Foreword

It may seem a paradox to the uninitiated, but the soldier, by choice or the dictates of his draft board, is a confirmed pacifist. Only the psychopath, the incurable romanticist, and the criminally ambitious consider war as a desirable state. Any child who has heard the whine of an artillery shell fired in his direction, would not have to pass an opinion. His shudder would be answer enough.

War, to the soldier, is no juvenile game of "Cops and Robbers." It is mud, cold, and the pain of bleeding flesh. It is the clammy sweat which comes with touching hands with death. It is hunger and diarrhea and the gnawing frustration of living from day to day. Peculiarly, the soldier hasn't even the all-consuming hate the civilian feels for the enemy. He kills impersonally under the dictates of self-preservation. Politics and economics are furthest from his mind. Only the enemy, his firepower, the weather and hunger are real. And the soldier is a realist.

Knowing these things, it is all the more remarkable that men in combat can rise to such heights of self sacrifice. Fear, generated by the motive of self preservation, is one of the most powerful impulses of all living creatures. Yet, trained to understand what a machine gun can do, having seen the dangers of shrapnel, terrified by the thought of mines, the infantryman will move forward in a single-handed attack on a machine gun section or hold in the defense against what he knows must be certain death.

It is not enough to say that he does so because of a confirmed belief in a political philosophy or because of "national" characteristics. It goes deeper than the length of his nose or the color of his hair. The Germans fought almost as well in defense of Heilbronn as we did in attacking that strongpoint. No Centuryman who faced the enemy during their counter-offensive at Bitche, can accuse them of cowardice. The British had their defense of London; the Russians, their Stalingrad; the Japs, their banzai charge; the Norwegians, Poles, Dutch, and French, their seemingly hopeless resistance. The fact that the American army, made up of descendents of every race and nationality on earth, fought so well, is proof that such is not the answer. The Germans were as firmly convinced that they were in the right as we were that they were in the wrong.

What, then, is the answer? In part, our success can be attributed to materiel superiority. Getting there "fustest with the mostest" goes a long

way toward winning battles. But, during the German counteroffensive at Bitche, when the enemy had the "mostest" by four divisions against our one, the men of the 100th held until even the enemy was forced to murmur words of praise. At Heilbronn, where the Krauts had every advantage of terrain and the numerical odds were even, we crossed the Neckar River and beat them to a pulp. Even as green troops, we stormed the enemy's seemingly impregnable positions in the Vosges Mountains and shattered their defenses, the first time in military history such a feat had been accomplished.

For our answer, therefore, we must turn to a nebulous something which we know Americans possess, but which cannot be defined. It is something which has its roots in freedom, in better living, in uninhibited conscience, inherent ingenuity and initiative, and the vibrant heart-beat of a young nation which does not know the meaning of defeat.

In these attributes, we find the reasons for our success in arms. It is not a matter of heroics. No one is a hero when bullets begin to fly. Yesterday, Joe Smith was a grocery clerk who would not touch a rifle on a bet. Today, Joe Smith pulls the pin from a grenade with his teeth and rushes a machine gun position. You don't learn that in training. The Army warns against such senseless action. But that's the way wars are won. Until some guy named Joe pulls a grenade pin and starts knocking out machine guns, the best strategy in military history cannot succeed.

This intangible, which military men call "morale," was unusually prevalent throughout the 100th Division. But morale is an American attribute, not a divisional monopoly. Throughout this combat diary there has been no effort made to "color" the actions of the 100th Division. The fight the Centurymen made stands on the record. The contentions of other divisions that they fought so well because their personnel were men from Texas or New Jersey or Georgia or New York, is blind sectionalism. The 100th, made up of men from almost every State in the nation, fought courageously because they were Americans who knew no other way. There were moments when victory seemed far away, when subordinate units were temporarily hurled back by the enemy, when overall military strategy dictated our going over to the defensive. These, too, have been set down accurately. A division can be as glorious in containing an enemy offensive as in winning a victory. But, as a whole, the 100th, fighting over appalling terrain against a wily and well-equipped foe, never failed to gain an assigned objective.

The *Story of the Century* is the epic of a civilian division which, for a brief moment in history, "came, saw, and overcame," and then retired from the scene. But the small part it played in this greatest of all global wars, like the men who fell in our cause, can never really die.

