.

The road junction, at the bottom of a hill, leading in one direction to Stolberg and in the other to Mausbach, was subjected to sustained artillery fire through the night, as the engineers built a bridge, and during the day, as our column moved across it. Half a dozen men from Headquarters and "D" companies were wounded by shell fragments. Among them was Lieutenant Glen Alford, whose platoon reached the road junction during a barrage.

Advancing towards the high ground, we cleared out three pillboxes manned by motley crews of war-sick Germans who were easily persuaded.

Turning right at the top of the hill, our plan was to capture Mausbach, turn left and go on to Gressenich. Unfortunately, we were exposed to commanding ground on our left flank. The enemy had numerous tanks and anti-tank guns well dug-in behind slag piles and quarries, looking down on us to the best advantage.

As our tanks, led by "D" company, peeked beyond the village, they were met by devastating direct fire, while the rest of them suffered frightfully accurate artillery barrages in Mausbach. Before we knew it, casualties had mounted to more than thirty, and three men had been killed. We lost seven tanks and one tank destroyer before being able to withdraw. The Germans won that round but not before they had lost a Mark V tank, an 88 millimeter gun, and fifty prisoners to Task Force Lovelady.

The aid station for the task force worked with all speed in the heavily shelled town of Mausbach. Their ambulances had all been loaded and driven towards the rear. There were still sixteen patients to be evacuated as our troops reluctantly retreated. One sorely needed ambulance was hit on the return trip by an anti-tank gun, disappearing in a halo of yellow flame. Finally, others came and the aid station was able to move back with the rest of the force. One medical half-track, returning that night to the forsaken town in quest of reported casualties, returned without patients, but with seven prisoners of their own, who were more than happy to surrender to the unarmed aid men.

Vehicles coiled and spread out in the open fields bordered by heavy pine growth which had not been searched for enemy soldiers during the day, and

now the last rays of light were dissolving in the thickness of night, as the remnants of Task Force Lovelady dug themselves in.

Hardly had they begun than Lieutenant Thomas McGreevy, commanding the assault gun platoon, perturbedly reported to the command post that one of his half-track crews had been captured. His vehicles had backed into the woods for camouflage, and, while everyone was engaged in preparations for the night, a German patrol sneaked noiselessly in, performed their mission and disappeared into the impenetrable darkness.

For the first time, Colonel Lovelady utilized a pillbox for his command post. These were grotesque monuments to the Todt Organization which built the Siegfried Line, a doubtful tribute to the plodding efficiency of the Teutonic mind. This particular one was, perhaps, thirty feet long, twenty-five feet wide, and fourteen feet high. It was sunk in an excavation, the dirt being mounded far above the structure itself, even on its roof, then planted with grass to afford near-perfect camouflage. Its walls were four feet thick, of steel-reinforced concrete. The only openings, except for the massive steel door, were small vents and machine gun apertures. The intent, of course, was to construct an impregnable barrier to infantry and have each pillbox thoroughly protected by heavy artillery pieces, tanks, and anti-tank guns, concealed and dug into the earth further back. Fortunately for us, the enemy had only now stopped reeling from his headlong dash across Belgium into Germany, and had not had time to man his defenses properly. Inside this dismal, oversized coffin were bunks swinging out from the walls, not unlike those in a troopship, and in sufficient number to accommodate nearly twenty men.

Pillboxes were great monstrosities, but once emptied of the enemy, made excellent command posts and aid stations, because they were absolute assurance against artillery.

Later on, however, when the Germans learned our location, there were many casualties in the vicinity of the pillbox among those who didn't have time to reach its protection.

For the next three days, from the 16th to the 18th of September, our bedraggled, exhausted infantry made local attacks to determine the strength of the enemy, trying to locate a weak spot where we might break through. They found well-prepared positions held tenaciously by a larger force than ours. The same system was used by the Germans, who daily prodded our lines in counterattacks, attempting to determine our weak points. These were invariably accompanied by constant mortar and artillery fire which harassed and added further to our mounting casualties through the days and nights.

Would there be no respite? Especially infantrymen, but tankers, too, were physically exhausted to the near breaking point. They were tired, cold, wet, and dirty. Their uniforms were worn and actually rotting, many hanging practically in shreds. Eyes were bloodshot, cheeks hollowed, shoulders bent forward, and what few grim smiles were encountered showed stained and lusterless teeth framed in drab, cadaverous faces.

We must not stop! Fresh troops were surely on the way to carry the torch that we must soon let drop. But oh! The misery of waiting!

With frayed nerves, the more susceptible by physical debility, increasing numbers of us began to wear the gaunt, hunted mask of combat fatigue. Eyes that saw not; ears that heard not. On every side of us, once strong, heartily cheerful soldiers were breaking down, stumbling or being carried to the aid station, crying like babies. Tempers snapped and courage failed. These sodden faces, more ghastly under growth of wiry stubble, gray and bloodless, unwounded and without loss of flesh, yet worse than wounded really, for these were ghosts of men, became more and more a common sight.

The few who stayed on were game. They did not ask for rest. They only prayed for strength to carry on.

Nine counterattacks were staved off in one day, the 19th of September! That was the day we attacked at six o'clock in the evening preceded by a sizeable artillery preparation. The objective, near the quarry just beyond Diepenlinchen, was reached, and our tankers knocked out two Mark IV's and one Mark V. Our own losses were bitterly heavy, which we paid with seven of our fourteen remaining medium tanks and two light tanks. Considering that our task force normally had thirty-four Shermans in its two medium companies, we were now dangerously understrength.

Under cover of darkness on the 20th of September, and with a relatively fresh company of infantry from the ever welcome First Division, Task Force Lovelady made a night attack through Diepenlinchen, pushing a confused enemy back about fifteen hundred yards.

On the next day we were to clear the woods on our left flank, thereby establishing physical contact with the task force parallel to us. This was accomplished, though there were several casualties, mostly caused by mortar shells bursting among the trees. The larger part of our task force then moved to a group of farm buildings not far from Stolberg, where artillery and mortar fire was even heavier than it was before.

At least there were no more attacks planned. Rumors gave way to facts, and during the drizzly night of 25 September, Task Force Lovelady crept

through the woods, returning along the main route of evacuation to Breinig, approximately three miles from the now stabilized line of defense. The long promised rest was at hand! Task Force Lovelady had finally been burned out. The miracle of it was it had not collapsed sooner. Reorganization, rest for men, maintenance for vehicles, reequipping, salvage and repair of knocked out tanks, reinforcement of our ranks with men and officers, had now become imperative. A once powerful task force had admittedly been weakened to virtual impotence by utter exhaustion.

The spirit of Task Force Lovelady, however, could not be stifled. Those who remained held their heads high, unashamed and proud. They knew the team would rise again, fight again, win again, and they were ready to help it.

The companies and attachments dispersed their vehicles in the fields around Breinig. These they camouflaged with nets and branches. Then foxholes were dug, for we were well within artillery range of the enemy, and the Luftwaffe would surely make a nuisance of itself at night. Pup-tents were pitched and tarpaulin's were improvised against the tanks for shelter. Company kitchens were set up for the first time since the end of the Falaise-Argentan Gap, and though we were able to draw only 10 in 1 rations, it was at least a relief not to have to prepare them ourselves. Showers were arranged for, and every day truckloads of us enjoyed this luxury for the first time since landing in France. At the shower point we could exchange our old clothing for clean. Sometimes it was new, more often it was just freshly laundered. Either way, it was appreciated because most of us had been fighting for months without a change, and uniforms were actually on the verge of decomposition. There were movies in the recreation hall of the town, and Red Cross trucks came in with coffee, doughnuts. and music, most of their value being derived from the girls who served them.

In three short days, when we had hardly begun to rest and vehicles badly needed more complete overhauling, we were ordered back into the line.

Happily enough, the plan was not one of attack. It was merely to hold the same line of defense that we had left, in order that the task force who relieved us might return to Breinig to enjoy the same brief respite that we had had.

Our tanks rumbled obediently, albeit a trifle reluctantly, up the hill overlooking Stolberg, and we traded places with the other task force, tank for tank and man for man. Because of the noise and general increase in activity the enemy threw in extra rations of artillery and mortar, their guns being answered promptly and vociferously by those of the 391st, who were supporting us.

The enemy still had direct observation on our forward positions and every time tankers would dismount from their vehicles, accurate fire drove them under their tanks. Finally it became impossible to move at all without drawing merciless barrages into the whole area, making it mandatory to remain in the tanks all day, with the hatches buttoned. Only at night was it reasonably safe to get outside and stretch, then only for short periods and with the utmost precautions against making any noise.

During the day our outposts would watch the enemy prowling around their own pillboxes and fortifications. They could see our artillery shells burst among the German troops and follow their ambulances cautiously creeping across the fields to evacuate the wounded.

At night, both sides frequently sent out small patrols, keeping everyone constantly alert and inflicting mutual harassment even though the information gained was slight.

After five full days of this, tankers especially were tired, lame, unshaven and unclean from living, eating and sleeping in their cramped uncomfortable compartments, even performing their excretory functions in empty shell cases, disposing of container and contents by cautiously throwing them out of the hatches.

Again the task force was relieved amidst the usual increased allotment of artillery, and we returned to the fields we had first sought refuge in.

Thus it went. Five days of misery in the line, five days of relative rest, peace and some comfort near Breinig. Eventually, as the weather became colder, we were allowed to move the German civilians out of their homes into one end of town, while we appropriated the buildings for billets. This had long been our desire, but we had to wait for orders to reach us from higher headquarters. Now we were able to keep dry, do our laundry, to have heat in our quarters, and light. We felt more like gentleman soldiers than at any time since April in England, when we had first moved into the field.

Morale improved with the food, and we were sometimes issued "B" rations. It improved as our standards of living improved and entertainment became more available. A few were lucky enough to go on pass to Paris and Verviers, though the allotment was so small, initially, that not many were able to enjoy that rare privilege. It improved as the conditions of our vehicles improved and we were being issued more and more of the latest type Sherman tanks with high velocity 76 millimeter guns, some with Ford motors, some with Diesel. Replacements for men and officers began to fill our ranks until we looked more like a battalion again than a company. Men who had been wounded along the line trickled back happily and were always heartily welcomed. We were beginning to regain confidence in the

fighting power of Task Force Lovelady. New men inherited and soon absorbed the pride that came with wearing the 3rd Armored Division patch and being assigned to Task Force Lovelady.

Complete idleness, undirected, is not good for any man. For veterans of many battles it is worse, because they cannot help but let their minds wander back to the horrors they have seen and experienced. Loneliness creeps in, the days drag, and the mind is slowly poisoned against the unforeseeable tasks ahead.

It was natural that we should fume and curse about the orders in October which demanded a daily four-hour period of training. Only in retrospect did it prove to be a valuable undertaking. Its mission was accomplished. We kept busy every morning until noon and performed worthwhile tasks. Our clothes were pressed and cleaned. Our weapons and vehicles were reconditioned and brought back to excellent condition. We may not have noticed it at the time, but there was a gradual change for the better during those weeks, and it was partly because of this return to semi-garrison life that our task force was speedily refreshed, rejuvenated, and able to carry on so admirably in the future.

October gave way to November. Soft white snow flakes, beautiful in their descent, melted when they touched the earth, leaving in their wake nothing but ugly mud. In anticipation of a winter offensive, mud grippers were applied to the tracks of medium tanks.

There were more and more secret meetings at combat command and division headquarters. The pace of maintenance and drawing of equipment was speeded early in the month. Preparations were being made in real earnestness to strike another blow. Task Force Lovelady was ready.

Task Force Lovelady's part in the November offensive was the most carefully planned of any they had ever engaged in. There were two weeks of orientation and study before it started. Maps and aerial photos were inspected so frequently, and so minutely, that everyone had a clear mental picture of the terrain and knew exactly what units would be on either flank. Some had ventured to the hill east of Mausbach, where the scene of the attack spread out below in its entirety. There would be the Line of Departure; there the draw that shows on the map; there the gravel quarry; there Gressenich (there's not much left of it now except part of a square church steeple); there is Werth; and there the high ground beyond. There was not a driver, bow gunner, or loader who had not personally studied the operational maps. Each man knew in precise detail what his particular job would be.

