

commander, ordered a withdrawal. Shortly after he had given this order, he was killed by a sniper while directing bazooka fire on the tanks.

The company withdrew to a line along the northern edge of the sugar refinery. The two German tanks came after them, but as they clanked into the open field just before the refinery, our artillery really zeroed in, forcing them to show their ventilator turrets to the hard-pressed Century fighting men and roar out of the area.

In the interim, as soon as the tanks had been reported, a liaison plane took off and went after them to direct artillery fire. The Cub, with Lt. R. W. Sands, the pilot, and S. Sgt. Richard Hemmerly, the observer, chased the Tiger tanks back to their lair in the German barracks, carefully tracing their path by liaison radio. As the tanks approached the barracks, a direct hit was scored on one of them with an 8-inch shell and a near miss caused a brick wall to crumble on the other, damaging it heavily. Its mission completed, the little plane flew back across the river.

The intensity of our frontal attack upon Heilbronn continued to increase in fury. During the night of 6-7 April, Co. C of the 399th crossed the river and was attached to the 1st Battalion of the 397th. The 399ers spent the night in the sugar refinery, waiting for the dawn when they were to attack the Knorr works which had been recaptured by the Jerries.

At about 0830 hours, however, the enemy again struck at Co. B of the 397th and Co. C of the 399th, this time with more than 100 infantrymen supported by three tanks and a flak wagon. The Jerry troops came from the south, moving around the Knorr works toward the southern flank of Co. B's lines. One of the tanks rolled up to the crossroads directly between the sugar refinery and the Knorr works, and fired a few

rounds into the river before being driven back by our artillery.

The men from Co. C 399th were particularly worried by the counterattack because of the danger of being cut off from Co. B of the 397th, on their left. The Jerries were known to have infiltrated along the east side of the sugar refinery in which the men of Co. C were battling and around the rear of the building to the river. If the enemy force was of any strength, Co. C would be effectively isolated from the rest of our troops on the bridgehead. Accordingly, S. Sgt. James Harte was sent with an eight-man patrol to eliminate the Jerries, if possible. The patrol killed two enemy and took six PWs, reducing the threat in that sector.

In the meantime, Co. C 399th had suffered two more counterattacks, one at noon and another shortly afterwards, but beat off both with light machine guns, 60mm mortars, and supporting artillery fire. Co. C 399th and Co. B 397th, then moved out to the attack. Co. C captured the Knorr works for the second time with little difficulty, and Co. B, against negligible opposition, reestablished positions on the Flein road that it had been forced to abandon earlier.

During the night a Jerry patrol tried to break through the lines held by Co. B, but the enemy was





*Infantrymen, supported by a tank, slug through a factory yard.*



*Wreckage of a Mark VI Tiger tank lies near the German barracks.*

repulsed by the company's machine guns emplaced at the northeast corner of the Knorr works.

The bridgehead could now be called secure, but the purpose of the landing, relief of the northern bridgehead, had not been accomplished. Co. A could not move north from Kilianskirche without armor. And our armor still cooled its treads on the west bank of the Neckar while the Centurymen in Heilbronn stewed.

While Co. C 399th was fighting alongside the 1st Battalion 397th across the river, the rest of the 399th was in Bockingen and Frankenbach, directly opposite Heilbronn, still protecting the right and rear of the division. Patrols were dispatched to clear the remnants of enemy resistance on the west side of the river, and a patrol from Co. A reconnoitered the Neckar southward to a point opposite the town of Sontheim. No contact was made with the Krauts in this area.

The chain of assault boats continued to operate back and forth across the Neckar river. At all times of the day and night, at least two boats were in operation, and, in emergencies, as many as nine could be used. On the morning of 6 April, the boats were moved north 400 yards to a new site at the ruins of a foot-bridge where Co. A 397th had cleared the east bank.

However, the Germans infiltrated behind the Co. A lines and fired on the engineers in the boats and on the landing, harassing operations to such an extent that Lt. Jackson took tanks and TDs of Co. C 781st Tank Battalion and Co. B 824th TD Battalion down to the river bank to fire on the houses in which the enemy were entrenched. This did not stop the German artillery, however, which kept finding the engineers and forcing them to move their site. Throughout the action, supply lines to the right bank of the Neckar were maintained and wounded were evacuated. But the small boats were unable to transport the preponder-

ance of materiel necessary to crush the enemy quickly, and armor still could not be brought across.

