



*The Rabodeau River and blasted bridge in the Vosges town of Senones. The patriotic inhabitants of Senones afforded us a warm welcome.*



*French women who collaborated with the Germans have their hair cut by members of the FFI. They were later stripped and marched out of town*

civilians that they were the first Americans to enter the village. Later, the 1st Battalion of the 398th entered Grandfontaine in force.

The trap around the enemy in the mountains between the Plaine and Bruche rivers was now snapped shut. Our Vosges Campaign was over.

In a stirring letter of commendation to our division on the successful completion of this trying assignment, Gen. Burress wrote: "Today the 100th Division has completed a series of important and difficult operations against the enemy. All objectives have been taken. It has pierced and rolled up the enemy winter line of the Vosges and captured the towns of Raon L'Etape and St. Blaise. By its actions it has contributed materially to the success of the larger forces. It has established a reputation for its spirit and fighting qualities, no matter how rough the terrain. Every member of the Division can take justifiable pride in its achievements in the initial and prolonged operation against the enemy. Please accept my personal appreciation and congratulations for a job well done."

At 0930 on 26 November, after the 3rd Battalion of the 399th had moved through the 1st Battalion above Ober Haslach, an order was received from VI Corps instructing our division to withdraw from action and assemble around Moyennoutier and Raon L'Etape. The civilian population, under the impression we were retreating, experienced a few tense moments as our long lines of trucks and foot troops retraced hard-won steps. But, reassured, the Alsatians were soon smiling and waving again.

The remainder of the day was passed in conjecture as to what lay ahead.

### *Bitch*

*From a proud tower in the town*

*Death looks gigantically down.*

—POE—*The City in the Sea.*

There are times when it is well that clairvoyance is not a human capability. For, had we been enabled to foresee what unbelievable hardships lay ahead of us, some of the joy which we felt upon withdrawing from the Vosges mountains would have been considerably dulled. After fighting victoriously through that wooded hell, what terrain could be worse, what contrivances of the enemy more cunning, what test more severe? We were veterans now, wise in the ways of warfare. The terrible, gnawing doubt which grips green troops at the moment of entering combat was no longer a part of us. We had met the Germans on terrain which had never before been invaded successfully, and had emerged crowned with laurels. Of course, we were still scared. Every soldier worthy of the name always is scared. He *knows* what 88s can do. But our "freezing" days were over.

Flushed with victory, morale soared to new heights as we were loaded on trucks for the shift to the area of Sarrebourg, some 40 kilometers to the north of our former division sector. We sang old training songs during the cold ride, talked about mail, the possibilities of a beer ration, sleeping in houses, a few days of rest. We didn't know about Bitch, yet.

In our new area, our division was attached to the XV Corps and remained in corps reserve until 3 December, with the division CP in Sarrebourg. Combat Team-8 moved through Sarrebourg and southeast to

*Scenes from the division Rest Center at Sarrebourg. Tired dogfaces were sent here for a few days of relaxation from fighting.*

Troisfontaine about nine kilometers away. Here the 398th went into training, stressing the care and cleaning of equipment. Movies were provided by Special Services and stubby bottles of beer and cans of peanuts were issued.

Combat Team-9 did not move until the following day, 28 December, when it went into an area around Niederviller and Schneckenbusch, three or four kilometers southeast of Sarrebourg.

Most of the action of the last few days of November and the first few days of December centers around Combat Team-7. With its command group in Dossenheim about 30 kilometers east and slightly north of Sarrebourg, and the other units in the surrounding towns—Neuwiller, Ernolsheim, and Hattmatt—the regiment relieved the 324th Inf. of the 44th Div. and was attached to the 45th Div. as reserve. In this area, 15 kilometers north of the city of Saverne, the regiment was close to the main road between Hagenau and Saarbrücken—one of the two invasion routes through the Saverne “gate.”

The 1st Battalion of the 397th entered the lines again on 29 November when it took over the fox-holes, CPs, and installations of the 45th Div's. 1st Battalion 157th Inf. These positions were on high ground overlooking the Hagenau highway just north of Ingwiller. During the morning the 2nd Battalion had moved from Ernolsheim to Weinbourg, and the 3rd Battalion moved behind it into Weiterswiller. Advancing to Ingwiller, the regimental Cannon Company fired 50 rounds at probable enemy positions.