Our task force was going to punch another hole in the Siegfried Line,

through which the First and Ninth Infantry Divisions would pour their might against a startled foe before they would have time to consider what was happening to them. The ultimate purpose was to extend the United States First Army's lines as far as the Roer River.

Never had we been given such a limited objective, the furthest point of which was scarcely two miles from the line of departure.

Our mission was to seize and secure the town of Werth and a little group of heavily fortified buildings called Kottenich, and to hold a line roughly between the two. In addition, we would remain prepared to send part of our task force to Hastenrath or Sherpenseel, or both, should the unit whose mission included these objectives need help.

Our line company commanders at that time were Captain Monroe with "D" company, 1st Lieutenant Vernon Dingley with "E" company, and Captain Morrison with "B" company. These officers, with Colonel Lovelady and Major Stallings, formulated in detail the plan of attack.

"D" company would take the left flank, driving in a straight line to a point due east of Werth, then swerve sharply left to the edge of town. Infantry, driving behind the tanks in half-tracks, would then dismount and together they would enter the town. Once this objective was seized, it would be firmly secured by tank-infantry road blocks. Given good flying weather, P-47's would dive-bomb the objective to clear it of anti-tank weapons.

Characteristically, Colonel Lovelady announced a blitzkrieg schedule, saying he expected "D" company to be on their objective in thirty minutes! It sounded mechanically impossible, even if it were just a road march, because of the inevitable mud and total absence of roads. Captain Monroe, however, was not to be dismayed, and the commander's prophecy was to be more than satisfied when the objective was seized in twenty-one minutes.

"E" company would take the right flank. They would start parallel with "D" but instead of turning left, continue straight ahead to Kottenich. They, too, would execute the attack at all possible speed, absorbing their losses from mines and other weapons to whatever extent would be necessary.

The mission, accomplished speedily, would enhance its surprise effect and enable the infantry units from the First and Ninth Divisions to capitalize on the rent we had torn in the West Wall. Task Force Lovelady had every intention of assuring that success.

"B" company would start out in reserve, protecting the left flank. Once the town of Werth was secured, they would return to the vicinity of our starting point by way of the highway between Werth and Diepenlinchen, thus

opening a suitable axis for evacuation. They, too, would be prepared to go to Hastenrath and Sherpenseel on order.

There were none who knew when the attack would take place. All plans were made on a basis of D-Day, just as they had been for the great Normandy breakthrough. Area bombing north of us in the vicinity of Echweiler would begin at H-Hour minus 165 minutes. At H-Hour minus 60 minutes, the greatest artillery barrage in the course of the war would begin, continuing, with predetermined minutes of silence occasionally, until H-Hour. Then all artillery would cease except as requested by forward observers. The entire artillery command in the United States First Army was assembled in our sector, scene of the main effort.

At precisely H-Hour, the massive, coordinated attack would start. All units of General Hodges' army would jump off at exactly the same time. Of vital importance to Task Force Loveladv were the missions of the Ninth and First Infantry Divisions' combat teams. The former was to take Gressenich immediately, the latter to take Hamich and secure the ridge in front of us.

Once again Task Force Lovelady was ready to pit its skill and power against the enemy. The original members of the team had no anxiety about the newborn capabilities of the unit. The reinforcement soldiers and officers had been battle-conditioned by short periods in the line since late September. They knew each other, knew their tanks and weapons; they wanted a chance to start afresh where the exhausted remnants of our task force groaned to a halt two months ago. Here was the test to prove that a champion could make a brilliant comeback! The stage was set. Task Force Lovelady braced itself and waited.

On the 10th of November we were ordered to proceed to the assembly area which was almost exactly the same place we retired to with our battered tanks and haggard bodies in September.

Coincidentally with the move, General Eisenhower drove behind our column, turning to go into Stolberg as we lumbered up the hill.

Once there, the tanks dispersed expertly under the shadows of trees, their camouflage perfected with branches.

Every morning we awakened with the question, "Will this be D-Day?" As the days passed and nothing happened, our normal tenseness of anticipation diminished to the calmness of near-boredom.

On November 14th, Lieutenant Abig with a soldier from his platoon in "E" company scouted around the dilapidated buildings of Diepenlinchen. A German second lieutenant, perhaps lingering too long after a night patrol

into our lines, perhaps purposely there to give himself up, was captured in one of the homes.

The prisoner answered questions readily, volunteering information which we at first regarded suspiciously but later proved to be correct in every detail. He gave the location of minefields, the positions of guns and fortifications, the disposition and approximate strength of troops. He even told of a German kitchen truck which drove into Gressenich every day, feeding the troops near the church. Most important of all, we learned that the troops now on duty would be relieved during the night by a fresh regiment. This was a perfect time to strike!

On the morning of November 16th, Colonel Lovelady called a meeting of all officers. He announced that this was the long-awaited D-Day. That the bombing would begin at 1015 hours, the artillery preparation at 1145, and H-Hour would be promptly at 1245. For the last time he reviewed the operation, answering last-minute questions, reiterating his plea for speed, and wishing us luck. Watches were synchronized, and muddy peep trails traced spokes from the hub of Task Force Lovelady to its outer reaches.

Soon after 10 o'clock the drone of heavy bombers told us that the first act was about to begin. The curtain raised at exactly 1015 as black sticks of bombs hurtled earthward from the leading planes far to our left front. Soon the rose-tinted haze of fire and smoking cordite, powdered buildings and debris, laid for miles across the land.

At 1145 the deafening roar of huge artillery pieces shook the earth. Never had there been such prodigious quantities of explosives thrown at the enemy in such a short time and in such a concentrated area.

As H-Hour approached, the pine trees stretched their branches, releasing the tanks of Task Force Lovelady. Slowly they headed cross-country towards the line of departure, their speed timed to reach it at exactly H-Hour.

Suddenly from Mausbach, the weird screech of thousands of rockets made us cringe for a moment until we realized what this unearthly noise was. Great clouds of smoke and fire belched forth from the launchers as the rockets sped towards the ridge.

The tanks came abreast of each other now, lining up race horse fashion as they reached the starting line.

Minutes ticked away and hearts pounded until it seemed that one could hear his own above the sound of the tank engines. At 1245 the idling motors roared into action, blue and yellow streaks of fire spewing out of their wide exhausts while both medium companies crossed the line of departure at the

maximum speed possible in the soft earth.

Ahead of them and with no way to bypass it, stretched a deadly minefield. Only luck and prayers could lead a tank between these buried demons without getting knocked out.

The point tank of "D" company drove into the minefield without diminishing its speed. There must have been a minute when no one breathed, but nothing happened. The first tank had struck just the right spot, establishing a lane which could now be used by the whole company! The rest of "D" company followed in their leader's tracks without a casualty, and behind them came the half-tracks loaded with infantrymen from the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment.

"E" company approached the minefields on the right, their lead tank stopping short when one of its tracks was blown off by a Teller mine. Without hesitating, the next tank pulled alongside, hit a mine, and disappeared momentarily in a shroud of black smoke and flying mud. The same fate met the third and the fourth. Finally, the fifth tank found an opening and the rest of "E" company followed through, increasing their speed to make up for lost time.

In the meantime, "D" company had turned left, racing over the hill to Werth, where they came under direct observation by the enemy. Thus far, without a casualty in men or tanks, they halted momentarily on the edge of town, waiting for the infantry to join them. Quickly, the doughboys dismounted from their half-tracks at the bottom of the hill, double-timed towards town, and together, with perfect cooperation, the tanks and infantry entered Werth, exactly twenty-one minutes after H-Hour!

"E" company was thundering towards the main road leading from Gressenich to Hastenrath. Both of these towns were still in enemy hands and both were visible. Most of the leading platoon got across the road without mishap, then one was hit by a small, rocket-type anti-tank gun. Without stopping, those tanks which had gotten on the other side of the road continued towards their objective, now easily within sight. At the same time, the next tank pulled up to the road and it was knocked out. Lieutenant Dingley's tank followed, joining the other crippled hulks. Lieutenant Dingley was painfully wounded but ordered the others to go on and Lieutenant Hope assumed command of the company without waiting for instructions. The leading tanks went into the fortified buildings of Kottenich with guns blazing. It was strategically defended with 75 millimeter howitzers and a well armed garrison, but fell swiftly and irrevocably under the withering blasts of direct tank fire. Lieutenant Hope's and S/Sgt. Stanko's tanks were on their objective at H-Hour plus 24 minutes with what

was left of "E" company.

Meanwhile, the tankers whose vehicles had been knocked out were in a most unfortunate position, and with their wounded suffered hardships which only those who were there will ever know. Enemy infantry being pushed out of Gressenich by the advancing Ninth were coming in on them. They dismounted the .30 calibre machine guns from their disabled tanks, setting up strong outposts around a house on the edge of town, prepared to defend the wounded to the last man, and to hold their ground, whatever the cost. This they did successfully, holding off the fanatic attempts of the enemy to enter. Later in the afternoon the situation cleared and it was finally possible to evacuate the casualties.

After its securement, Werth was even more of a hot-seat than during the first minutes of the capture. In the initial phases of the attack, fifty prisoners were taken, but later on when other enemy troops were being pushed into the town by the task force on our left, the fighting increased rather than diminished. There was a continuous job of mopping up, tightening of outposts and road blocks which persisted until midnight. There was still considerable infiltration after that time, and by the next day we had taken a hundred prisoners.

It can hardly be said that the enemy was caught napping. Considering the bombing and the terrific pounding of his positions by artillery, he made our punch expensive and, though he did not retard the speed or scope of our attack, he did succeed in making the infantry gains slow and costly.

Colonel Lovelady stayed with the medium tank companies throughout the attack, while his command group followed along behind, setting up in the deep gully just east of Werth. Shortly after the colonel left his tank, it met disaster by artillery, killing Matecha and wounding Medius. Twenty enlisted men and two officers were wounded, and the new reconnaissance lieutenant, Ginsberg, was killed by a sniper.

As soon as the enemy had been completely cleared out, both objectives and the command post area came under intense and persistent artillery fire, which was far too accurately observed and extremely nerve racking.

With us at that time was Lieutenant Don Andrus, a P-38 pilot who coordinated air-ground operations. He had never seen combat from the ground before and had anticipated the experience with more than the usual amount of zest for an airman. Prior to the attack he had innocently remarked that he would like to be in an artillery barrage. By the end of the second day he had had quite enough and never, never even wanted to hear the word artillery mentioned again. By the end of the operation, his bedding roll, which had been carried on the rear deck of a tank that was subsequently

knocked out, was so thoroughly riddled with shell fragments that it was utterly valueless. This, however, was his proudest possession and when the time came for him to return to his post, he insisted on carrying that with him. Stroking his chin thoughtfully, he asked, "Shall I tell 'em I was in it?" Then, realizing that it was entirely too full of holes and bits of jagged steel for anyone to believe such a story, he decided, "I guess I'd better say I just got out of it!" Thus it was that he returned willingly to the kind of fighting he knew, only to be killed a few days later while on a strafing mission.

The first three days were miserable ones indeed, and the weather made them worse. It rained constantly, making movement in wheeled vehicles virtually impossible. With increasing difficulty, tracked vehicles ground through the ever-deepening mud.

On D plus 1, "B" company and the engineers started to clear the proposed route of evacuation. A light tank was destroyed by a Teller mine, and the operation was not completed until the third day, complicating the problem of supply and the rapid return of the wounded.

It was D plus 1, too, that a P-47 accidentally dive-bombed "B" company's command post, blasting Captain Morrison temporarily into oblivion, which necessitated his hospitalization.

The enemy artillery barrages continued unabated, all through the day and night of November 18th.