Under cover of darkness, early in the morning of 7 April, the indefatigable Co. C of the 31st Engrs. started to build a treadway bridge 100 yards south of the demolished span. At daylight, smoke generators were employed to screen the engineers operations. The 163rd Smoke Generator Co. was reinforced by the 69th Smoke Generator Co., a light unit whose generators could be dug in and protected more fully from artillery fire. A wind-shift plan was devised by the engineers, and three small generators were ferried across the river to the east bank so that a wind coming from the east would carry the smoke toward the river rather than away from it. Altogether, ten small generators were knocked out at the southern crossing site, but none on the east bank were hit, the operators having skillfully concealed them in the rubble or placed them deep in the cellars of the buildings. The small generators had another advantage over the larger ones. Their smoke goes up in puffs and diffuses soon after escaping the spout, leaving no tell-tale stream pointing to the source of the smoke. The new system worked pretty well during the day, but the Jerries still were able to shell the site.

A sudden lull in the almost continuous enemy fire gave the engineers some respite, and by evening the treadway bridge was nearing completion and the tanks and TDs lined the bank ready to roll across. Then, at 1730 hours, the enemy artillery thundered ominously and five floats were knocked from under the bridge. Prisoners captured later said that the Jerry artillery men in the hills had carefully watched the bridge being put in and with a macabre humor had waited until the span was almost completed before destroying it. They had laughed as it went under.



*Left, air liaison transmits fire missions to the artillery batteries.  
Above, looking down on the roofs of the glassworks.*

That night, an overcast blacked out the moon, and smoke was not needed. The bridgehead had expanded somewhat. Fewer German shells fell along the river banks, and the engineers were able to rebuild the bridge, completing it by daybreak. Before 0800 on 8 April, 24 tanks from Co. C 781st Tank Battalion and nine tank destroyers from Co. B 824th TD Battalion, rolled over to the east bank and joined forces with the valiant infantrymen.

Traffic was still pouring across the bridge when the wind fish-tailed, sending the protective smoke down the eastern bank and up the western bank, leaving the center of the river clear and the bridge perfectly visible from the hills to the east of town. At 1130 Jerry shells knocked out two floats, reducing the carrying capacity of the bridge to ten tons. Two hours later, the bridge was under water again. So the division went back to supplying the troops on the bridgehead with assault boats. But some armor had gone across and the bottleneck had developed a crack.

During the remaining days of the battle, the division worked on other methods of spanning the river while the assault boats continued to ply between the banks of the Neckar. On the night of 9 April, engineer officers considered building a treadway trestle bridge, but when soundings found the water too deep, they decided to construct a motor-powered ponton assault ferry capable of transporting a tank.

Co. A of the 31st Engrs., which had struggled so courageously with the ferry at Neckargartach, came down to build the power-driven raft. Construction was started in the courtyard of an old garage before midnight on the night of 9-10 April. Assembling all five of the necessary floats here, they loaded them into trucks, transported them to the river bank, and by

0630 had the ferry in the water and ready to churn. For once, enemy artillery did not bother them, and by 1130 of 10 April, 13 tanks and TDs, in addition to the 81mm mortar platoon of Co. D 399th, had been carried across the river. From then on, crossings were made continuously. The average ferrying time was ten minutes.

While the first ponton bridge was being shelled by the enemy, our 1st Battalion 399th was moving across the river to take positions on the southern bridgehead facing to the south and east. Co. C was, of course, already across and had been helping the 1st Battalion 397th protect and expand the bridgehead. Co. B crossed the river on the ponton bridge and took positions on the right of the 397th. Co. A had begun to cross when the bridge was destroyed. The remainder of the company negotiated the crossing in assault boats, and Co. A dug in on the right flank of Co. B. At 1445, Co. C 399th was relieved of duty with the 397th and reverted to control of the 1st Battalion 399th.

An interesting sidelight to the drab drama of war occurred when an enemy prisoner was sent out across the front lines to convince some of his fellow soldiers to surrender. He returned with four civilians who demanded a guarantee of safety for any other enemy who wished to lay down their arms. The guarantee was made, and 22 enlisted men and one officer surrendered.

The 2nd Battalion 399th took over positions vacated by the 1st Battalion on the west side of the river. Co. E moved from Schwaigern to the former positions of Co. B along the west bank of the Neckar. Co. F re-



*Centurymen dash through the rubble of Heilbronn in face of intense enemy fire. This was once a beautiful city.*

mained in Grossgartach, sending one platoon to Schluchtern as added protection for our right flank and rear.

The 3rd Battalion 399th continued on VI Corps special duty, rounding up enemy stragglers while acting as security guard for Corps.

While efforts were being made to construct a bridge on the southern bridgehead, the artillery, in addition to helping protect the engineers, was trying to shield the northern bridgehead by screening Jerry observation from the hills overlooking the city. S. Sgt. James E. Hampton, with Co. L, who had seen a gun flash between Cloverleaf and Tower Hills from his vantage point on the top floor of the Fiat factory, relayed this information and four battalions of artillery focused their fire on this point. Enemy artillery fire from this spot ceased.