WITHERS A. BURRESS, MAJ. GEN., U.S.A.
Commanding Officer, 100th Infantry Division

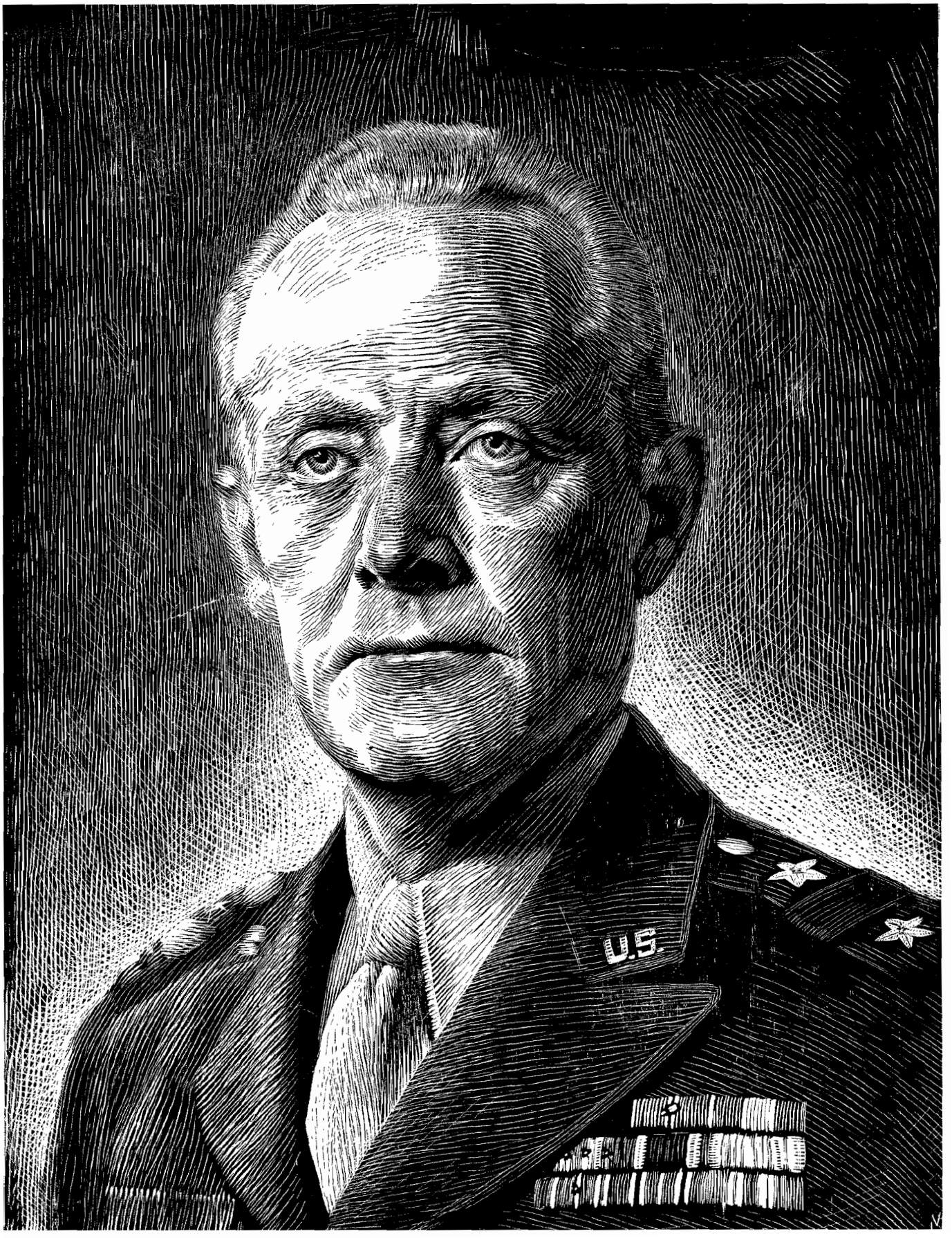
A veteran of 30 years service, Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress piloted the Century Division from activation until 22 September 1945, when he left the 100th to take command of the VI Corps.

Born in Richmond, Virginia, on 24 November 1894, Gen. Burress matriculated in the Virginia Military Institute from which he graduated in 1914 with the degree of Bachelor of Science. He was commissioned in the Regular Army as a second lieutenant of Infantry on 30 November 1916.

With the advent of World War I, Gen. Burress was assigned to the 23rd Infantry, Second Division, with which unit he served as regimental operations officer. He participated in five major engagements: the Troyon Sector, Chateau Thierry, the Aisne-Marne Offensive, the Pont-a-Mousson Sector, and the St. Mihiel Offensive. He returned from France on 2 November 1919 with the permanent rank of captain.

Between wars, Gen. Burress occupied school and command posts throughout the United States including his VMI *alma mater* where he was Professor of Military Science and Tactics. On 29 October 1941, he became Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. He left this important post upon assignment to the Puerto Rican Department early in 1942.