The axis of advance in the first battalion task force sector on our left flank was under close scrutiny by the enemy from the beginning. A continuation of the same minefield that almost stemmed our drive, well protected with its mortal sting increased by artillery and anti-tank fire, made it an even more deadly obstacle than ours. Their losses were heavy, which prompted them to change their course and come through Werth, attacking Hastenrath from a different direction. By the 18th of November they needed help. Thus it was that a small group from the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion held Werth, while Captain Monroe and his "D" company tankers with "E" company infantry blazed a trail into both Sherpenseel and Hastenrath. Direct fire accounted for many tanks and there were a considerable number of casualties. The phenomenally good luck of "D" company had run out. Captain Monroe left his tank to reconnoiter the terrain with his artillery observer and was shot dead by a German infantryman. How short a time some men are destined to serve in combat!

This was a pitched battle, a day of give and take. The entire front was fluid, and losses were severe on both sides. Ammunition and gasoline were rapidly being exhausted and the supply route which we had counted on was not yet open to traffic. Rations were replenished by half-track ambulances,

who would drop them off every time they came for wounded.

By the 19th, our status was less chaotic. Sherpenseel was cleared completely and the other task force held Hastenrath, only a quarter of a mile away. Critical supplies were refurbished and the infantry units attacked and secured the ridge in front of us, relieving us of the embarrassment of having our every move observed by the enemy.

The front flowed slowly, relentlessly forward, until, by the 21st of November, we were no longer in physical contact with the foe, though their artillery continued pounding away at us. The 104th and 1st Infantry Divisions literally pinched us out as they continued towards the Roer, thanking us for the helpful punch we had dealt the tenaciously held line.

By that time, our crippled tanks were being retrieved and repaired. Only four were irreparably damaged, but seventeen others had been incapacitated, chiefly by mines.

The command group established itself in a badly mauled house in Werth while the companies shifted around until, finally, everybody was under cover, of a sort, and once more we settled down to routine living, fighting nothing but mud.

By Thanksgiving our tanks were ready for action again, and our personnel had been replenished until now we were at full strength.

We celebrated Thanksgiving as elaborately as practicable in our crude, war-torn environment. Company kitchens exerted their best efforts to provide sumptuous turkey dinners "with all the fixin's." In the face of a war yet unfinished, we found much to be thankful for.

There were no indications of any action being planned in the near future. We relaxed, made ourselves more comfortable, and began thinking of Christmas.

Just as these dreams of trimmed trees, parties, and holiday wines were taking shape, we were violently awakened by the writhing convulsions of the critically insane, but by no means dying German military machine, which was to play havoc in one last fantastic adventure in the Ardennes.

IMPORTANT NOTE
from the author

There were five distinct chapters in the combat history of Task Force

Lovelady, each one the story of a major campaign. The present chapter was interrupted for two full months in the space of time, hence the present account must be interrupted while our task force writes a fourth chapter with blood, hate, steel and fire, in the deeply snow-laden fields, forests and villages of Belgium.

The author suggests then, that for the reader to follow the trail of Task Force Lovelady chronologically, he should leave, momentarily, the last few pages in this chapter to join us through the most gruelling tests that men and machines must endure together in the course of total war as told in Chapter IV, starting on page 77.

In Stolberg, we felt that we were practically home again, since we had helped occupy this castled city and its environs for three full months prior to our precipitation into the Ardennes.

Training and recreational activities continued while we put the finishing touches on our new team. Lieutenant Bill Farrington returned from England where he had been hospitalized since September, and took command of "E" company. Lieutenant Glen Alford commanded "D" company, and Lieutenant Shipman remained with "B" company.

Each of the medium companies drew one T-26 "Pershing" tank, the titan of American armor which had not yet been baptized into battle or announced to the public. These ponderous weapons weighed 42 tons, with tracks which were nearly a yard wide, and mounted a great 90 millimeter cannon. It was America's answer to the German "Panther," from whose tough hide our ordinary tank shells had too long bounced off harmlessly, while the Panther's deadly sting would pierce our Shermans in their heaviest armored spots and go out the other side.

To strengthen the armor on the front of our tanks, some of the crews, particularly in "E" company, constructed reinforced slope plates of concrete and steel three or four inches thick.

Finally we were more nearly up to normal tank strength than at any time since hedgerow days, with 17 tanks in each medium company, and 16 in "B" company, a total of fifty tanks.

The main topic of conversation was the inevitable crossing of the Roer River, followed by the drive across the Cologne plains to the Rhine. The Germans had blown the dams which controlled the height of the river, thus

delaying the assault but crystallizing the plans.

As soon as the waters receded slightly, the 104th and the 8th Infantry Divisions would establish a Corps bridgehead from Duren northward to the 9th Army Boundary. Then the 3rd Armored Division would cross in the Duren sector, break out of the bridgehead, thrusting its spear towards the Rhine.

Once again, there was time to thoroughly study the plans for the encounter, at least the first phase. Aerial photos and large scale maps were pondered over daily. Defense maps showed the location of six battalions of artillery which could oppose us, and 20 "88" millimeter guns in the vicinity of Elsdorf, one of our first objectives. Our artillery units furnished Cub planes for flights over Duren, in order that commanders could see the terrain at first hand.

To the men of Task Force Lovelady it always seemed that every move began at night or on Sundays. Thus, at midnight on the 26th day of February, the deafening roar of many tanks reverberated against the stone buildings in Stolberg as our task force streamed over the hill to the autobahn, thence to Duren. Under the light of a full moon, we crossed the pontoon bridge uneventfully, picking up the second battalion of the 13th Infantry Regiment in the shadows of a burned-out factory. Driving through Arnoldsweiler to Ellen we learned that the 104th had already taken our first objective, Morschsnich, for which we were duly grateful. By six o'clock in the morning, we were bypassing this town, swinging northwards through woods to Wullenrath.

Shortly after noon, we heard the familiar hum of friendly fighter-bombers through the heavy mist. We wondered as they circled what brought them out on a day like this. Then we heard a whine like a thousand rockets and stood petrified as their bomb loads plummeted earthward. All of them landed between Morschenich and the woods, killing and wounding several field artillery men, excavating great holes in the road, and thoroughly frightening the rest of us. Somehow, their signals had gotten confused while flying by radar equipment, causing them to bomb prematurely.

"D" company lost a tank to artillery fire and one to an anti-lank gun, which was soon erased along with others. "E" company stayed on the left flank, driving through Wullenrath to Giesendorf, and Berrendorf. Establishing very tight defense positions, we stopped for the night while Task Force Welborn worked into Elsdorf on our left flank. In the morning, "E" company with a company of infantry, jumped off to assist in the seizure of Elsdorf, reached their objective in an hour, then swung west to place road blocks on that side of town.

Tragedy struck just as plans had been completed for the attack on Elsdorf, scarring our recent successes with bitterness. Perhaps the largest calibre shells that ever fell on any of the elements of our task force hit Giesendorf. The first round demolished an entire house, leaving in its place a deep hole partially filled with bricks. Fragments flew for a hundred yards, blasting everyone within that distance off their feet. Many of the pieces found precious targets, one killing Lieutenant Farrington, another mortally wounding Captain Peters from the 391st Field Artillery. Other fragments killed the infantry company commander, wounded Lieutenants Paulsen and Jones, plus a lesser number of enlisted men. The most common speculation was that we had been fired upon by a 380 millimeter railroad gun.

Without loss of time, commands were turned over to junior officers and the attack progressed.

Lieutenant German's tank, driven by Pfc. Copeland, was hit in the front by an armor piercing shell, forcing the crew to bail out. Ordinarily this would have penetrated completely, but Copeland and his crew had built a concrete reinforcement for the slope plate, and the missile buried itself harmlessly in that. Later, when the fire-fight lessened its intensity, Copeland remounted his tank and drove it back to safety, a courageous act for which he was highly praised.

The new "Pershing" in "E" company proved its worth as the fight moved from Giesendorf northward to Elsdorf. A Mark V and two Mark IV's were its victims, all of them being completely destroyed by this potent high velocity weapon.

Elsdorf was strongly defended, and for the first time German civilians were caught firing panzerfausts at our tanks. The city fell late in the afternoon, and we spent the next day defending it, while two task forces from C.C.A. passed through it to attack two towns on the Erft River, Gleisch and Paffendorf. This done, we assembled in the latter town on March 1st.

Here, plans were proposed for crossing the Erft, and capturing the large town of Stommein, midway between Paffendorf and the River Rhine.

For two days we perched on the west bank of the Erft, resting and amusing ourselves in the humorous ways known only to the American army. West of the Roer, we had hoped and believed that Germany was slowly starving during the cold winter months. Quite the contrary, this fertile agricultural plain, sprinkled with villages at little more than kilometer intervals, had provided the best stocked larders we had yet seen in Europe. Fruit cellars were packed with beautifully canned cherries, strawberries, peaches and vegetables. Full potato bins embellished every house. Smoked hams swung invitingly from rafters. Backyards and coops abounded with chickens and

rabbits. Ten-in-one rations were terribly boring, weren't they? And counterattacks must be repelled even though they be committed by barnyard fowl. Corporal Hill, always an enterprising adventurer, experimentally threw captured concussion grenades into the Erft River, the blasts from which yielded a fine mess of speckled trout.

Such things were but brief interludes to the sporadic shelling that continued day and night, to the frequent strafings and bombings by the overactive Luftwaffe, trying desperately to riddle our bridges across the river. Several times during the day we could look into the sky and see the new Heinkel jet-propelled planes sweeping past more swiftly than sound could travel.

The spectacular drive to the Rhine was, in many respects, one of the most thrilling that had marked the varied colorful career of Task Force Lovelady. Except for the too closely spaced towns, the rolling plains of Cologne were more nearly suited to tank exploitation than most of the terrain we had fought over. Here, the easy maneuverability and speed of Shermans paid dividends over the heavy, sluggish German monsters. Our rapid progress, reasonably low casualty rate, and gratifying victories over enemy weapons, made our spirits soar, especially after the Ardennes counter-offensive, when every day we vacillated alarmingly between life and death, success and failure. For us, the survivors of the Ardennes, it was the proof we needed to regain confidence in our nervous systems, and in our luck. With the same youthful recklessness that led us so brilliantly across France and deep into the Siegfried Line, we pressed our advantage, crossing the Erft on the third day of March, driving viciously, and with renewed strength, into Stommein.

Other units had forced the Erft Bridgehead through Bergheim and Niederaussem, then turned east, into Busdorf and Fliesleden. This was the springboard to Stommein, from which we jumped off immediately, securing the objective by three o'clock in the afternoon, each of the companies losing one tank, but together they destroyed a Mark IV, a self-propelled gun, and captured 120 prisoners.

The wide expanses of open terrain, spotted generously with tall buildings, afforded excellent observation for the last-ditch defenders of the "sacred soil" west of the Rhine. Exhibiting no shortage of ammunition, they showered us constantly with artillery. As soon as they lost a town, they showed no more compassion for its homes and German families than they had manifested in France and Belgium. Without scruple, they would shell each one mercilessly, hoping to drive us out or hinder our advance.

On the 4th day of March, Task Force Lovelady once again made history, by being the first unit of the United States First Army to reach the Rhine, while we were momentarily attached to the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance

Battalion.

Early in the morning, the entire task force attacked Roggendorf. A tank destroyer was fired upon by what appeared to be one of our own Shermans, only one of the crew escaping alive. Without hesitating, "E" company eliminated the rude offender, and determined that it actually was a Sherman tank, captured and manned by a German crew. Bypassing an extensive anti-tank ditch, they crashed into the town much earlier than anticipated by the enemy, which resulted in the capture of 125 prisoners. Surely, these were not S.S. soldiers, to surrender a town so uncomplainingly! For the most part, they were not even Wehrmacht, but like so many we had encountered recently, were Volksturm troops. These frightened, ill-trained, poorly equipped substitutes for a dying army, were composed of citizens who had been rejected for military service through the years, because of age, large families, poor health, and physical defects. Some had been discharged from the army after losing an arm or a leg. Even these culls of German society were drafted into the "People's Army" by Hitler, who tried to inculcate them with such fanatic faith in the Nazi party that they would lay down their lives and block the roads to Berlin with their bodies. How utterly unsatisfactory this final desperate effort was, was demonstrated daily by the large numbers captured without firing a shot.