That was the night of 5 April. On the next night Sgt. Hampton observed more Jerries running into some houses near the same spot. He called for more fire, and two of the houses were destroyed. From the same Observation Point, Lt. Richard W. Pace, and Cpl. Gordon E. Stiles directed fire on the miscellaneous shacks and houses on the side of the hills around which the Jerries were constantly moving. Cos. B and C of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion smoked the ridge line of the hills to blot out enemy observation, and on 7 April it was reported by prisoners that the enemy had been smoked out of the tower and was looking for new OPs. But the smoke screen was not entirely effective, because the smoke did not always cover the top of the tower. So the artillery and the

heavy mortar battalion, firing high explosive shells, knocked the top off the tower with some long-range sharpshooting. The P-47s also bombed and strafed Tower Hill, but failed to hit the tower, even though they did plenty of damage to the castle.

After finding that they could not attack the gray stone house frontally in the advance southward from the northern bridgehead, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th, on 6 April, initiated a four-pronged drive aimed at meeting with the 1st Battalion 397th, coming up from the north. Plans called for Co. G, with the remaining men of Co. E, to push along the river, while the other three companies advanced through the factory district. Co. I, from their position in the Fiat factory was to lead the attack on the gray stone house, flanking it from the left side, where cover was to be found from two rows of warehouses running generally east and west. The first row was only 100 yards from an outbuilding at the southeast corner of the Fiat factory, and the second row only 50 yards from the first. From here it was only 25 yards to the gray stone house. Co. F, which had moved over to join Co. I in the Fiat factory earlier in the day, was to follow in support. As a preliminary, the artillery observer in the Fiat building directed several HE shells into the second row of warehouses, where he had seen Jerries, and registered fire on a large number of Krauts in a cement bunker and several foxholes out in front of the gray house. Some of the Jerries ran inside. The others were pinned down.

S. Sgt. Harold Kavarsky led the attack with his squad from the 2nd Platoon of Co. I. They made it to the first row of warehouses without drawing fire, but when they started to move out into the open again, the



Jerries fired on them from the cellar of the westernmost warehouse in the second row and from the foxholes in front of the gray house. When the lead scout in the squad was wounded, Kavarsky withdrew his men, and called for artillery. The forward observer directed fire for 30 minutes on the Jerries in the warehouse and in front of the gray house, killing some 15 of them as they tried to escape from the artillery into the gray house. Kavarsky then set up two light machine guns on the second floor of his warehouse and sprayed the windows of the warehouses in the second row and the enemy foxholes. These machine guns covered Kavarsky and his men as they ran 50 yards in the open under intense enemy fire to the middle building of the second row of warehouses. They reached the ramp which led up into the first floor of the warehouse, fired a machine gun burst into the windows of the building, and advanced into the structure where they paused amid burning piles of grain for the rear element of the squad to come up. As they waited, a round of our own artillery came in and struck Sgt. Kavarsky in the leg. When Kavarsky's squad was joined by the squad of S. Sgt. Robert Tessmer in the warehouse, four men led by Sgt. John P. Keelen went down into the cellar and captured five enemy prisoners, the only Jerries left in the building.

In the cellar, the men found a tunnel leading from their warehouse to the westernmost warehouse in the row, the one nearest the gray house. Waiting for the 3rd Platoon of Co. I to join them, the group proceeded through the tunnel to the next warehouse, and found it deserted. From the upstairs window they could see the cement bunker between them and the gray house, and they fired four bazooka rounds into the bunker, killing two Jerries. The Krauts in the foxholes retired into the gray house.

Early in the afternoon, Co. F came down into this

last warehouse to finish the job of taking the gray house. S. Sgt. Joseph A. Snyder leaned out of the window and fired two rifle grenades into the window of the gray house from a distance of a 100 yards, and the Jerries put out a white flag. With this strong-point subdued, the Centurymen worked through the buildings around the gray house, taking 20 prisoners from the house itself and 53 from the factory across the street.

Now that the second strong point in the enemy's zone-by-zone defense of Heilbronn had fallen, Cos. I and F found comparatively easy going. The spearhead advanced four companies abreast, Co. G on the right next to the river, Cos. F and I in the center, and Co. L on the left. Co. K covered the left and rear of the advance. That night, they cleared the block below the gray house.