While Co. B of the 1st Battalion 397th remained in position on the right or east side of the Hagenau highway just north of Ingwiller, Co. A, followed by Co. C, attacked north along the other side of the highway. As soon as the attack began at 0800 on 30 November, Co. A received fire from enemy foot troops to the northeast. The advance went slowly until, in the face of mortar fire, Co. C was committed on the east side of the highway and the two companies made a little headway. To the left of the 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion secured the town of Weinbourg, sent Co. G north to take the high ground overlooking the Millbach brook which ran eastward into the Moder River just above Ingwiller, and sent a rifle platoon and Weapons Platoon of Co. E northwest to Sparsbach, two kilometers away, as security for the left flank.





The 3rd Battalion, leaving Co. K in Weiterswiller as security, moved northeast to Weinbourg, passed through the 2nd Battalion, and continued northeast along the road toward the Millbach, just east or downstream from the positions taken by Co. G. Because of heavy mortar fire, the battalion had to infiltrate troops one platoon at a time to take up positions along the stream and in a group of buildings at a watermill less than a kilometer west of the Hagenau highway where Cos. A and C were attacking northward.

The first day of December was clear and sunny. The 398th and 399th Inf. were conducting training programs concerned with the assault on fortified positions, learning about bangalore torpedoes, beehive and pole charges. The 100th Cav. Rcn. Tp. was attached to the 106th Cavalry Group, and moved to Zittersheim, northwest of Ingwiller, where the 397th was attacking and just south of Wingen. The Rcn. Troop was to outpost the town of Zittersheim and keep in contact with the enemy around Wingen and Puberg to the north while the division was preparing to move into line.

On the front held by the 397th Inf. the day was quiet except that Co. K marched some 7000 yards, from Weitersviller to Ingwiller, and a patrol of Co. I, attempting to take Hill 296, two kilometers north of Ingwiller, was stopped by artillery fire and withdrew south for the night. The 1st Battalion of the 397th was along the Hagenau highway in a valley just to the west of this hill.

Except for the 397th which continued its attack, the division spent 2 December moving into position to attack on the following day. The assembly areas were

around Metting, northeast of Sarrebourg. The division CP was in Metting itself. The 398th, which was to attack through parts of the 44th Division and the 106th Cavalry Group, and take Wingen, Puberg, and the roads to the west, moved to the neighborhood of La Petite Pierre. The 1st Battalion trucked from Valerysthal to Lohr, 15 miles to the northeast, then marched to a bivouac 12 kilometers away in the area just southwest of Zittersheim. The 2nd Battalion motored from Troisfontaine (Dreibrunnen) to Schoenberg and then hiked to a bivouac area west of the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion, which was to be in reserve, motored to La Petite Pierre.

Behind the 398th, the 399th Inf. took over the area around Schalbach, Veckersviller, and Sieviller.

In the continuing attack of the 397th, when one platoon of Co. I was stopped by artillery fire at the base of Hill 296 north of Ingwiller, another platoon worked around the base of the wooded hill and attacked the enemy from the flank and rear, forcing his withdrawal. The two platoons then took the hill, overrunning an enemy observation post. Co. F, advancing up another part of the hill, found that the enemy had withdrawn so rapidly that he had left a field telephone and wire in position. The company followed the direction of the wire down the hill. When the hill had been taken the troops dug in because enemy artillery, from Hill 370 to the northeast, was falling in the area. The 1st Battalion was on the south facing the enemy dug in 800 yards away in the direction of Rothbach. North of these positions, Co. I faced Hill 370 and the burning houses of Lichtenberg to the northeast. Co. L was moving into the area from Ingwiller, encountering heavy artillery and mortar fire.



In the rain of 3 December, the 397th Inf. continued its advance above Ingwiller. The wooded hills made communication difficult and contact between small units was in a deplorable state. The enemy had strung trip wires and planted mines through much of the area and heavy enemy artillery concentrations in the direction of Rothbach added to the hazards of the 397th position. Pushing forward doggedly, however, the 397th was able to complete the capture of Hills 296 and 369 on the way to Hill 375, the immediate objective. Three hundred and eighty-four rounds of interdictory fire by the regimental Cannon Co., accurately directed by the company's forward observers and men in the rifle companies by means of radio, greatly aided the advance. Some of the prisoners taken during the 397th push were in civilian clothing and masquerading as shoemakers and carpenters. Others claimed to be AWOL or on furlough.

The 398th began its attack from south of Puberg and Wingen, on a front to the west of the 397th. The 2nd Battalion of the 398th attacked on the west, and moved north along the road into Puberg. The leading elements by-passed two road blocks which were protected by machine guns and artillery, and captured the town.