From Roggendorf, the task force struck with all its might at Worringen on the Rhine, seizing; and securing it to the very banks by 1730 hours. Thrilled by their glorious feat, tankers shot haphazardly at barges laying peacefully at anchor in the river, while Lieutenant Huttonlock with his mortar platoon rushed purposelessly to the scene, hastily firing several rounds of ammunition at imaginary targets on the eastern shores of this last great natural barrier to the heart of Germany.

The enemy was reluctant to part with this route of withdrawal across the river, and indicated his dissent by counter-attacking strongly with a hundred infantry troops, supported by two of Germany's biggest tanks, Mark VI "Tigers." The attack was successfully repelled, and one of the Tigers was destroyed. A total of 380 prisoners had been captured that day and two enemy tanks had been knocked out.

Now these objectives were left to be defended by the 83rd Reconnaissance Battalion, while Task Force Lovelady withdrew to Roggendorf for the night, in order to launch an all-out attack towards Cologne from the north.

Jumping off at 4 o'clock in the morning, we headed south to Esch, knocking out machine gun emplacements along the way, and receiving air bursts from flak guns, which had been depressed for use against ground troops. Striking northeast, Weiler was cleared by 0930 hours, while the route of advance was sporadically fired upon by several tank and anti-tank guns, whose

positions we had not yet taken time to locate. When the town was secured and eighty prisoners had been collected, the two medium companies dashed into Fuhlingen. Here, "D" company lost a tank, while "E" company's sector was heavily shelled from both sides of the river. Another enemy Tiger was destroyed, and eighty more prisoners were taken. Early in the afternoon, our tanks changed their direction, thrusting south, where they were literally stopped in their tracks by withering anti-tank fire. Cautious reconnaissance revealed seven enemy tanks carefully camouflaged among the fortifications south of Feldkassel.

With intentions of outflanking this hornet's nest, "D" company withdrew at dusk, attacked again, accidentally ending up in Kasselberg, on the banks of the Rhine "E" company returned to Feldkassel after dark, and new plans were advanced for the morrow.

Again the attack began at four o'clock in the morning. This time, our units were guided over the circuitous routes to our objective by expertly rendered rounds of white phosphorus shells fired accommodatingly by the field artillery. By eight o'clock in the morning, the town of Merkenich was secured.

In the meantime, "B" company, with infantry, proceeded to envelop the formidable tank nest which had so abruptly halted us the day before. Then enemy had apparently decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and withdrew during the night, allowing us to enter without opposition.

Task Forces Welborn and Lovelady had secured the northern flanks of Cologne, while the entrance into the city was accomplished by Task Force Doan in Combat Command "A."

Now we were placed in reserve while street fighting and tank battles ended resistance in Cologne.

The companies were deployed among the final objectives, and the headquarters units with much of the infantry, billeted in a rayon factory. We continued to be targets of high priority for enemy rockets and artillery, and we were more than glad to know that our mission had been accomplished, and we would withdraw for another undetermined period of rehabilitation, before joining in the coup de grace upon the disintegrating German military machine.

Task Force Lovelady had operated like a well-oiled machine to the completion of its task. Now, they withdrew, honorably, bivouacking briefly in Pulheim. A long and trying drive at night on the 8th of March brought us to Kottengen and Kierdorf, where we billeted more permanently with the

division's reserve Combat Command.

The spectacular capture of the Ludendorf Bridge at Remagen led us to be attached to the mighty 1st Infantry Division, who, together with all available troops, were frantically pouring men and material onto the eastern banks of the Rhine, determined to make the most of this unforeseen opportunity.

For two or three days we were frequently placed on a one-hour alert in anticipation of being called by the infantry to help them pound away at the slowly expanding bridgehead.

Nothing materialized, and we settled down to garrison life with its training programs, inspections, "B" rations, and recreational facilities. It was only natural for us to complain, as we had on similar occasions before, about the apparent incongruity of a training program directly after we had proved ourselves so admirably in combat. Most of us had been soldiers long enough to accept our fates resignedly, dismissing the proposal good-naturedly with an "Oh well, that's the army!" Actually, greater minds than ours had discovered through the years, that training is a progressive thing, which is just as necessary to the production and maintenance of elite troops, as it is to recruits. Retrospectively, we must agree that as these not-so-trying duty hours proceeded, we were quickly restored to neat, clean, good-looking human beings, proud of ourselves and of our unit. We felt better, slept better, and regained a healthy outlook on life. One cannot help but give some credit to these days, for being partially responsible for the thoroughly disciplined, perfectly coordinated team, which made legends grow around the combat adventures of Task Force Lovelady.

With the skill of long experience, we swiftly returned to normal strength in men and tanks. Concrete and steel slope plates, which had demonstrated their value on Copeland's tank, were constructed on many others.

Anxiously, we followed the news about the painfully, expensively enlarging bridgehead, the collapse of the Ludendorf Bridge, the building of pontoon bridges, the cutting of the autobahn. We knew that sometime soon, our task force, with its sister units throughout the division, would again be called into the fray to punch holes in the stubbornly opposing forces, perhaps precipitating another breakthrough, this time into the heart of the Reich.

On the 18th of March, we reverted to our customary assignment with Combat Command "B," and moved into Berrenrath. Hardly had we gotten settled, than a battalion from Major General Terry Allen's 104th "Timberwolf" Division, was attached to us, and Task Force Lovelady was on its way to fresh adventure, as related chronologically in Chapter V, page 93.

CHAPTER IV

ARDENNES

During which the fury of Task Force Lovelady rises to new heights
in a thirty-day nightmare when life and death are one.

Grey clouds and cold mists blanketed the always drab landscape around Mausbach, Gressenich, and Sherpenseel. It was the 16th of December. Radios blared the news that large German forces, concentrated in the vicinity of Prum, had made a breakthrough in the weakest part of the American lines. Looking at our maps, we found Prum, sighed slightly, and remarked, "That's south of us, not even in our Corps' sector. Somebody else can worry about that!" Satisfied, we finished our card games, letters, made evening snacks from recently received Christmas packages, and went to bed. We were, perhaps, more complacent about the startling news than most of the world.

There was more air activity than usual that night. We could hear planes strafing not far away, and there were larger ships, too, bombers, we supposed. The steady pulsation of their motors warned us that they were German. In the morning, we learned that unknown numbers of enemy paratroopers had been dropped behind our lines to destroy bridges, harass small groups of soldiers, and generally to disrupt communications. Most of these were apprehended during the day and no damage was done to Task Force Lovelady.

On the 17th and 18th of December, we became more interested in the bold attack. The grave possibilities of this furious counter-offensive began to dawn on us. Already, Field Marshal von Rundstedt's forces were driving their wedge deep into our crumbling lines, destroying normally rear echelon installations, capturing hospitals, and supply dumps. They were headed towards Spa, Liege, then perhaps the Meuse River and on to Paris, or north, behind the entire United States First Army to Antwerp. The Fifth Panzer and the Sixth S.S. Armies were throwing every ounce of strength into this last bitter attempt to avert defeat. Rules of warfare were thrown to the winds as the atrocity minded Germans massacred American prisoners rather than transport them rearward. The weather turned cold, the mists changed to snow, and soon the ground was white. Roads were deep with snow, making cross-country travel more difficult than ever.

The men of Task Force Lovelady made other plans for Christmas. On the 19th of December, we packed hurriedly, driving as quickly as possible to an assembly position near Spa. It was after midnight when we finally halted in open fields, cold and wind-swept, atop a hill.

We had seen occasional V-l "Buzz Bombs" before, but now we must have been along their main route of flight to Liege and Antwerp. All night, their throbbing, sputtering motors droned, spitting streaks of fire from their exhausts, like dotted lines across a great celestial map.

By dawn, we had more definite orders, and proceeded southward to secure a road junction towards which the enemy spearheads were rapidly advancing in their unabated dash from Stavelot to Spa, Marche, Liege.

Spa, world famous for its mineral baths, had been the site of United States First Army headquarters. In imminent danger of capture, they had moved out, leaving behind only a few service troops, who happily guided, with sighs of relief, the tanks of Task Force Lovelady through the city.

A short distance further on, we passed through a tremendous gasoline dump, millions of five-gallon cans stacked at intervals through hundreds of acres of dense forests. Service troops were hastily loading these in trucks, moving them to safety. We later learned that the Germans were just as earnestly drawing gasoline from the other side of the dump.

As we wound along the narrow, snowy roads, it became clear that American troops were scarce. The only visible defense were anti-aircraft guns, the larger ones being used for road blocks, strategically dug-in on curves and tops of hills. Soon, these disappeared and we were in no-man's land, approaching the road junction we were to secure.

"E" company was in the lead that day, commanded by 1st Lieutenant Hope. They reached their objective at the same time an enemy column was driving through. This surprised the Germans, all of whom were killed or captured before they could fire their guns.

Leaving road blocks here, we received orders to move on to Stavelot. An enemy armored column had apparently received orders exactly contrary to ours, for they were coming, with equal resolve, towards us. The two spearheads met, locking horns of hot steel in ferocious mortal combat.

Lieutenant Hope was killed when his tank was hit, and Lieutenant Stanko wounded. Casualties mounted but were not excessive, considering the raging battle.

The day ended and we had lost four Sherman tanks by anti-tank and tank fire. The enemy task force must have sent a gloomy report back to their higher headquarters, too, because they lost a Mark IV tank with a 150 millimeter cannon mounted on it, five armored and two personnel and supply trucks, one towed 150 millimeter artillery piece, two towed 75 millimeter anti-tank guns, three large personnel carrying half-tracks, and

one Volkswagen.

Thus ended our first day in the Battle of the Bulge, with the promise of even harder ones to come. Von Rundstedt must exploit his advantage to the fullest extent before we could get organized, or lose his great gamble.

Our Combat Command was attached to the XVIIIth Airborne Corps and the 82nd Airborne Division worked along our right flank, also in the direction of Stavelot.

The "E" company battle group was still detained in the vicinity of Trois Pont, when "D" company tried to ease the predicament by a flanking movement to the left. At Parfondry, they encountered large numbers of enemy infantry. These troops were more than ordinarily savage, composed mostly of S.S. and Paratroopers. Since infancy, they had been Hitler's favorite children, whose only creed was "Victory or Death for the Fuhrer!" Their minds had become warped by the narrow limits of military training to such an extent that the commitment of atrocities was a fascinating diversion for them. Human life was the least precious of German commodities, and they dealt their blows and gave their own lives with the same sadistic abandon.

It is difficult for Americans to develop the emotion called hate. Good sportsmanship, fair play, reluctance to kill, failure to beat the foe when he is down, will oftimes lose a battle, for by these rules, a team dedicated to killing, cannot be fully aggressive. Parfondry shall remain a monument to the birth of the deepest, fiercest hate for the German people by all the ranks in the command of Task Force Lovelady. When "D" company with infantry liberated the tiny village, they found only a few living civilians, huddled in dark corners of cellars, too terrified, too overcome by grief, to move or welcome American troops with their usual hearty greetings. For, strewn about the houses were the corpses of whole families, from babies to parents and grandparents. Obviously innocent bystanders, they had been killed by beating or shooting in cold blood. Compassion for the victims and burning hate for the foe welled up simultaneously in the hearts of the soldiers who witnessed these gruesome scenes. We had read accounts of the massacre at Malmedy, but no amount of reading can replace a few minutes of seeing.

With doubled efforts, Task Force Lovelady suddenly became a wild beast, stampeding enemy positions with increased ruthlessness and ferocity, which often, throughout this memorable campaign, made even the most rigorously disciplined enemy troops wither in horrified amazement, their dying soldiers more than once expiring, not with the word of their Fuhrer on their tongues, but a final conviction, learned far too late, "Deutchland Kaput!"