On the following day, 7 April, they worked down through 550 yards of the next long block, meeting stiff organized resistance only at the end of day in Co. L's sector on the left of the line. About half way down the long block, Co. L was held up by about 20 Germans they heard yelling in a factory about 50 yards across the field from the factory they had just entered. S. Sgt. Hampton, forward observer, called for artillery on the Jerries' factory, and the enemy was driven out.

Co. L continued down the block into a group of shell-torn apartment houses, but as they entered the buildings they were greeted by a heavy burst of machine gun fire from across the railroad tracks a hundred yards or so to the east. As the 1st Platoon moved into the southeasternmost building, they were counter-attacked from the east by a small enemy force armed chiefly with panzerfausts. The first platoon held its

*Below, a disabled American tank stands beside a wrecked house. Left, a makeshift ferry carries two jeeps to the east bank of the Neckar.*



ground. When they heard a wounded German groaning as he lay out by the railroad tracks, a medic crawled out to help him, but before he could reach him, he was wounded himself and had to crawl back into the house.

By this time it was growing dark. The Jerries continued to fire into the corner apartment house. From the roofless top floor of the building, Pfc. Arthur Nimrod fired his BAR down on the railroad tracks, keeping the Jerries from crossing the tracks and attacking the apartment houses in force. Not until the attack eased up did he pay any attention to himself, and only then noticed that his knee was badly swollen from being hit by some of the debris thrown up by the shells that were hitting all around him on the top of the building.

On the morning of 8 April, Cos. G, F, and L, had to hold up their advance while Co. I cleared a small but powerful force of Germans from an orchard in their sector. From a small brick house in the southeast corner of the orchard the Germans could fire on the factory in which Co. F was preparing for the further attack on the southern part of the factory district. Along the east side of the orchard was a long factory, with all but half of its first floor blown away. In the center of the orchard, an enemy machine gun was emplaced in a dugout, where the trees were sparsely enough planted to afford good lanes of fire.

Early in the morning, our artillery shelled the orchard. S. Sgt. Richard C. Olson led his squad, from the 2nd Platoon Co. I across the road into the first room of the factory. From here they planned to work along the walls on the inside of the battered building to a point opposite the red brick house. They had to keep low behind the walls of the factory because the

machine guns in the house would fire on them every time they raised their heads. The first scout, Pfc. James Van Danne, climbed over a sheltering wall and made it into the next room. Pfc. Henry P. Perkins didn't make it. As he followed Van Danne over the wall a sniper from the red brick house killed him on the spot. At the same time the machine gun in the orchard began to blast the Item Co. men, forcing them to rush for cover.

Olsen got two bazookas into firing position, and two riflemen into a room closest to the red brick house. T. Sgt. Edward Eylander, in command of the 2nd Platoon, placed two light machine guns into position in windows in the factory across the road, and opened fire. Several bazooka rounds and an anti-tank grenade quieted the fire from the red brick house, and a smoke round from one of the bazookas forced the machine gunner from the center of the orchard to the back of the house. After a heavy preparation burst of machine gun fire from our positions across the road, Sgt. Thomas E. Cooper led four men across the orchard and up to the front door of the house. Pvt. Arthur Hare smashed the front door with the butt of his rifle and seven Jerries rushed into his arms and surrendered. Part of Olsen's squad later went down into the cellar and captured two more Krauts.

After Co. I had cleared the orchard, Co. L advanced into the block of factory buildings to the left of the fruit grove, using a captured enemy 37mm gun as direct support. The company moved through this block with little difficulty until reaching an office building at the southern end of the block next to the junction of two rail lines. From the railroad station at the junction, the Jerries zeroed in their machine guns on the office building, immobilizing the company. Sgt. Hampton, the artillery FO, called for fire on the station. The artillerymen registered 12 direct hits on the build-

*Remains of another ponton bridge attests to the accuracy of enemy artillery. Right, riddled pontons salvaged from the Neckar.*





*Tower in Bockingen which proved an excellent vantage point for artillery observation.*

ing which silenced the enemy MGs and enabled Co. L to continue into the next block of factories.

From mid-afternoon of 8 April until noon of the 9th, relatively little opposition was met, and the companies were able to take all of the factory district north of the bend in the river. In the cellar of one of the factories, Co. G discovered 22 men and 6 women Russian slave laborers. The only serious resistance made by the enemy was a counterattack by some 20 Jerries who came across the railroad tracks on Co. L's left, armed with panzerfausts and burp guns. Co. L quickly repulsed the attack, sustaining only light casualties.

By noon of 9 April, our forces on the north bridgehead were ready to jump off across the railroad tracks, move into the heart of Heilbronn, and connect with the troops pushing up from the south. Only 1,000 yards away, the tall spire of Kilianskirche could be seen rising out of the smoke, and they could hear the firing of Co. A of the 397th. They were so close they had to telephone Co. A's tanks to mind their fire. Less than 1,000 yards—3 minutes at a jog-trot—for the pincers to be joined. But those 1,000 yards were the heart of Heilbronn.