One of these roadblocks was an abatis at a point where dense forest came down to the road on both sides. Sgt. Dee W. Crosby, a squad leader in the 2nd Platoon of Co. B 325th Engineers, was assigned the task of securing the abatis. When his squad moved through it to the enemy side, Germans in entrenchments and houses only a few hundred yards away, began to fire machine guns and rifles at the Engineers. From a partially concealed position, Sgt. Crosby di-

rected the withdrawal of his squad while returning the enemy fire. His direction was so expert, that only one man was lost in the engagement. A short time later, Sgt. Crosby volunteered to return for a reconnaissance of the roadblock so that a tankdozer could remove the trees. Crawling through the abatis, though a sniper had been firing at the spot from only 30 yards away, Crosby found anti-personnel mines but no anti-tank mines. The tankdozer, thereupon ground through the roadblock and the armored vehicles went on to knock out the enemy positions.

By nightfall, the 2nd Battalion 398th was several thousand yards beyond Puberg on the road to Soucht.

The 3rd Battalion 398th swung right toward Rosteig with only light mortar fire hindering their advance.

The 1st Battalion 398th, however, attacking east against Wingen, had been less successful. Like most of the towns in that area, Wingen lay in a flat valley surrounded by steep hills. It was a communications center on the Moder river, with a railroad and a highway running along opposite sides of the river from Wimmenau and Ingwiller to the southeast. A road net led north toward Meisenthal and northwest toward Rosteig, with another highway stretching from Zittersheim to the southwest and into Wingen. The 1st Battalion, with 3 TDs from the 106th Cav. and attached engineers, attacked along this main road and through the valley against harassing fire from enemy foot-troops and murderous 88s. The battalion reached a roadblock to the south of the town and moved to take hill positions overlooking the settlement from the south. Co. C, to the east, sent patrols down to houses on the eastern edge of the town, but the men were driven back by machine gun fire. Late

in the afternoon Co. A went down into the town. The company is known to have captured several houses, but during the night suffered such severe losses in prisoners that it later had to be entirely reconstituted. When night fell the engineers were still working to remove the roadblock south of town.

The 399th, following behind the 398th, prepared to pass through in an attack.

Continuing its attack northward to take Hill 375 on 4 December, the 397th was slowed to a halt before noon by the stubborn enemy. Our forces withdrew so that all available artillery could be thrown upon the positions which were camouflaged six-foot by ten-foot holes protected by sandbags and logs or roadblocks covered by the all-purpose 88s used as flat-trajectory weapons. But as our troops backed off, the enemy followed, and our artillery failed to do much damage. The 397th attacked so quickly after the barrage, however, that the enemy was caught outside his holes. The regiment took Hill 375 by late afternoon. It had been a hard day for the medical aid men and the litter bearers because of the inimical terrain and the enemy mortar and artillery fire.

In the 398th Inf. sector to the west, the 2nd Battalion, with Co. G remaining in position to ward off counterattacks, sent Co. F northward toward Soucht through the Forêt Dominale de la Petite Pierre Nord. The 3rd Battalion in the center completed the taking of Rosteig against bitter enemy fire from the high ground around the town. To the east and south, the 1st Battalion sent patrols into Wingen in an unsuccessful attempt to make contact with Co. A. Co. C then pushed northeast along the ridge toward the highway coming into the town from the east. From these positions observed artillery fire could be dropped on strong points in the town, but the advance by Co. C was delayed by enemy mortar and artillery.

At one minute past midnight, the morning of 5 De-

ember, the 397th Inf., which had been attached to the 45th Div. for the past six days, reverted to our division, as did the 100th Reconnaissance Troop which had been operating with the 106th Cavalry. The Recon. Troop was to continue reconnaissance of the left flank of the division and to maintain contact with the 44th Div. Contact could not be made with the enemy, and when the 397th attacked in the morning, it found that the Krauts had pulled out of the area to its front. The enemy had, however, left many mines, felled trees with trip wires attached, and various forms of booby traps to impede the troops. By the end of the day the 1st Battalion of the 397th had taken Wimmenau, two kilometers east of Wingen, and the 2nd Battalion had secured Reipertsviller and Lichtenberg to the north as well as Rothbach to the east.

After a twenty-minute artillery preparation, the 1st Battalion of the 398th entered Wingen just before noon and took the high ground to the north and east. The 2nd Battalion, in the center, sent patrols into Soucht and Meisenthal. The 3rd Battalion to the west completed the capture of the hills north of Rosteig.