By way of disposition of our task force, the situation was peculiar. The

command post, in order to maintain liaison with both battle groups, split into two communications sections, one at Maulin du Rui, one in the railroad station on the road to Grand Coo. Driving from the command post to Grand Coo, a distance of two miles in a southerly direction, one looked down into a valley on the right side with a parallel range of hills rising above it. Halfway up this range was the town of La Gleize, strongly held by the 1st S.S. "Adolph Hitler" Panzer Division. Task Force Lovelady and other units had cut them off completely, then left them quite alone, while Task Force MacGeorge and his First Battalion systematically set about to eliminate this potent pocket. In the meantime, as one drove from our command post towards Grand Coo, he would invariably be fired upon by enemy tanks in La Gleize, which often could be plainly seen as they changed positions.

At Grand Coo, the route turned sharply eastward, through Petit Coo, whose only installations were the aid station guarded by a platoon of light tanks from "B" company and the Reconnaissance platoon. Half a mile further east was Trois Fonts, the right boundary of the main line of resistance, held by "E" company in charge of Major Stallings. North of this was Parfondry, the left boundary of the main line of resistance, held by the "D" company battle group, led by Captain Richard Edmark. Thus a triangle was formed by the two battle groups and the aid station, the left leg of which was exposed to enemy attack, unprotected and unguarded except for occasional patrols. The right leg was secure by virtue of a small river with units of the 82nd Airborne Division on the other side.

To relieve the increasingly desperate plight of Hitler's finest soldiers in La Gleize, the logical axis of advance would be behind our two battle groups, the attack proceeding from the northeast, directed towards Petit Coo, thence up the valley to their objective.

Unfortunately, this important probability, although it occurred to us, was not seriously considered, since our chief interest was directed towards organizing an attack to retake Stavelot.

Early in the afternoon on the 22nd of December, the present writer returned to Petit Coo from the command post and engaged in replacing a radio in the peep. One of the light tankers noticed a group of soldiers walking towards us in the distance. The radio was disregarded temporarily; its aerial left unconnected. Had it been in operation, a frantic warning from Major Stallings would have been heard, telling us to get out of there in a hurry.

Standing complacently in the doorway of the aid station, previously a restaurant, we watched, with little more than mild interest, the advancing soldiers, silhouetted against the sunlit hillside.

We recognized them as enemy troops when they were perhaps 200 yards

away. There were about fifty of them, but more came over the crest of the hill until approximately eighty were counted. They advanced in approved infantry fashion, irregularly dispersed and about six paces apart. Nonchalantly, and with no effort at concealment, they marched towards us, utterly disregarding our plainly visible light tanks, whose guns were now threateningly trained upon them.

With admirable presence of mind, seen so frequently among tankers, the "B" company men held their fire until the enemy was about 50 yards away.

By that time, our aid station personnel were so intrigued by the attack, in which no shots had yet been fired, and so confident that our light tanks could annihilate what we thought was simply a large patrol, that no effort was made to escape.

Finally, the tanks opened up smartly and in unison, with their .30 caliber bow guns, spraying the thoroughly exposed German infantry mercilessly.

Many fell, but many more continued their advance, still marching almost at attention, polished black boots and aluminum mess equipment shining brightly.

Then our tanks began firing their 37 millimeter guns loaded with high explosive ammunition, among the foe. More fell, and more advanced, seeking cover behind the buildings on their side of the road.

Now the Germans began to fire rifle and other small arms at us, the first round shattering a large mirror behind the doorway we had been standing in. This brought us, the medical section, to the shocking realization that we were not watching a training film, and, in fact, were in the midst of a fire fight. Judiciously, we repaired to the basement, there to discuss our sad predicament.

Another wave of enemy infantry came over the hill, followed by others which we did not wait to see. Their mortar support had arrived, and these unbearable missiles crashed around the aid station until it became completely untenable.

The first groups of the attackers had reached cellars in the houses across the street, from whose windows they fired bazookas at our far from impregnable light tanks, knocking two of them out, killing or wounding most of the courageous occupants.

A brief and trembling underground council brought us to the decision that we should try to escape by dashing through a barbed wire fence to the

slightly sunken railroad bed, thence towards Grand Coo.

This we did, but when the sixth man was shot to death by a machine gun, the remaining two aid men returned to the basement, where they spent a harrowing forty-eight hours waiting for us to retake the village, at the same time performing valuable services to the wounded left behind.

The rest of us escaped unharmed, and reported the details of the incident. The reconnaissance platoon fared less well, nearly all of them being captured, including Lieutenant Gray and Corporal Dye.

In the meantime, the two battle groups were completely cut off, and only the river prevented them from being surrounded.

By utilizing every bit of fire power they had, and by the very close artillery support offered by the 82nd Airborne unit, the main fighting elements of the task force held their ground. We were still in radio communication and Major Stallings would report at regular intervals that everything was "Just fine, thank you!"

Since all of the infantry was with these isolated battle groups, "B" company had to launch an attack against the intruders alone. This they did, but it was simply impossible to retake a diligently defended town with nothing but tanks. However, they did lengthen the enemy casualty list and prevented further penetration towards La Gleize.

On the second day, part of the 30th Infantry joined our light tanks and what few medium tanks were available, retaking Petit Coo, establishing contact with the battle groups, and sending the remnants of the S.S. Infantry regiment back over the hill.

Many of the enemy soldiers were dressed in American uniforms and wore American equipment. Almost all were S.S. troops, and the most aggressive we had ever met.

Major Stallings reported that they had had a good time and felt that they could kill more Germans when they were attacked on three sides, than when they could fire in only one direction.

The La Gleize pocket had been expertly demolished, and the 30th Infantry Division resumed the attack on Stavelot as Task Force Lovelady moved to another front on Christmas Eve.

The crunching of fresh, dry snow added another sound to the ordinary noises that tanks make, as Task Force Lovelady rolled through the crisp, moonlit night. Whole forest of Christmas trees spread out before us, and

could have been adorned no more beautifully than by their natural trimmings. Paradoxically, some seemed to be hung with silvery artificial icicles, the same as we used to use on the trees at home. Closer scrutiny revealed these to be bunches of narrow tin-foil strips dropped by Allied bombers to distort enemy radar equipment. Real stars hung over our Christmas trees and they were lighted by the dotted tinsel of exhaust flames from the frequent flights of "Buzz Bombs." Shivering in the cold steel of half-tracks, peeps, and tanks, we drove into the night, finally bivouacking in the early morning hours in a grove of scrub spruce. We made our beds on the snow and were worn out sufficiently by the long cold ride to sleep for a few hours. Awakening more from coldness than necessity, we stretched our benumbed legs, beat our arms against our bodies, and halfheartedly wished one another "Merry Christmas!"

By ten o'clock, we were again on the move, stopping in the afternoon for turkey dinner served from the kitchen trucks. The mess personnel deserved much credit for preparing such a heartening repast under such untoward conditions. Spirits lightened and we set up defenses around Oppagne, sleeping more soundly and comfortably than we had on Christmas Eve.

On the 26th of December, we moved a few miles where we instituted strategic defenses from the high ground east of Ny to the railroad tracks in Melreaux. Never had the tanks of Task Force Lovelady been so firmly entrenched against an anticipated enemy attack. We had been brought here to thwart the most recent German threat, whose cold steel fingers were already probing the area for a weak spot. Daily the line of defense was elaborated upon. Tank dozers scooped out tons of earth, where all but the turrets of tanks were thoroughly concealed. Then they were camouflaged so expertly that anyone who did not know they were there would have difficulty finding them. Mines were laid, and concertina wire stretched between trees for hundreds of yards.

During these days, Colonel Lovelady would go from outpost to outpost inspecting his positions and talking cheerfully with the tankers. His favorite question would be, "Have you killed any Germans today?" And were the answer, "No, sir," he would good-naturedly remind us that the war would end quicker if each of us killed at least one German a day. This usually brought a grin from the prematurely lined faces of the tankers and a hearty retort that "The day isn't over yet, sir!"

A few scattered rounds of artillery was all that reminded us that the enemy was within shooting distance. On the 29th of December we were directed to send reconnaissance in force into Trinal, which appeared to be a center of activity. A platoon from "D" company performed this mission, losing one tank to a mine. Retribution was more than equal, for they killed a hundred enemy soldiers in addition to knocking out a self-propelled and an anti-tank

gun. Returning to Ny after accomplishing their mission, our artillery took over, singing a "Serenade" to Trinal, by firing several rounds from every available piece to our sector at the same instant.

Another job had ended and we were called for more important tasks. On New Year's Eve, our tanks shook loose their camouflage, crawled from their dug-outs, and marched to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Borsu and Odet.

Anticipating a few days to at least thaw out, we billeted in Belgian homes, unpacked to dry our equipment, and spent New Year's Day devoid of celebration other than relative peace of mind. This was unjustified, for suddenly a battalion of the 330th Infantry Regiment from the 83rd Infantry Division was attached to us, a new attack order was received, quickly studied and plotted on our maps. Colonel Lovelady fell ill with influenza but would not believe that he could not carry on. He was transported to the assembly area in an ambulance, still feverish, and now scarcely able to sit up. Finally succumbing to our pleas, he agreed to stay with the 45th Armored Medical Battalion until he felt better. We disliked losing him, even for a short while, but he left us in thoroughly capable hands and we became Task Force Stallings.

Skidding along slowly on secondary roads, we twined around curves, cliffs and hills, to an assembly area. One tank slid over a cliff and was jolted to a sudden stop by a huge beech tree. Others were stuck at intervals all along the way. Maintenance sections labored through the night to get them back on the road with the rest of the task force in time to fight.

Von Rundstedt's powerful counter-offensive had been contained. His steel fingers had poked into Belgium as far as they could go. Now these same fingers must bend, clutching onto what they had so daringly, brazenly gained; failing in this, they must slowly, painfully withdraw into Germany. To push them back and cut them up, the United States Third Army from the northwest, with the British from the south, would drive in unison to pinch the bulge in two at Houffalize. With the 2nd Armored Division on the right and the 3rd Armored on the left, General Hodges chose this sector for his main effort.

On the 3rd of January, our task force began the most hard-fought battle of its glorious career, which in fifteen endless days, would leave frozen, exsanguinated, decimated of men, officers and tanks.

Crossing the line of departure at Vaux Chavanne, the tanks and infantry met a normal amount of small arms resistance whose effectiveness was enhanced by the generous use of mortars. The town was soon cleared; however, and the task force pressed on over fire trails, wooded lanes, rutted

and snow-covered, to capture the village of Malempre. By the time this was cleared out, there were seventy-five dead Germans rapidly stiffening in grotesque positions on the bitter cold ground. Ten more were wounded and sixty-three were captured. Many were wearing American uniforms and equipment, and one group was firing an American .50 caliber machine gun into our troops. As soon as the town was irretrievably lost to the Germans, they began macerating it with the most intense mortar, artillery, and rocket fire, we had ever experienced. In a short time, six of our men were killed and twenty more wounded. Screaming rockets, pounding in fifty or more at a time and amplified in the winter air, sent chills up and down our spines, encouraging us to seek whatever shelter was at hand. Shells burst all over the place, adding to the difficulty of keeping our forces organized.

The attack resumed with even greater fury on the next day. Enemy mines were buried by the blinding snow storm, and their defenses were all but invisible until it was too late. Observation was impossible, precluding all hope for artillery support. Frozen feet and hands slowed our reactions and reflexes until we were benumbed to all feeling. Infantrymen limped into the aid station, feet wet, cold and blue, suffering the agonizing pain of Trench Foot. Whenever possible they had been washing their socks in steel helmets, afterwards pinning them on the inside of their combat jackets to allow the body heat to dry them. There was not time or even the minimum facilities for taking all the recommended precautions, and trench foot became more and more alarming as name after name was stricken from the list of battle-effective soldiers. The battle raged on, and we gained scarcely two hundred yards after having some sixty men killed and wounded, and losing two tanks. The command post remained in Malempre, where an estimated 3000 rounds of enemy artillery poured in during the day. A large mortar shell hit directly in the command half-track, killing T/Sgt. Syrjala instantly, seriously wounding Tec/5 Allen and several others. Lieutenant Luton, our dependable, highly duty-conscious liaison officer, Technician Fifth Grade Farmer, Private Bugg, all from the command group, were evacuated with wounds within those few disastrous minutes. As time went on, key men in the task force were lost as never before. The enemy lost three of its anti-tank guns which were hidden in the edge of the woods.