To the south, Co. A had been stopped the afternoon of 6 April along the east-west road running along the north side of Kilianskirche. There the Germans began to put up some of the most concentrated defense offered during the entire battle of Heilbronn. Co. A had been advancing with the 2nd Platoon on the left next to the river, and 3rd Platoon on the right. T. Sgt. Bennie Ray was able to get two of his squads across the road that evening, but he withdrew them upon hearing that Lt. John H. Strom, leader of the 3rd Platoon, had also gotten men across the road, but had been unable to find tenable positions and was withdrawing

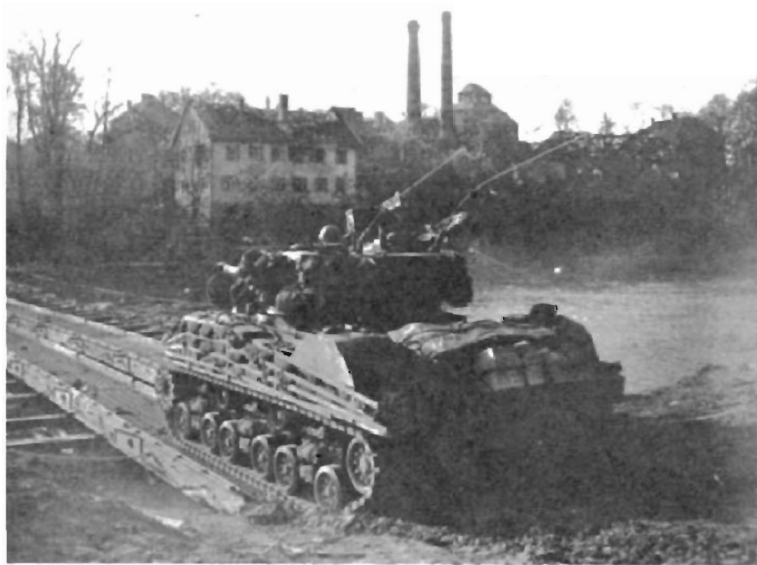
south. Strom's men had run across the road in the face of almost constant machine gun crossfire, one man every ten minutes dashing to the piles of rubble on the other side. As night fell, and they still were unable to advance through the German lines, Strom called them back and the platoon spent the night in the ruins of Kilianskirche.

Early in the evening, the 1st Platoon, led by Lt. Walter Vaughan, which had been following the other platoons, was sent to clear the block directly behind Kilianskirche, which had been bypassed by the 3rd Platoon.

S. Sgt. Edward Borboa's 3rd Squad went through the center of this block. As they rounded a corner, they came upon a group of seven men talking together near a rubble pile. Thinking they were men from Co. C, on the right of Co. A, Sgt. Borboa called to them. As they looked around, Borboa saw that they were Jerries. The squad's BAR man, Pfc. Paul Guzldes, and Pfc. Laurence Mills killed them all. The platoon went on through the western half of the block, but as darkness fell, they met heavier sniper and machine gun fire, and stopped their advance for the night.

The following morning, 7 April, Lt. Vaughan sent Sgt. Carl Cornelius with five men across the street into a large building, diagonally across the street to the northeast from Kilianskirche, to form an outpost and prepare for the attack that was planned for the afternoon. With the 19 men he had left, Lt. Vaughan waited in the building that forms the apex of the triangular block, directly across the street to the southeast from Kilianskirche.

About 1430 he saw a platoon of Jerries coming down the road from the north, and another platoon coming along the road from the east. Their movements threatened to cut off Cornelius and his five men in the outpost across the street. Both his platoon and Strom's platoon in Kilianskirche opened up on the two German columns. When 15 Jerries fell, they ceased fire to let the medics take care of the wounded. Both German columns withdrew. But they were soon back again, this time more cautiously, hugging building walls and stopping behind rubble piles and in doorways. They squeezed off Cornelius and his five men in their corner building, and firing panzerfausts, drove a wedge between Kilianskirche and Vaughan's platoon. At the same time, another Jerry counter-



*A TD crosses treadway bridge to southern bridgehead on morning of 8 April. Some armor got across before span was destroyed.*



*Lending supporting to southern bridgehead from the western bank of the Neckar, a couple of TDs fire into enemy positions.*

attack was launched on the southern end of the triangular block, and the right rear of Vaughan's platoon was forced to withdraw, losing all contact with Co. C on the right. Now completely cut off, the platoon was forced to withdraw altogether from the triangular block and form a line along the road that leads southwest from Kilianskirche. Here they held, and succeeded in driving out the Germans who had wedged in south of Kilianskirche.