The 399th now moved through the 398th sector. The attacking force was the 3rd Battalion with Cannon Co., a platoon of Anti-Tank Co., a platoon from Co. C of the 325th Engrs., and half a Mine Platoon. The engineers were to prove very useful, for the battalion had hardly begun its advance northeast from the Wingen-Rosteig railroad when it ran into roadblocks which the engineers removed and into a destroyed bridge which the engineers made passable. The advance continued with Co. L to the west and Co. I to the east of the highway leading from Wingen northeast to Sarreinsberg. Civilians informed the regiment that the enemy was withdrawing to Lemberg, leaving in haste and abandoning their equipment in Soucht and Meisenthal. Moving up the highway on which, since it was the only main road in the division





sector, the 399th had priority, the two companies did not encounter the enemy and by mid-afternoon had reached their objectives. Co. L was in the little settlement of Colonne at a road junction just east of Meisenthal, and Co. I was to the south and east at a junction of the Wingen-Sarreinsberg highway and the road running from Wimmenau to the east into Meisenthal. The 1st Battalion of the 399th followed the 3rd Battalion by bounds, and the 2nd Battalion patrolled to the west, covering the Rosteig-Volksberg road and establishing contact with the 114th Inf., of the 44th Div., the unit on the division's left. The 925th F A Battalion had returned to Combat Team-9 after its mission with the 398th Inf.

Rain was still falling on 6 December when the 3rd Battalion of the 399th Inf. resumed its attack astride the highway leading north from Wingen to Lemberg. By mid-morning the battalion had taken Sarreinsberg, Goetzenbruck, and Plateau 409 to the north without a fight. But here there were indications that the enemy meant to hold Lemberg. The regimental I and R Platoon, working ahead of the battalion, found that the enemy had destroyed a bridge on the road just south of Lemberg and had entrenchments running parallel to the west of the road. When these entrenchments were fired on, the Germans returned mortar fire. The enemy had a battalion of 105s just south of the east-west highway between Lemberg and Enchenberg; he had 75s and 88s north of Lemberg, entrenchments and fortifications on Hill 423, a hill around whose base on the south, west, and north lay Lemberg itself, and a company of the 953rd Volksgrenadier regiment on Hill 345 just east of Lemberg and north of the highway to Mouterhouse.

After reorganizing, the battalion attacked with three companies abreast. Co. L, to the west of the road, moved through the woods but was stopped when

it reached a clearing just south of the highway to Enchenberg. Artillery fire from Hill 423 in Lemberg forced Co. K to dig in just southeast of the town when it had advanced to the edge of the woods east of the road. Farther east, as it moved northeast toward the Mouterhouse highway, Co. I was stopped by artillery from Hill 435. The battalion spent the night in these positions, preparing to attack after an artillery preparation the following morning. The 1st Battalion of the 399th moved up to support positions and the 2nd Battalion remained in reserve. The regimental CP moved to Sarreinsberg.

While the 1st Battalion of the 398th regrouped around Wingen, the 2nd Battalion moved into Soucht where the troops were billeted in houses, and the 3rd Battalion moved into Meisenthal and sent patrols east into St. Louis and west to make contact with the 44th Div.

On the 397th Inf. front to the east, the 1st Battalion took Wildenguth and Melch which the enemy did not defend. Then the 2nd Battalion, moving along trails through thick woods to the north of Melch, dug in an all-around defense on Hill 335 about half a kilometer south of Mouterhouse, held by the enemy in force. There was no opposition to this move, though there was difficulty in carrying the heavy machine guns and mortars of Co. G through the woods. Chow was brought up from Reipertsviller, and the battalion spent the night patrolling. The 3rd Battalion remained in reserve. Co. A of the 325th Engrs. and the Mine Platoon of the regimental Anti-Tank Co. spent the day clearing the roads of mines and felled trees, many of which were booby-trapped.

The enemy which the 399th Inf. faced on the gray and rainy anniversary of Pearl Harbor was not merely entrenched on all the commanding ground near Lemberg; he also manned concrete pillboxes at the junction of the road running north from St. Louis to the Lemberg-Enchenberg road, on the hill at the east edge of Lemberg. At the western base of Hill 345, on the north side of the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road, he had anti-tank guns covering all routes of approach. 20mm. anti-aircraft guns, used as anti-tank guns mounted on armored vehicles, had been dug in to serve as pillboxes.