On the fifth day of January, the line held steady, pitching back and forth with nothing but losses on both sides. Only a night attack could relieve the situation. This was launched and we gained about 100 yards through dense, treacherous woods and heavy snow.

Now the tide had turned temporarily, and after excellent artillery preparation, our force jumped off with renewed vigor into the village of Fraiture. The tank companies aggressively flanked the objective in as neat a maneuver as ever was written in a Field Manual, while the infantry, with more tanks to support them, moved in, cleaning it out rapidly Two hundred

and eighty-seven prisoners were collected, 57 were killed, and 20 more wounded. Four 75 millimeter assault guns were destroyed, the same number of huge 120 millimeter mortars, 6 personnel carriers and much equipment. Thirty horses were captured which were given to the Belgian farmers. Task Force Stallings rejoiced and paid silent homage to the eighty men and officers lost in the last four days.

The attack continued towards Regne against persistent opposition, which slackened only after we had knocked out three Mark V Panther tanks, captured 60 prisoners, killed 20 and wounded 5.

Gordon Fraser, reliable N.B.C. commentator, who with Ernie Pyle, Dick Tregaskis, and men of similarly high caliber, did much to bring the war close to the hearts of all Americans, had a habit of turning up during exciting and historic occasions. Though this was no place for anyone not positively duty-bound to be, we were not surprised to see Mr. Fraser wandering around Malempre through the snow, the death, the desolation, unconcernedly making notes on the little human interest things that would make good stories for the folks back home. Riding in a medical half-track before the break of dawn, he went to the most forward positions to talk with the men who were actually killing Germans and to watch the evacuation of wounded from the place where they first fell.

Major Stallings was leading the infantry across a field which was being thoroughly sprayed by small arms fire. A "Burp" gun bullet hit him in the back, breaking ribs and opening his chest in a great sucking wound that threatened him with suffocation. Blue and breathless, he was brought to the aid station by Lieutenant Columella in a reconnaissance peep, which Major Stallings later described as the roughest ride he ever hopes to take. On that very morning, General Boudinot had radioed him the congratulatory message that he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for heroic exploits in Normandy.

Captain Ronald K. Bacon assumed command of our fast-dwindling task force in this emergency, and reported the loss of its commander to higher headquarters. Then he continued to prosecute the attack with undiminished vigor, and with resolve undaunted by the loss of an officer ordinarily above him in station. This trait was not uncommon among the ranks of our task force, for we had long been trained by our far-sighted commander to assume the responsibility of the next higher position immediately as the one above us became a casualty.

Colonel Lovelady had been propped up in bed, which had recently been moved from the medical battalion to Combat Command "B" headquarters, listening to radio reports and staying with us mentally throughout the attack. Now he gingerly mustered his slowly regaining strength, dressed, and

returned to take command, thus changing our name back to Task Force Lovelady.

The 1st Battalion task force was in Regne, and, working together, it was quickly secured. We had lost one tank to anti-tank fire, one to a mine, and one to a German tank destroyer.

After defending Regne for two days under harassing artillery and rocket fire, we moved administratively to Hebronval, from whence the remainder of the attack to Cherain would be launched.

Here we thawed out, reequipped partially, and on the 12th of January, hastily moved out towards Langlir, there to engage a stubborn foe in the final phases of an attack which was gradually reducing the unsightly bulge into Belgium.

Arriving at the outskirts of Bihain, our jump-off to Langlir was deterred overnight while infantry attacks routed the enemy from acres of bazooka defended woods.

Before dawn, the tanks charged into action, skirting Langlir and plunging down the road to Lomre. Here, "D" company lost a tank to mines, but evened the score by knocking out a self-propelled gun. Casualties were heavy, especially among infantrymen, because of the artillery and mortar fire, which, during the past two weeks, had been showered upon us in greater profusion than we heretofore believed was within the realms of enemy capability. Twenty-seven prisoners were captured, another self-propelled gun was destroyed, and an 88 millimeter ground mount, in addition to a signal truck and a half-track. A smoothly operated bazooka team from our infantry disabled two Mark IV's, and two Mark V's.

Before dawn on the 14th of January, our tanks and infantry were creeping along the fringe of woods southeast of Lomre. Across the fields of snow lay Cherain, our objective. The lead tank hit a mine but the attack moved on, and the task force knocked out a Mark IV, a 20 millimeter anti-aircraft battery mounted on a half-track, and a Volkswagen. Another Sherman died of wounds inflicted by an anti-tank gun, when it poked its nose out of the woods. Direct fire was coming in from every angle, rapidly thinning our ranks. "E" company tried to dash into Cherain and lost two more tanks. Angrily, Task Force Lovelady coiled again at the edge of the woods, organized a coordinated attack and struck with all its might. Three more tanks from "E" company were lost along with most of their crews and many more infantrymen shed their lives in what was swiftly becoming only a monument to the memory of Task Force Lovelady.

To be sure, these were days to try the very souls of men! The grimness of

the day before was multiplied on the 15th of January. Bitterly, the ten tanks left in our two companies, with the remnants of the infantry battalion, again marched in the face of death. One tank returned, while the larger part of a hundred doughboys guarded the other nine with their lifeless bodies.

Cold, wet, miserable with trench foot, frozen fingers, and battle weary minds, men whose tanks had been knocked out would plod back into the aid station at Lomre. Here they stripped, sat by a hot stove while their clothes dried, ate and drank hot coffee. In a few hours they were fighting mad again, apparently offended by the effrontery of any German force who dared to defy the tanks of Task Force Lovelady. What few Shermans could be repaired, and others which could be mustered from maintenance company, were manned by these crews, who plunged back into the fray, more than once never to return. To them, we can but offer humble thanks.

When all else failed, "B" company's light tanks charged into that deadly German target range, dashing about wildly, purposely drawing fire so others could localize it, permitting artillery to be brought upon the offending pieces. This was no more successful than previous attempts. Finally, with two tank destroyers from the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, three light tanks and about 60 infantrymen left in the task force, we were withdrawn into Lomre, while other units attacked the defiantly held town of Cherain from every side, until it eventually crumbled.

Task Force Lovelady was down but not out. This once great and powerful war machine was shattered, but not irreparably. It was defeated but unashamed. Victory, like success, sometimes thrives in the face of adversity, and oftimes is gained only by a series of defeats. Task Force Lovelady would rise again, as it had before, to avenge the lives of its comrades with the same forceful blows that had been dealt to Hitler's finest troops in three countries.

No sooner had we withdrawn into Lomre and been attached to Combat Command "A," than our maintenance teams set about recovering salvageable tanks and putting them in fighting order. By the 18th of January, we had 17 Shermans and 10 light tanks ready for combat. The infantry battalion was relieved, and a similar unit from the 335th Infantry Regiment of the 84th Division was attached. We were alerted to move through our nemesis, Cherain, and proceed to Sterpigny, where another mission awaited us.

This was done under the cover of darkness, which was extremely difficult without lights, in the driving snowstorm. The fresh and wonderfully trained infantry battalion led the attack on the morning of the 19th of January, to secure the high ground east of Sterpigny. The mission was accomplished by

1030 hours through light opposition.

After the objective was secured, however, our troops were again subjected to intense mortar and direct fire which came crashing through the trees in a most frightening manner. It was one of these which wounded Captain Bacon, who had never missed a day of combat previously.

Shelling continued through the night but during the next day our own artillery, and especially Lieutenant McGreevy's assault gun platoon, did a lot of well observed firing which proved to be unusually effective.

The bulge was dissolving rapidly now. We were pinched out of contact with the enemy, and returned to our regular Combat Command "B" control.

For us, the Ardennes offensive ended exactly one month after we had entered it. We had seen the mighty threat first contained, then slowly, relentlessly, sent the enemy through the hell of their own making, back to the *Vaterland*.

Task Force Lovelady, along with the rest of the division, and in fact, all of VII Corps, repaired far from the noises of war for a rest which was never more deserved, more needed or more appreciated.

We billeted in the unpretentious village of Bonsin, not many miles from Huy, a city on the River Meuse, which we had liberated together with its vital bridges, early in September. For two full weeks we never once heard a single artillery shell coming in or going out, the first glorious experience of that kind we had enjoyed since landing on the beaches of Normandy seven long months ago.

Our days were busily engaged with training the many reenforcements who joined us, reequipping, providing needed maintenance. We showered, and for some, it was the first bath since mid-December. We were issued new uniforms where needed, and we laundered our old ones. American Red Cross trucks came frequently, movies were shown daily, and there were U.S.O. shows. Passes to Verviers and Paris were again available in limited quantities. With practiced efficiency, Task Force Lovelady groomed itself and soon became the same highly spirited, combat effective machine of steel and guts that it had been before the interlude which wrote its bitter chapter 'ere the last was finished.

On the 7th day of February, our tanks marched confidently and in full strength back into Stolberg, the same sector it had departed from, and started to plan its part in the inevitable thrust to the Rhine.

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The action between the Roer and the Rhine is described in Chapter III.

CHAPTER V

CENTRAL EUROPE

In which Task Force Lovelady crosses the Rhine, forces another breakthrough, this time of the Remagen Bridgehead; plays a vital role in the closure of the "Rose Pocket," knifes its way eastward in a spectacular dash through Nordhausen to the banks of the River Mulde, there ending its victorious career amidst the defeated remnants of a once proud German Army.

Nine months of spearheading the First Army's most powerful Corps, the VIIth, had wrought the 3rd Armored Division into a highly polished precision instrument, capable of measuring death to the German foe accurately, deliberately and with scientific method. It was no surprise, then, that our finely tempered steel should be chosen to point the javelin which would thrust straight and true into the black heart of the Reich. General Hodges' toehold had become a foothold on the Remagen bridgehead, as the infantry divisions cut the Cologne-Frankfurt autobahn. It was large enough to mass troops and supplies in sufficient numbers to exploit an armored breakthrough. The time was ripe to invite the 3rd Armored Division into the now familiar game, ask them to sever the taut ring of enemy defense which was binding the other players in, then move them behind the main line of resistance, sending them out into space to exploit whatever opportunities might arise.

Task Force Lovelady was thoroughly prepared, ready to wield its might against a determined opponent. On the 22nd day of March, Lieutenant Columella and his Reconnaissance platoon reconnoitered our proposed route, crossed the Rhine and selected a site for us to bivouac. Early the next morning, the main body tracked noisily along the highways to Bonn, crossing a Navy-built pontoon bridge, south of Bad Godesberg.

Here was the storied Rhine, its splendor enhanced by a beautiful backdrop of majestic mountains sprinkled with ancient castles. No wonder this fabled land had been the inspiration of poets and musicians through the centuries! These sights puzzled us in Germany, for we could never understand how such a scenic, fertile country could yield such a ferocious population of war-makers.

Winding around steep trails we drove inland for several miles, bivouacking in fields torn intermittently by enemy artillery. By nightfall we had learned that our final objective was Altenkirchen, and that we would attack on the 25th of March.

When we sprung into action at 0430 in the morning, we found that friendly troops had not yet reached our supposed line of departure. Passing through them anyway, we were held up temporarily by mines. Reaching the starting

point, "D" company, in the lead, lost two tanks almost immediately to mines. This was a day of heavy slugging, each man giving his utmost to put a dent in the opponent's lines. By 8 o'clock in the evening, we had punctured the inner ring of defense a distance of six miles, a gain greater than had been made in the First Army's sector during the past week. "D" company had lost three tanks, little enough for destroying two enemy tanks, four anti-tank and three self-propelled guns, seven trucks, three artillery pieces with their prime-movers, and two flak guns, besides capturing ninety-five prisoners! Task Force Lovelady was on the loose again, playing the game it knew so well, with all the brilliance of a perfectly coordinated team!