Gen. Burress guided the 100th through the difficult Vosges Mountains campaign; the initial assault on Bitche; the 100th's great winter defense before that Maginot bastion; the final capture of the Bitche fortress; the bitter, 9-day assault against Heilbronn, which resulted in the 100th's most brilliant victory; and the surge southward to Stuttgart.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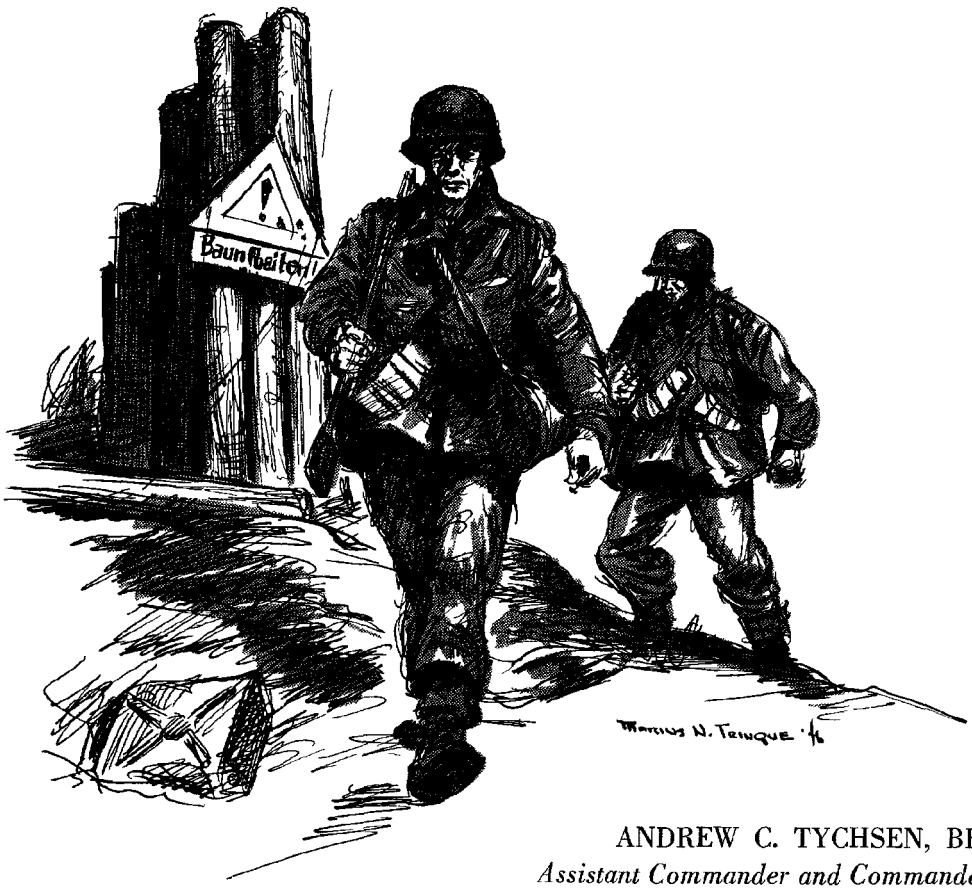

ANDREW C. TYCHSEN, BRIG. GEN., U.S.A.

Assistant Commander and Commander, 100th Infantry Division

Like Gen. Burress, Brig. Gen. Andrew C. Tychsen is a veteran of 30 years Army service. Assigned to the 100th Division as commanding officer of the 399th Infantry Regiment upon activation of the division, Gen. Tychsen was appointed assistant division commander in January 1945. He became commanding officer of the Century in September 1945, upon Gen. Burress' assignment to VI Corps. He retained that post until January 1946 when the 100th was inactivated.

Gen. Tychen was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on 27 June 1893. Enlisting as a private in the First Minnesota Infantry in April 1914, he rose through the ranks to 1st Sergeant and saw action on the Mexican border.

Leaving the First Infantry, Gen. Tychsen entered the First Officers Training Camp at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, on 25 March 1917 and was commissioned a captain in August of that year. Upon graduation he was assigned to the 88th Division and served on the French front as a machine gun company commander and battalion commander from July 1918 to July 1919. seeing action at Belfort, Epinal, Verdun and the Meuse.

Shortly after his return to the States in 1919, Gen. Tychsen entered the Regular Army as a captain and served in various school and command posts throughout the United States and Hawaii until World War II. In 1935 he entered the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and upon graduation was assigned to the Sixth Infantry, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. He was then placed in command of the Organized Reserves at Camden, New Jersey.