When the 3rd Battalion of the 399th attacked following a ten-minute preparation by Corps artillery which changed to a rolling barrage lifting a hundred yards every four minutes, Co. I on the east flank was almost immediately stopped south of the Lemberg-



*We took losses, too. Above, an American tank knocked out on the outskirts of Lemberg. Right, one of our big guns is jockeyed into position in a field south of the town.*

Mouterhouse road. The enemy was firing from positions on Hill 345 in a curve of the road and from pillboxes, fixed armored vehicles, and buildings at the base of the hill. If the company advanced, it would have to move up hill into an arc where the enemy had fire from three sides.

Co. K, working through murderous cross-fire, was able to cover only 400 yards in two hours; then it was stopped north of the Mouterhouse road, to the north and west of Co. I, by enemy fire from the left on Hill 423. After an artillery concentration on these positions, Co. K crept forward suffering heavy casualties and by mid-afternoon one platoon had reached the forward slope of Hill 380 which faced Hill 423 from the southeast. With the other platoons on the reverse slope, the advance was again stopped. To the fire from Hill 423 was added fire from enemy entrenched in a ravine to the other flank.

At noon, Co. L attempted to move into the gap between Cos. I and K caused by the advance of Co. K. By attacking north and northeast up the long curving slope of Hill 405, Co. L would flank both the positions on Hill 435 which were delaying Co. I on the east, and the positions in the ravine which were stopping Co. K to the west. After a slight advance Co. L was withdrawn to allow further artillery preparation.

To the west of the Sarreinsberg-Lemberg Highway, Co. C drove forward against a pillbox at the junction of the St. Louis road from the south and the Enchenberg road running west and captured three 20mm. guns. Further west, also attacking toward the Enchenberg road, Co. B crawled across open ground in its approach, but enemy fire was so heavy that those

elements which could do so were ordered to pull back. Two platoons of Co. B had to remain in the open ground until after dark. On the western edge of the regimental front, Co. A held blocking positions which were under artillery and mortar attack during the day and throughout the night.

On the 397th front to the east of Lemberg, the 2nd Battalion had seized a part of Mouterhouse, the important town protecting the southern approaches to the Campe de Bitche. Just before midnight on 6 December, S. Sgt. Herbert Harvey, a Co. H forward observer for mortars, and a nine-man patrol from Co. E had started northwest along a trail which ran through dense woods to the road leading into Mouterhouse from the southwest. Because of the activity of enemy patrols, the men avoided the path and advanced parallel to it through the woods. The final 150 yards to the road were a steep slope down which the patrol was compelled to crawl before making a dash across the road. Here they came upon a pond not shown on their map, but shallow enough to wade across. Entering an isolated house on the edge of town, the patrol ordered the astonished civilian inhabitants into the basement. Then they set up an observation post from which they could watch enemy activity on the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road and Hill 275 to the north of the town. Spotting Jerry entrenchments, a road block and an armored vehicle, Sgt. Harvey directed accurate mortar fire on these positions.

Meanwhile, attacking northward along either side of a trail leading down the north slope of Hill 335 toward Mouterhouse, Cos. G and E moved through a section of woods which ended 75 yards from a church to the south of the town. In attempting to cross this open ground, the troops were immediately blanketed by fire from 88s, mortars and machine guns.



S. Sgt. Buddy Thomas of Co. G braved sniper fire to move across the clearing to the church. Finding that the door was located on the north, the enemy side, he waited until the remainder of his squad had joined him and then ordered them to boost him through a window. From this vantage point, he directed other elements of his company into the church.

Co. E, storming the church on the left, advanced through the cemetery. The Easy Co. men suffered several casualties as enemy fire chipped pieces of stone from the tombstones and sent them spinning into the crouching Infantrymen. Toward dusk, however, Co. E had also gained the shelter of the church.

Under cover of darkness, Co. G continued their advance to the schoolhouse. They were followed by a platoon from Co. E, while other elements of the two companies captured the Sarriensberg-Lemberg road junctions and cleared houses at the base of Hill 275 and the western edge of town. Here they paused for the night, the platoons of Co. E withdrawing to the church in preparation for resumption of the attack the following morning.

Co. F of this fighting battalion, left reserve positions late in the afternoon and, swinging east, crossed into the northeastern part of town. The 2nd Platoon, coming up through a defilade, so surprised a number of Germans dug in on a cemetery that they surrendered. By the end of 7 December, the 397th was well on the way to taking Mouterhouse.