The German counterattack came from the north as well as from the east. Kilianskirche was pounded all afternoon by a heavy German self-propelled gun which would roll up near the church, fire, withdraw, and then return from a different direction. Strom's platoon, in the church, fired constantly at the attackers and dropped grenades out the window to halt the infiltrating Jerries. The 2nd Platoon, next to the river, had already begun to attack northward when the counterattack hit. Five men led by S. Sgt. Max Dow had crossed the road and were setting up an outpost. But here the counterattack was less severe than it was on the right and the men in the outpost joined the men in the platoon in firing on the Jerries advancing from the open square north of the road, diagonally across the road from Kilianskirche toward the river. Most of the men from the 2nd Platoon fired from the cellars of their houses. Sgt. Ray, the platoon leader, came out of his cellar one time to kill a Jerry who was crawling along the roof of the building his platoon was using. Several Jerries lay wounded in the road when their leader raised a Red Cross flag. Ray's men let them pick up the wounded and get away. They did not return.

By the end of the afternoon, the Jerries had with-

drawn all along the line, and the three platoons of Co. A were able to establish contact with each other. But the Jerries had forestalled Co. A's attack, and throughout the night of 7-8 April artillery and nebelwerfer rocket fire harassed all three platoons. The Jerries infiltrated through tunnels that the men of Co. A knew nothing about. Snipers would go through the lines, or rather under them, and fire on our guards from the rear. That night a section of heavy machine guns was brought up to fire from the 2nd Platoon's house and from Kilianskirche, and the company's light mortars sent rounds into enemy strongpoints.

Lt. Vaughan with three men tried to reach Sgt. Cornelius and his A Co. squad in the building across the street from the church where they had been holding an outpost. They got as far as the building on the apex of the triangular block, where they ran into a Jerry patrol. After a short grenade fight, the Century-men were forced to withdraw. With every attempt at rescue repulsed, it seemed certain that Sgt. Cornelius and his men were lost.

It was at this time, when farther advance by Co. A was impossible and even the positions they were holding were precarious, that the short-lived ponton bridge was completed and the tanks and TDs roared across the river onto the bridgehead.

One tank, commanded by Cpl. Vincent J. Neratka, immediately raced to the aid of Co. A. As the Sherman clanked up the road leading toward Kilianskirche from the southwest, the road which now was Lt. Vaughan's front line, it was hit by a panzerfaust and its tracks were burned out. The crew bailed out and ran for cover as a German machine gun began to fire down the road from the north. This machine gun, sup-





*The Market Platz. This building was west of Kilianskirche.*



*Street leading to bridgehead between Market Platz and Kilianskirche.*

ported by panzerfausts and burp guns on the other side of the road, had stopped four previous attempts by Vaughan's platoon to advance into the triangular block.

A second tank and a TD were dispatched to help Co. A. Approaching up a different road, the two vehicles reached Kilianskirche safely. There the tank took a position at the intersection, while the TD opened shop at the northwest corner of the church where it could lay fire into the open square across the street. After several exchanges with the enemy, the Krauts ceased firing from behind the square, but it took three hours of steady shelling by the armor before the machine guns, firing into the intersection from the north and east, were silenced.

Now the way was clear for Strom's and Ray's platoons, still stymied along the river road. In short dashes, one man at a time, Strom's platoon crossed the road and took up positions in the open square amid the rubble of the wrecked buildings. By dark, a line had been established on the far side.

Ray's platoon had it easier. The roads in their sector were freer of enemy, and they were able to advance faster with the support of two tanks and a TD through the sniper-infested rubble along the river. The tanks proved extremely valuable in blasting snipers out of buildings and helping to clear intersections. That morning, 8 April, the 397th Anti-Tank Co. had crossed the river while the bridge was still in, and had moved up to the lines behind Co. A, securing that company's rear against infiltrating snipers. During the night, they took positions vacated by Ray's and Strom's platoons along the river road.

Lt. Vaughan's platoon, to the right and rear, meanwhile, was still unable to secure Co. A's right flank. Armor was brought up to stabilize the situation. On the afternoon of 8 April, while the original tank was clearing the intersection near Kilianskirche, two additional Shermans were thrown into the struggle for the triangular block of houses.