Leaving Fiersbach the following morning, we were due for a trying day. A frontal attack was impossible because so many anti-tank weapons were hidden in a broad wooded semi-circle that they could pick us off like ducks in a shooting gallery. Flanking movements were equally difficult because of rugged terrain features which precluded maneuvering. The provoking slowness of an infantry attack would be the only way to break the gauntlet of fire which presented an unsurpassable barrier to tanks.

There was no alternative and we were forced to remain in approximately the same position all day while the infantry systematically destroyed strongpoint after strongpoint. Close artillery support accounted for two self-propelled guns which had played havoc with "E" company. P-47's flew over and bombed an enemy tank to Kingdom Come, then strafed several suspected positions. Towards the end of the day, "E" company knocked out another self-propelled gun, and we were finally on the way.

The column moved most of the night in a drizzling rain to reach its objective near Altenkirchen a few hours before dawn. We had accepted heavy losses that day in the interest of achieving a definite breakthrough. "E" company had lost five tanks, "D" company one. Four of Captain Aldinger's supply trucks had been knocked out, one after another, and one medical half-track was hit by an anti-tank gun.

Task Force Richardson had already entered Altenkirchen from the right flank, and much of Combat Command "A" had broken out of their sector of lighter resistance to dash headlong towards Hitler's inner sanctum.

The anticipated breakthrough had been accomplished within two days of committing the 3rd Armored Division! All the pent-up might on the Remagen Bridgehead was ready to pour through the gaping German lines to exploit the successes of our division!

It was clear that we were destined to tailor another pocket, this time sewing shut Germany's greatest industrial region, the Ruhr Valley. The Ninth Army

had bridged the Rhine further north and were driving hard to the east. Now, we must meet them.

After following the route of Combat Command "A" on the 27th of March, we were ready to lead an attack on Marburg the next morning.

Leaving Herborn to cross the Dill River, we reached our line of departure before nine o'clock in the morning. With the exhilarating smell of both impending victory and spring in the air, morale was never higher. Soft sunshine brought to life the early morning dew, making cloudlets of steam-like fog rise from the warming earth. Colonel Lovelady drove lo the head of his column in his peep, waving over his shoulder for the tankers to "Step on it." As their pace reached 20 or 25 miles per hour, he would drop back to a more nearly normal place in the line, sometimes stopping by a crossroad to admire his heavy team as they passed in battle review. When their pace would tend to slacken, he would again speed recklessly ahead and encourage them to drive on. Overhead, hundreds of silver-winged American bombers droned their way in perfect echelon, towards the ever diminishing target areas in Central Germany. The thrill of watching these symbols of America's overwelming power in me air and on the ground, and being a part of it, spurred the tankers on to even greater endeavor, and they now "barreled" along the highways at top speed.

The column would not even slow down for pockets of small arms resistance and the tanks knocked out seven enemy trucks, practically without stopping. A great fuel supply dump was captured, its location reported, then left behind without taking time to examine its contents. Town after town fell so quickly that the people didn't have time to put out the white flags, and could only crouch in their doorways, staring in awe at the unexpected advance. French, Belgian, English, Polish and Russian prisoners of war lined the roads by the thousands, waving and shouting "Viva l'Amerique!" in all its variations. At one point we looked into a valley on our left and watched a German supply column moving in the opposite direction, obviously unaware that we were anything but their own forces. Not wishing to waste time playing with them, as long as they were hopelessly lost anyway, we continued straight towards our objective.

In an hour and a half we had travelled more than 20 miles and were on the southern edge of Marburg, one of Germany's cultural centers, a city of some 25,000 population. Its several hospitals and lack of industrial development had scared it from the fate of destruction by Allied bombers that we had seen in Cologne, Bonn and Altenkirchen. Its great 13th Century Cathedral, and University, founded in 1527, escaped completely the ravages of this most terrible of wars. Here, "D" company was halted by a log and earthen road block, covered with infantry forces armed with small weapons, grenades and panzerfausts, and well zeroed-in by mortars. Without waiting

for this to be cleared, "E" company swung sharply left, encircled the city, and came in to it from the west at 1030 hours. Thus, complete and overwhelming surprise was attained as we hurriedly and with the method of long experience took over the prize and sealed its exits before the consternation of the inhabitants began to wane.

In the meantime, engineers had forced the road block and the rest of the task force joined in the securement of the objective.

Entire garrisons of troops with a high percentage of officers were captured. Formal surrenders were accepted all through the day. The final count was 2000 prisoners, not counting the 6000 wounded in the seven hospitals.

A brief review of the hospitals revealed a number of Americans had been captured between the Roer and the Rhine. They were collected and started back on the route of evacuation after telling us some of the stories of their experiences. They had received as good treatment as was possible for the dwindling medical facilities of the disintegrating German state to render. Food was scarce, but they were as well nourished as the German wounded. "K" rations actually looked good to them, and they could not have devoured them with more zest, had they been turkey.

The civilian Nazis had thrived during the Hitler regime in this ancient and wealthy university center. More arrogant than most we had met, it was necessary to convince them that we meant business and that their homes were ours for billets and command posts.

Well-stocked Nazi warehouses were quickly ransacked until everyone had new flags with great black swastika's, arm bands and other souvenirs.

Fine liqueurs and an abundance of Schnapps were collected, consumed in moderation, the rest being loaded into our vehicles for future reference.

Marburg was the biggest prize yet seized east of the Rhine. Task Force Lovelady reveled in its spoils of war and prepared for another exciting day.

At five o'clock in the morning on March 29th. Captain John Haldeman, who had led us unerringly through much of France, Belgium and into Germany, took his Reconnaissance Company out of Marburg to find the best route leading north. At the first town, Colbe, they hit a hornet's nest of small arms, panzerfausts and mortars. They were trapped with nothing but thin-skinned vehicles. Captain Haldeman was wounded in the neck and they called for help. A platoon from "B" company went to their rescue, the scrap developing into a full-fledged fire-fight in which our small force came out second best, several of our light tankers and Reconnaissance soldiers and officers being wounded or killed.

Meanwhile, the rest of our task force took a parallel route west of them, driving with all speed in the direction of Paderborn. Resistance stiffened during the day, "D" company encountering intense bazooka fire in Munchausen, and losing one tank. Rather than consume precious time opposing it, we flanked the town and continued northward, knocking out five trucks, capturing two large railroad guns and 170 prisoners. By dusk, we had travelled 48 miles!

Factories and farms poured forth their slave laborers, who greeted us joyously, exuberant on their day of liberation. A constant stream of these happy folk lined the road as they immediately started towards home; French and Belgians walking in the opposite direction from us, on one side of the road; Russians, Poles, Slavs, following us, on the other side, all trekking hopefully toward their respective homelands.

We continued our relentless drive on Paderborn on the 30th of March, through ever-increasing opposition. The enemy had bolstered its collapsing defenses with picked groups of S.S. soldiers, armed mainly with panzerfausts.

"B" company was leading when they were trapped at a road block in Wrexen. Almost simultaneously, three tanks were knocked out by the deadly panzerfausts, their operators thoroughly concealed in roadside dug-outs. As the tankers bailed out, they were mercilessly mowed down in a withering curtain of machine gun fire. Thus, three tankers were killed and several wounded, along with much of the infantry who had been riding with them. "E" company pulled its heavier weapons up to relieve the desperately beset light tankers. Their plight was temporarily eased and by dusk we were through the town, trying to blaze our way to the final objective. Due to the steep cliffs, completely fortified on the left side of the road, "E" company was stymied until the infantry ferreted out the tenacious defenders.

By the time that task was accomplished, night had closed in on us and it was decided to try to run the gauntlet under the cloak of darkness. Hardly had we started out than the resounding "BOOM!" of many panzerfausts crystallized in the chill air, sending great flashes of fire far into the night. "E" company lost two tanks, and one was captured before we could withdraw.

Returning to Wrexen for the night, we received the tragic word of Major General Rose's death. He had been in Task Force Welborn's column on our left flank, when they were treacherously ambushed by a strong force of enemy tanks. With no alternative but surrender, he started to hand his pistol to his captors, when they shot him to death with a Schmeisser machine gun. Because of the importance of the attack which he was leading, and in honor

of his personal courage, both VII Corps and First Army has since referred to the operation which virtually isolated the entire Ruhr industrial area, as the "Rose Pocket."

On March 31st, Task Force Lovelady resumed its attack, "D" company in the lead. Their first act was to knock out the Sherman which had fallen into enemy hands the night before. Then, just as the high ground was being cleared by the infantry with two tanks from "E" company, our combat command headquarters ordered us to withdraw into Wrexen and take another route to our objective.

This we did, losing another tank to that obnoxious little weapon, the panzerfaust, and fighting deep into the night.

Changing our route again, we jumped off at six o'clock in the morning, determined to reach our objective that day. At 1200 hours, Task Force Lovelady and Task Force Welborn entered the recently fire-bombed city of Paderborn against nothing but small arms resistance. By the time this devastated city was firmly secured, we had collected 160 prisoners.

Here the death of Major General Rose was partially avenged. A Nazi General Major by the name of Lippert was quite confidently and completely, without knowledge of our advancing tentacles, working in his garden. When the news of our impending approach finally dawned upon him, he rushed into his house, donned his dress uniform and tried to escape by running into the woods at the edge of the city. Refusing to halt at the repeated demands of our infantry, he was mortally wounded by a few well-placed bursts from a Tommy-gun.

Our task force was proud to have been a part of the 3rd Armored Division and to have assumed a vital part in closing the great Ruhr trap which was to yield 350,000 enemy troops who were now completely cut off from supplies and reinforcements.

Task Force Lovelady had helped sew up the Rose Pocket with stitches of steel. Other units were designated to destroy its contents while we resumed the First Army's eastward thrust.

"B" company had seized and secured Dahl, a suburb of Paderborn, capturing 15 prisoners against little opposition.

By April 4th, though we only had 16 Sherman and 4 light tanks left, we were sufficiently refreshed to begin another long drive, this time to the Weser River and beyond.

Leaving Ebberinghausen early in the morning, we spent most of the day

fighting terrain and clearing woods, eventually arriving on an objective already secured by the Ninth Armored Division, who had fought along our right flank.

Seeking to avoid opposition in order to expedite a rapid push to the river, we drove through the night until one o'clock in the morning, when we were halted by impassable roads. A reconnaissance patrol spent the rest of the night looking for a better route, ran into an enemy road block at which two of our soldiers gave their lives and one officer was seriously wounded.

Marked opposition from roving self-propelled guns and tanks weakened us to 15 Sherman and 9 light tanks, holding us up most of the day.

On April 7th, we turned north from Trendelburg to capture Helmarshausen on the Weser River, after destroying an enemy tank, 3 trucks and capturing 45 prisoners. The next day was spent securing the river banks and getting ready for the plunge to the other side.

On April 9th we were on the east bank of the Weser, rolling insistently eastward. By dusk we had reached Lenglern, two miles northwest of the ancient city of Gottingen, having destroyed one enemy tank, one self-propelled gun and capturing another 20 prisoners.

Now we were moving swiftly as town after town fell before they had time to complete their log and earthen road blocks. A town defended by small numbers of enemy bazooka-men and snipers was reason enough to draw our tanks up to a fighting front to practically destroy the village by tank, mortar and artillery fire, and sometimes by strafing planes.

"Axis Sally," the German female commentator who broadcast the news, highly flavored with propaganda, in English, had always given the 3rd Armored Division considerable infamous publicity. It was about this time that she professed the enemy's dislike for us, just as we had hated them so ruthlessly for many months. Speaking of the merciless onslaughts by. some American units, she reminded us that few German troops would take prisoners from the 1st and 9th Infantry Division, or the 3rd Armored. This bit of advertisement served only to make us more immaculate in our devastation of German property and lives, though we would not stoop to refuse the surrender of those who wished to give up legitimately.