In its third day of attack, 8 December, the 399th Inf. began to succeed on the Lemberg sector. The 2nd Battalion, moving up from reserve in Goetzenbruck, was committed to an end run to flank the German strongpoints on Hill 345, that hill in the curve of the Lemberg-Mouterhouse highway which had stopped the 3rd Battalion for two days. When



*Left, an engineer gingerly deactivates a "dud" from the center of a highway. Above, mines removed from a road leading to Bitche. The enemy made constant use of this weapon.*

Co. F tried to approach the hill from the southeast, to the right of Co. I, it was stopped along a draw and streambed. But Co. G, further east, was able to cross the highway and go up Hill 327 which faced Hill 345 across a steep ravine to the east. Outflanked, the enemy began to withdraw, and Co. F was able to move up Hill 345 just before noon. As the attack gained momentum Co. F took the hill just north of 345, and Co. G moved out along a ridge to take Hill 329 even further north and east facing a ridge along which ran the Lemberg-Bitche railroad. Machine gun fire from this railroad ridge slowed Co. G, but Co. F cut across the railway in the late afternoon. In the center, aided by the flanking attack of the 2nd Battalion, the 3rd Battalion also advanced to positions they had formerly reached and given up to allow artillery to soften the strongpoints. This time there was no withdrawal in spite of machine gun fire from Hill 405 to the rear, road blocks and mines. Co. L reached the head of a valley just east of Hill 423, to the other three sides of which lay Lemberg. The furthest point of advance for Co. L was the railroad underpass on the edge of this valley. Here the company was stopped by 20mm. fire from buildings to their front and by machine guns emplaced on the ridge above the railroad.

On the left flank of the 399th, elements of the 398th took over the positions which Co. A of the 399th had captured and held against great odds. Co. A, thereupon, moved to St. Louis as a mobile reserve, with the exception of one platoon which shifted to the east side of the road running north from St. Louis.

In this sector, Cos. C and B of the 399th, were preparing to launch a night attack across the open

ground south of the Lemberg-Enchenberg road. This was ground which they had previously been unable to seize and hold. Co. C of the 325th Engrs., dynamited a roadblock on this highway at the western edge of the area, after which artillery and mortars plastered the road and enemy positions west of town, destroying a pillbox at the junction of the Enchenberg highway and the St. Louis road.

In the late afternoon, under a white phosphorous smoke screen, Cos. B and C attacked with the 1st Platoon of Co. A 781st Tank Battalion. Two of the four tanks were almost immediately disabled when their tracks were blown off by anti-tank mines. But the remaining two tanks, flanked by part of Co. A and Co. C, battered their way directly up the highway and into Lemberg, where they began blasting the stubborn enemy out of the houses. The tanks fired point-blank into the cellars, and the infantrymen threw hand grenades into the windows and through the doors. The fighting continued all night and it wasn't until late afternoon of the following day that Lemberg could be called secure.

To the east, the 397th had completed its capture of Mouterhouse during the day of 8 December. Because the mortars of Co. H and the 4.2 chemical mortars emplaced at Melch had forced the enemy to abandon Hill 275, Co. G was able to clear the western part of the town without undue difficulty while Co. E, unopposed, was sweeping the factory district in

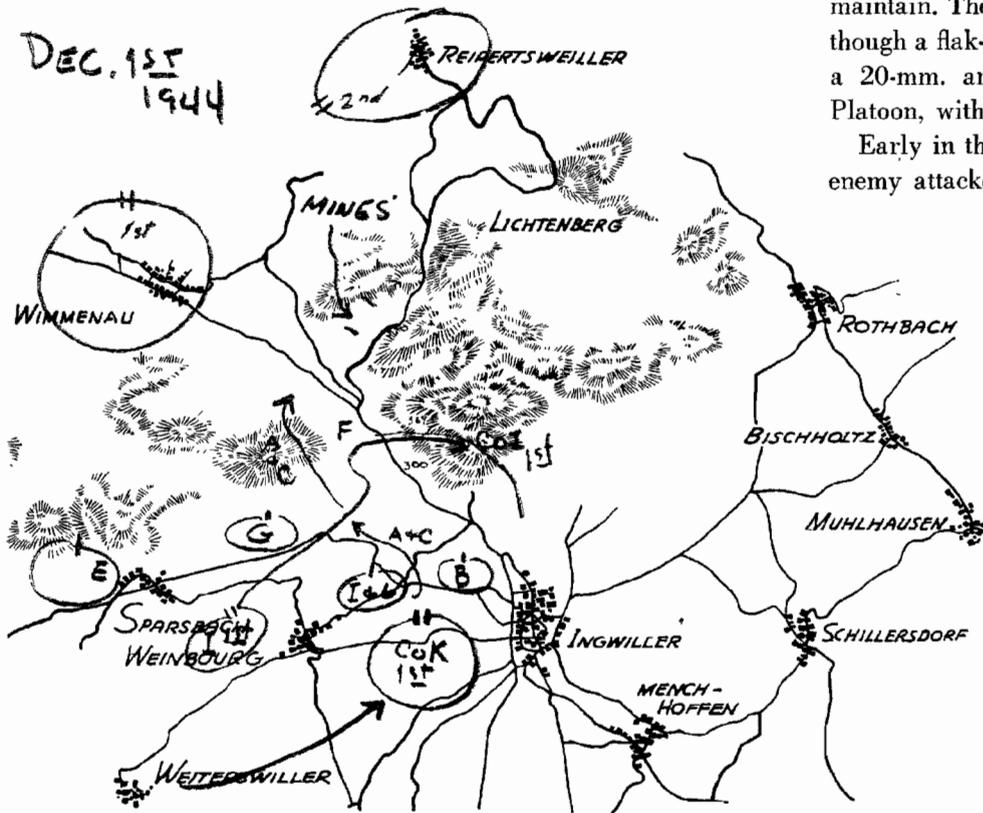
the center of town. The only real action of the day was the capture of a few enemy guarding a roadblock east of town by a squad of Co. F mudsloggers.