The tanks, attached to the 1st Platoon of Co. C, on Lt. Vaughan's right, and supported by infantrymen under the command of T. Sgt. Pittman Hall, started to work eastward through the street that lay directly south of the triangular block. A panzerfaust wounded Sgt. Hall and two other men, but Hall refused to be evacuated until he had secured medical aid for his two men. Having brought the medics back, Sgt. Hall returned to his platoon, showed the two tanks where he thought the panzerfaust had been, and oriented his second in command as to the situation. Only then did he permit the medics to remove a large piece of shrapnel from his arm.

Early the following morning, Sgt. Hall was back in the line with his platoon. Together with the tanks, the platoon pushed eastward along the road to the south of the triangular block, concentrating fire to the north and down the road to the east, from where they were receiving heavy panzerfaust and machine gun fire.

The tank fire, together with that of Hall's and Vaughan's platoons, drove the Krauts clear out of the triangular block. In the afternoon a squad from Vaughan's platoon entered the house where Sgt. Cornelius' patrol had been surrounded. Six gas masks and an American bazooka was all that was found.

The Germans kept up their heavy artillery fire dur-



*Facing toward the Neckar. Ruins of Kilianskirche are at left.*



*All that remained of battered Kilianskirche after its capture.*

ing the night, but made no attempt to attack directly. South of Kilianskirche, however, they did make an effort to break through. Ten Jerries started toward the church, but they were seen by Tec 4 George F. Brazier of Anti-Tank Co. Brazier killed one enemy and wounded two others with his carbine, causing them to withdraw.

The most serious resistance offered by the enemy to the capture of Heilbronn was over. During the day of 9 April, we cleared the entire inner area of the city. Here the southern bridgehead halted, waiting for the northern arm of the pincer to join them.

On the afternoon of 10 April, the forces had not yet met. Two tanks started north to contact the men of the northern bridgehead. As they followed the road north, they met heavy fire from the factories along the river and from a house along the road. Both tanks used up all their ammunition on these points of resistance and were forced to return without having found any trace of our troops to the north.

Meanwhile, at noon of 9 April, Cos. I and K of the 397th, on the northern bridgehead, made ready to cross the railroad tracks and launch a final drive to meet the forces of the southern bridgehead, closing the pincers. The 3rd Platoon of Co. I and the 3rd Platoon of Co. K jumped off following an artillery preparation.

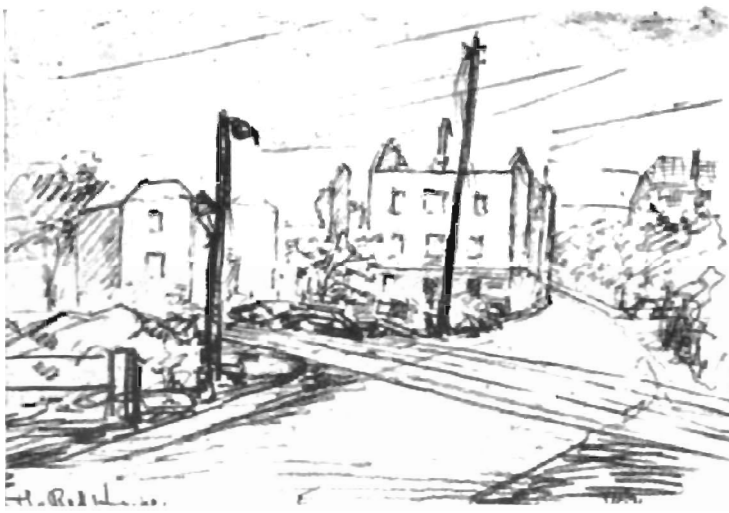
Almost immediately, enemy machine guns opened a deadly crossfire on them from a red house just to the left of a small shack which was Co. I's initial objective, and a grey stucco house we had dubbed the "Gestapo Headquarters," the first objective of Co. K. Both platoons had to dash and crawl for the tracks.

One squad from Co. I, led by S. Sgt. Edwin Huermann, managed to reach the small shack where they found cover from the fire of the enemy machine guns in the red house, only a few yards away. The squad remained in the shack for the remainder of the day, while the rest of the platoon retired to the factory beyond the tracks.

The platoon from Co. K, under Lt. Harris, reached the first line of railroad tracks and dived for the shelter of a ditch. Here they were comparatively safe from enemy fire, but could not even raise their heads to fire over the embankment. Harris and three of his men were wounded. A medic, Tec 3 Frank Harton, crawled out to aid them and was fired on by the enemy. Seeing that the platoon's position was hopeless, Capt. Ralph W. Scott, Co. K commander, called on the 374th F A Battalion for a smoke screen and ordered the platoon's withdrawal to the factory. It was now agonizingly clear that a frontal attack could not wrest the few remaining yards of the center of Heilbronn from the Germans.