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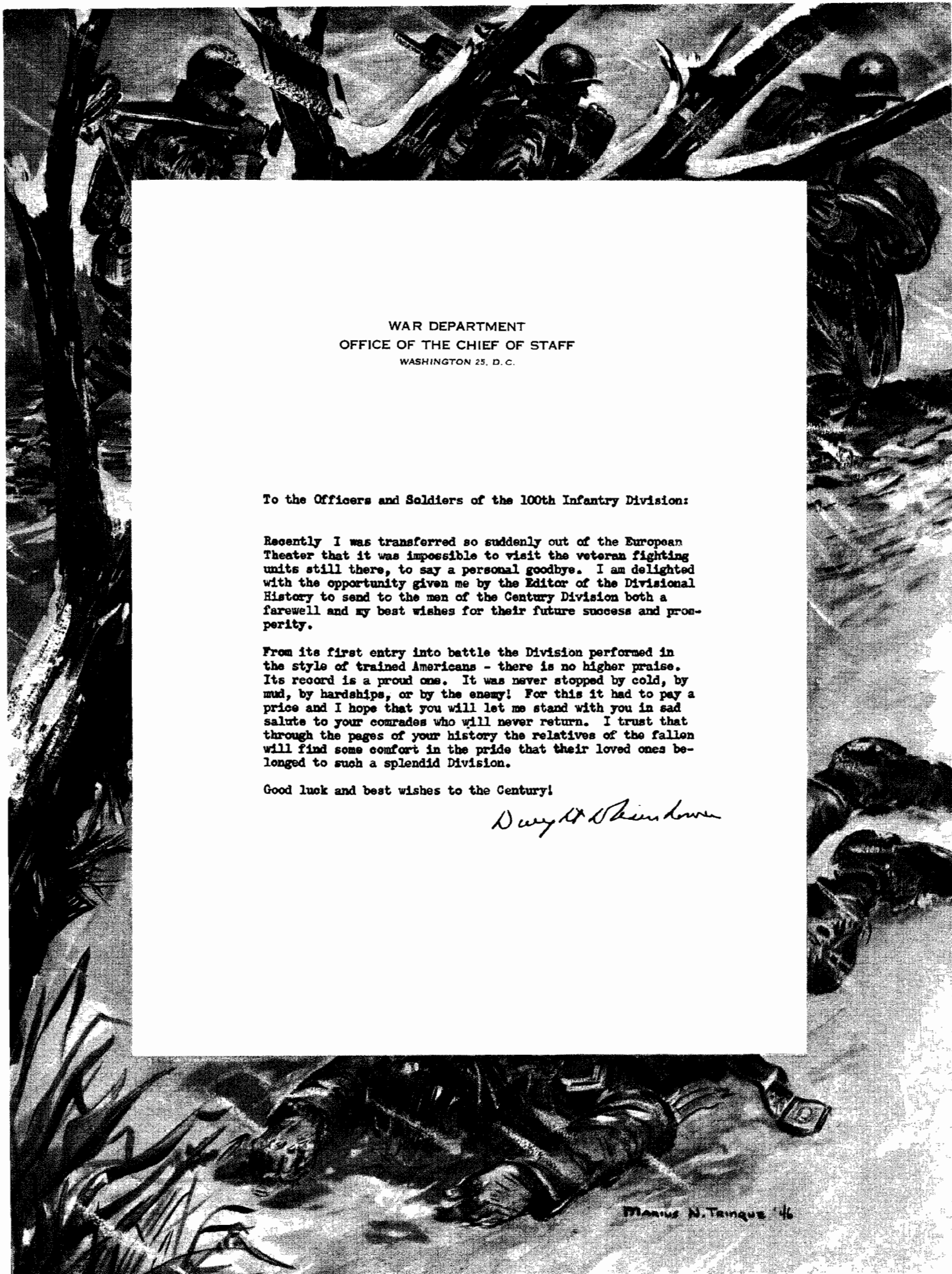

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

To the Officers and Soldiers of the 100th Infantry Division:

Recently I was transferred so suddenly out of the European Theater that it was impossible to visit the veteran fighting units still there, to say a personal goodbye. I am delighted with the opportunity given me by the Editor of the Divisional History to send to the men of the Century Division both a farewell and my best wishes for their future success and prosperity.

From its first entry into battle the Division performed in the style of trained Americans - there is no higher praise. Its record is a proud one. It was never stopped by cold, by mud, by hardships, or by the enemy! For this it had to pay a price and I hope that you will let me stand with you in sad salute to your comrades who will never return. I trust that through the pages of your history the relatives of the fallen will find some comfort in the pride that their loved ones belonged to such a splendid Division.

Good luck and best wishes to the Century!

Dwight D. Eisenhower