In the 1st Battalion 397th's attack to take a crossroads east of Mouterhouse, Co. B was caught in a draw by artillery fire, but continued infiltrating. Not all casualties could be evacuated before night, and the mined roads over which the litter bearers had to pick their way in the blackness, delayed the complete removal of the wounded until midnight.

With their two tanks in support, Cos. A and C of the 399th Inf. continued to push their attack in Lemberg through the night of 8-9 December. The house-to-house fighting was the toughest kind of combat. By 0315, the 1st Battalionites had cleared the main street in the southern half of town to a crossroads at the center. At daylight, Co. B entered Lemberg to begin clearing the side streets. Enemy resistance and artillery fire from hills to the north, slowed the attack, and another platoon of tanks was committed. By dark, the northern end of town had still to be cleared.

Along the railroad and high ground northeast of Lemberg, Co. F had two platoons dug in north of the railroad and to the west of a bridge spanning a railroad gorge. Except for one squad of the 3rd Platoon, the remainder of the company was south of the railroad on ground between two steep ravines. The wild terrain, the deep gorge of the railroad, and the thick woods, limited vision and made contact difficult to maintain. The enemy did not attack during the night, though a flak-wagon—a half-track vehicle armed with a 20-mm. anti-aircraft gun—did approach the 1st Platoon, withdrawing on sighting the E Co. men.

Early in the morning of 9 December, however, the enemy attacked from two sides with two flak-wagons



*Tanks and TDs line up along the main street of Lemberg preparatory to moving forward in the drive against Bitche.*



supported by infantry armed with automatic weapons. Having the advantage of terrain and fire-power, the Krauts forced the 1st Platoon into their foxholes and then overran the positions, firing into them at point-blank range. The 2nd Platoon, unable to come to their comrades rescue, with their own right flank exposed, circled back to the south side of the railroad and joined the rest of the company in regrouping.

The combined fire of Cos. F and G finally stopped the attack, and late in the afternoon, with Co. F holding on the right flank, Cos. E and G moved forward across the railroad toward Hochfirst Hill. As Co. E was climbing a ridge beyond the railway, it came under merciless fire from concealed enemy positions and from four flak-wagons on the road to its front. When one flak-wagon was finally hit by an anti-tank grenade and a second suffered a near-miss, the three remaining vehicles withdrew. But a dug-in half-track and several machine guns continued to fire, and Co. E pulled back in the darkness to the reverse slope. Co. G, nearer Lemberg on the left, went on and took Hochfirst Hill.

In the center of the 399th front the 3rd Battalion had a double mission. While Co. I moved into Lemberg to help the 1st Battalion secure the houses there, Cos. K and L were attempting to clear Hill 423. Lemberg surrounds this hill on all sides except the east. The task of Cos. K and L was to climb the dangerously open eastern slope and clear the houses on the crest.