By noon of the 11th of April, another large city fell to Task Force Lovelady. This was Nordhausen, the site of a notorious concentration camp.

The horrors of Nordhausen have been dwelt upon so extensively by others that we shall not describe its gruesome scenes here. Having seen it, we need no words to remind us. Its gross inhumanity has been burned deep into our

minds. We shall not forget the brutish sadism of the people who perpetrated and tolerated these dens of mass murder.

Hardly had Nordhausen been cleared than "E" company attacked southeast to secure Sundhausen in order to facilitate the speed of our eastward attack.

On April 12th, we roared out of Nordhausen for a blitz attack on Allstedt, another thirty miles along the road to Berlin. Racing through town after town, burgermeisters were informed that if a single shot was fired at an American soldier, we would burn that village to the ground. This was the kind of talk Nazis understood and we progressed rapidly, capturing 60 prisoners by dusk. Unknowingly, we had taken many towns which we were to come back to as their first occupation troops after the war. Haringen, Kelbra, Tilleda fell in rapid succession.

Just east of Tilleda, we encountered the tiny "Beetle" tanks, grotesque failures in the Nazis' book of weird weapons. These were little more than a yard long, less than two feet high, and about twenty inches wide. They were shaped like a tank and carried tracks. They were propelled by a battery-operated electrical mechanism and were guided by a reel of wire which unwound from the operator as the tank moved forward. The body of this lilliputian held in its warhead, several pounds of T.N.T. Our tanks riddled them into easy submission before they had done any damage and we by-passed them scoffingly.

These were days quite like those of nearly a year ago when we were racing through France. Instead of so many tanks and anti-tank guns, however, the most popular weapon now was the panzerfaust. We were also encountering more flak guns whose barrels were depressed for use as anti-tank weapons. Here, too, every town had its entrance blocked by sturdily constructed log and earth, or rock, road blocks. We were marching so fast, though, that many of these had not yet been completed.

On the 13th of April, "D" company ran into serious direct crossfire, which destroyed a peep and two tanks, causing some casualties. Our infantry flanked the town of Unterrissdorf on the right. "B" company was on the left and, as they were about to close in on the offenders, the entire crews of two large flak guns appeared with their hands over their heads.

After that, we proceeded for several miles, practically unmolested, stopping at the banks of the Saale River near Wettin. Finding the bridge blown and a few snipers childishly trying to be brave from the buildings on the other side of the river, our tankers cleaned out their .50 caliber machine guns by firing them into the windows. This was followed by a few minutes of animated strafing by P-47's just to warn the townsfolk that they were

making a mistake by trying to defend their village with a few riflemen.

Colonel Welborn's task force had a bridge across the river north of us, so we returned to Beesenstadt for the night and crossed the river on the morning of the 14th, returning then to our own route.

"D" company was again snared into a trap of direct fire which cost them one tank, while "E" company lost two tanks trying to flank the enemy's guns. This accomplished, the task force approached Zorbig, there to encounter determined resistance from infantry with large numbers of panzerfausts. This stronghold paid a heavy price for its folly, because we lost no time laying down a heavy artillery concentration, elaborated upon by vicious strafing from the P-47's who hovered over us, just waiting for a chance to shoot. Then, laying down an irresistible curtain of marching fire, our tanks and infantry rolled through a completely subdued community.

Moving out at dawn, Task Force Lovelady achieved its deepest penetration into Germany on the 15th of April.

Crossing another great autobahn, we approached Raguhn, our entrance fanatically opposed by panzerfaust troops whose only hope was to knock out one tank before they died. This they seemed to do willingly, and a hundred enemy soldiers clutched their diabolical weapons in lifeless hands before the day ended. Three hundred wiser ones surrendered.

We then prepared the town for our arrival by greeting them with a lusty artillery and mortar barrage, which facilitated our entrance at four o'clock in the afternoon. Reconnaissance elements inspected the River Mulde for the unlikely possibility of unmolested bridges, returning with the usual report that they were all blown. We were not particularly perturbed since our orders were not explicit about further objectives on the other side of the Mulde, and we settled down for a comfortable night's rest in Raguhn.

"B" company back-tracked for a few miles in a northwesterly direction, to clear out a village called Thurland, a name which more than a hundred of us will never forget, for reasons to be presented shortly. Here they encountered strong small arms resistance, and the ubiquitous panzerfaust, which had been the mainstay of the dying Wehrmacht since the closure of the Rose Pocket, destroyed two of our light tanks and killed Lieutenant Forbes.

The next day was spent clearing the towns along the banks of the River Mulde in our sector. "D" company seized Priorau and Schierau against light opposition, in which they captured 18 prisoners and a small ammunition dump. "E" company, with infantry from the 414th Regiment, attacked north through woods, to secure a road crossing just south of Dessau. Here they were subjected to continuous barrages of artillery and mortar fire coming

from the east side of the river, which caused some casualties, especially among the infantrymen.

At this point, our long engaged task force was dangerously attenuated to spread it out so thinly over such a broad and, as yet, unstable. front. On the 16th of April, the command post, maintenance section, the infantry and armored aid stations, moved into Thurland in order to assume an approximate central position among our widely dispersed troops. Little did we suspect that some of the most exciting and terrifying hours of the war were about to begin in this little town, thus far scarcely touched by the devastating hand of conflict.

After establishing as nearly normal guard precautions as possible with an understrength command, we settled down for a few hours of much needed rest, with the exception of Colonel Lovelady, who left his headquarters to join his companies in an attack through the woods. At 0130 o'clock in the morning, the town was attacked by a battalion of enemy infantry, whom we soon recognized as first rate troops, experts in their business. From the burgermeister and Nazi civilians, they found out exactly which buildings we were in, whereupon they set about systematically to rout us out. The command post came first. Some of the officers and men tried to shoot their way out, believing they were faced by only a small patrol. This error led to the death of our Air Corps Lieutenant who had stayed with us to keep liaison with the P-47's. Young, our valiant, youthful motorcycle rider, incurred a compound fractured arm, and because he couldn't be evacuated for more than twenty-four hours, died, apparently from gas gangrene. Others were wounded less critically, among them, Captain Aldinger, whose foot was slightly injured. The rest of the battalion staff was captured intact except for Chief Warrant Officer Palfey, who shot one German with his pistol, then buried himself under a pile of potatoes, where he remained throughout the ordeal.

Continuing methodically through town, the marauders approached the aid station, which was billeted in two buildings separated by a driveway. This led to a barnyard surrounded by hay-filled sheds, and served as an excellent parking lot for the medical vehicles. Suddenly, the familiar flash and the crash of a panzerfaust brought us quickly to our feet. Dressing hurriedly, it was immediately apparent that the barns were burning furiously and would soon consume all of our vehicles. At that instant, a hand grenade was casually, and impolitely, hurled in the window, its fragments wounding S/Sgt. Griese in the face. Not realizing the strength of the attack, the men thought only of getting their vehicles out of the holocaust. This they did, turning westward and driving through a canyon of gutteral voices, but no further shots were fired. They halted on the edge of town, hiding themselves in the cellar of an infantry company's command post. In less than an hour, commands in German brought them from their refuge, hands over heads.

Outside, they faced perhaps thirty enemy soldiers with two officers, only a small portion of the number who were in town. After being counted and searched, they were returned to the basement until dawn.

By then, news of our plight had reached higher headquarters, and friendly artillery (no more consoling than enemy artillery under these circumstances) began pounding at intervals, much to the disconcern of the German troops. By 0830 o'clock in the morning, all American prisoners were collected in another small basement across the street. There were 117 of us, and if it is true that "Misery loves company," there was an abundance of both, crowded into this tiny shelter.

The burgermeister was walking around his town in full glory, smoking an American cigar and wielding an American pistol. He supervised the distribution of panzerfausts and furnished whatever information was needed. His attitude did not impress us favorably and eventually led to his inability to ever hold that office again.

Our vehicles were thoroughly ransacked, and soon Germans were eating our emergency "K" rations with apparent relish, drinking our coffee and smoking our cigarettes. They wasted no time improving their defenses around the town, cutting the autobahn just west of it, and preparing for the counterattack which was sure to come.

Believing that another German battalion had successfully attacked Raguhn, thus providing them with a route of evacuation across the Mulde River, they loaded our ambulances with wounded together with considerable numbers of unwounded troops, assigned American drivers with German guards, and started back. Captain Aldinger rode at the head of the column in a peep, with a German driver.

The other battalion of enemy infantry hadn't performed so well, holding only a few houses on the western edge of Raguhn. Even this fact was unknown to Captain Aldinger, who had no reason to think that the village was not entirely in our hands. At the crossroads a few hundred yards from Raguhn, the strange procession was halted by an alert tank destroyer road block whose persuasive looking 90 millimeter guns encouraged the enemy occupants of the vehicles to surrender.

With the perfectly correct impression that Colonel Lovelady had again established a practically unstaffed command post in Raguhn, the column headed in that direction in order to place the prisoners under the guard of our troops. As they approached the first buildings in the confusing half-light of early dawn, German machine guns nervously tattooed the road, killing Captain Aldinger and his German chauffeur. Later on, Corporal Perry from the reconnaissance platoon, drove the peep out, and he, too, was killed when

it turned over for some inexplicable reason. Tragedies such as these struck us deeper than ever at this late date, since everyone felt that the war was nearly over.

In the meantime, the enemy troops in Thurland realized that they were isolated from their own lines, and decided to defend their positions until dark, then infiltrate through our cordon of tanks which surrounded them.

Part of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion came to our rescue in an attack which was to consume the entire day. Artillery beat in heavily for many hours and, in the evening, tanks were firing directly into the town, many of the rounds hitting the building we were staying in.

It was nearly eleven o'clock at night that our liberators finally poured into Thurland. A larger part of the German command had been killed during the day, and most of the rest were captured.

Struggling out of the cramped quarters, the American liberated witnessed, not without some satisfaction, a German village destroyed, with the exception of not more than four houses, by fire and artillery.

As soon as the wounded were evacuated, the rest of us returned to our normal positions, this time into a safe Raguhn where the command post and aid stations were once more established.

Except for routine patrols, the allocation of a few "B" company tanks to another task force for reinforcement, and of three "E" company tanks to secure a town which had been seized by Task Force Richardson, there was not much activity. Various plans were proposed for bridging the Mulde and securing that part of Raguhn on the eastern bank, but none of these materialized.

Combat Command "A" was attacking Dessau, while we continued to hold what we had.

For the Task Force Lovelady, the war was nearly ended. They had reached the banks of the River Mulde, final destination of the VII Corps. The war was rapidly dissolving around them as the Russians hit Berlin and were approaching units south of us near Leipzig. Now they were waiting for the Ninth Infantry Division to come forward and relieve them. Billeting parties went back to Tilleda, Sittendorf and Rossla. Ironically enough, we were destined to sojourn under the majestic shadow of a titanic monument in memory of Germany's leader in World War I, Kaiser Wilhelm. On the highest hill at Kyffhauser, it could be seen by all the troops in our task force and the massive lodges surrounding it, a luxurious haven for officers in the S.S. and their spouses, would soon be occupied by "D" company. Those of

us who later examined its extensive museum were struck by a scroll engraved in English which read, "To our dear friends and True Comrades!" and signed by the members of Milwaukee's American Legion Post as late as 1934! We could not but wonder if someday we would follow in the gullible footsteps of our progenitors, perhaps inscribing a congratulatory message to the inaugurators of a similar monument in honor of Hitler. We did not think we ever would, but time does strange things, and Americans are strange people, willing to love and trust in a world that knows only hate and deceit.

On the 24th day of April, Task Force Lovelady heard its last crash of enemy mortar and artillery, fired its farewell rounds into enemy lines, picked up its tracks and marched gayly into the west, relatively certain for the first time in ten adventure-filled months that they would awaken the next day to find themselves alive and unwounded.