During the attack 2nd Lt. Warren D. Behrens led his 3rd Platoon of Co. K, a platoon reduced to 17 men, in a wide arc around to the west of the hill following various roads until he was to the northwest of a group of enemy foxholes, two of which contained machine

guns. Exposing himself in order to deploy his platoon for the assault, Lt. Behrens saw that the attack uphill across fifty yards of open ground would cause many casualties. Instead he ran forward alone and, though being fired on constantly, threw two grenades, one into each of the machine gun emplacements. The grenades wounded two Germans, and the lieutenant killed two more with his carbine as they were trying to escape. The rest fled. While the platoon was coming up and regrouping, Lt. Behrens saw three enemy entering a house about a hundred yards away to the flank. With one of his men the lieutenant advanced to the house, ordered the man to throw in a grenade, and then shot the three Germans as they came out. Before the end of the day all the houses on the hill had been cleared by Cos. K and L.

The 397th Inf. continued seizing ground north of Mouterhouse from an enemy who showed little ability to resist except in the 3rd Battalion area to the north and west of town. There, when Co. K attempted to cover the advance of tanks up an open draw near Hammerkopf Hill, enemy artillery and mortars forced the tanks to withdraw, and the infantry was compelled to take the Kraut positions unaided. Co. L also ran into enemy artillery fire while taking the ridge called Le Witterschall, further north and to the west. The men dug in and held the ground under enemy artillery concentrations which were so heavy that the wounded could be moved out with only the greatest difficulty.

On the Lemberg front the enemy seemed to be pulling back toward Lambach and Reyersviller to the north. The 1st Battalion of the 399th Inf., having completed the mopping up of Lemberg, went into reserve



in St. Louis before midnight of 9 December. During 10 December, while the 2nd Battalion consolidated its positions on the Hochfirst to the northeast, the 3rd Battalion reorganized in the northeast sector of Lemberg under light artillery fire throughout the day. A platoon was sent to outpost le Schlossberg, the hill to north of town. In late afternoon the 398th began to relieve the 399th which went into division reserve.

To the east, the 397th continued north of Mouterhouse without interference from the enemy who had taken positions in a northwest-southeast line northeast of the town along a group of hills running parallel to the road and railroad between Hagenau and Bitche. Thus there was danger of an enemy attack from the east, but no opposition to the advance northward toward the Campe de Bitche.

Under a new Commanding Officer, Col. Paul G. Daly, who had replaced Col. Nelson I. Fooks, the 398th began its drive on 11 December toward Bitche and the Maginot Line in our division sector. The 3rd Battalion advanced north of Lemberg in the direction of Reyersviller, taking successive hills against enemy delaying action. The 2nd Battalion, which had been at a chateau called Alt Schmel behind the 2nd Battalion of the 399th, moved north across country, seizing hills and ridges to the rear of the positions held by the 397th on hills like Hammerkopf and Witterschall which faced northeast. Cos. F and G of the 398th were to seize the Sommerkopf Hill to the west of the railway and the eastern highway between Lemberg and Bitche. Co. G had nearly reached le Sommerkopf by nightfall, and Co. F, though halted for a while by a road block, moved up to the west of Co. G. On the 397th sector to the south and east of these positions, elements of the 3rd Battalion advanced

*A wounded Centuryman is carried to the rear by four of his buddies. Left, cover was sparse in some sectors and positions had to be taken in the open.*

northeast along le Witterschalk to take Hill 395. During the early morning hours and intermittently throughout the day, enemy artillery shelled Hill 415, north of Mouterhouse, and the town itself, dropping shells all around the regimental CP. During the night Co. H had left a section of machine guns and 17 men on a nose of hill to the east of Hill 415. In the morning, the men had disappeared, except for one soldier who had been killed, but the guns were still in place.

While the 399th Inf., in reserve around Goetzenbruck and St. Louis, engaged in training in the assault on fortified positions, the 398th Inf. continued its advance toward Bitche on 12 December. The 3rd Battalion, on the west, moved north along the Lemberg-Reyersviller road with Co. I leading the attack behind a rolling barrage. By the end of day Co. I had dug in on the eastern slope of Hill 427, east of Lambach and Glassemberg, and overlooking Reyersviller from the south. Just west of Co. I, Co. K moved into positions on the northern slope of Hill 427 and just east of le Steinkopf, while Co. L seized the nose of le Spitzberg to the east so that it had command of the junction of the road from Lemberg and the road between Reyersviller and Bitche to the northeast. The 3rd Battalion positions to the south of Reyersviller thus formed an arc running along high ground west from the road junction. To the east of the junction in the 2nd Battalion sector, Cos. F and G had turned northwest from le Sommerkopf and taken the hill area south of the Reyersviller-Bitche road.

There were only two enemy actions on the 397th Inf. front, above Mouterhouse: the first was a sharp