On 10 April, the 3rd Battalion attempted to flank the enemy on the west, the side nearest the river. Co. I was to move down past the shack by the railroad bridge to the area of the "Hardware Factories" along the bend of the river, take the factories, and work in behind the red house and the Gestapo Headquarters. Co. K was to follow Co. I and exert pressure on the enemy flank from the northern portion of the factories and the railroad shack.

Late in the afternoon, following a blistering artillery preparation, the attack was begun. Sgt. Huermann, leader of the squad which had gained the shack



*Artist's sketch of the Red Brick House across the railroad tracks which barred the advance of the 3rd Platoon of Co. I.*

near the bridge the previous day, had found that it was possible to walk from the shack to the edge of the canal which skirted the river, and from there south to the factories under cover of a steep bank with a minimum of enemy observation.

As the sky, already thick with the smoke and fog of battle, began to darken, Huermann and Lt. Edinson led the 3rd Platoon of Co. I down along the canal to the rear of the big factory buildings. Cautiously, they entered the first building. Finding it empty, they moved in and waited for the 2nd Platoon to join them. From this point the Item Co. men were one block south of the Gestapo Headquarters. Just a few hundred yards down the road to the south, Strom's and Ray's platoons were waiting with the tanks.

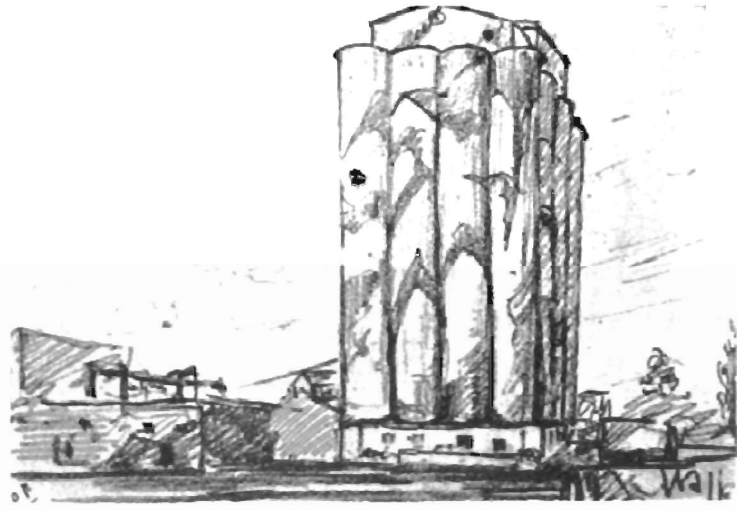
At about 2200 hours, Sgt. Huermann and two men set out southward along the river in an effort to contact the tanks and infantry of the southern bridgehead. As he reached the parkway, 200 yards to the south, Sgt. Huermann was challenged.

"Are you the guys that's supposed to guide the tanks?"

"Who's that? Tankers?"

The great pincers around the center of Heilbronn had been pressed shut. The end of the bloody struggle for the city was in sight. The northern bridgehead forces had driven, without the help of armor, 3,000 yards south through four fanatically defended zones of enemy defense, clearing the enemy, building by building from cellars, piles of rubble and ditches along the way, pitting courage against the desperation of a well organized, amply supplied enemy defense.

Against the pounding hammer of the north, had stood the unyielding anvil of the southern bridgehead, steadily pushing block by block, rubble heap by rub-



*Camouflaged granaries of the Knorr works. The enemy waged a determined fight for this key defense point in factory district.*

ble heap, stone by stone, into the very core of the enemy apple as the Centurymen outfought the Krauts on their own ground.

Except for a few bursts of fire, the night of 10-11 April passed quietly. Early in the morning of 11 April, the attack on the red house and the Gestapo Headquarters was begun. The two tanks moved up the road to the red house, and each fired four rounds into the building. Then the infantrymen rushed the structure only to find it deserted. It was the same story with the Gestapo Headquarters. The Krauts had withdrawn from the center of Heilbronn. Later, they again attempted a defense on the eastern edge of the city. But the remainder of the battle, especially in comparison to these first six days, seemed relatively easy going.

Farther south, Cos. B and C of the 397th and Cos. A, B, and C of the 399th had pummeled their way steadily southward on 8, 9, and 10 April. The fighting in this sector was not as decisive as that done by Co. A 397th, to the north, but it contributed materially to the success of the operation by occupying enemy troops who might have counterattacked the center of the city. They also served the valuable purpose of protecting and enlarging the bridgehead.

Action wasn't long in coming to the 1st Battalion 399th after Cos. A and B had crossed the river and taken positions alongside Co. C of that regiment, which had held the lines on the east side of the Neckar since the first stages of the southern bridgehead. A limited attack to enlarge the bridgehead toward the south and east was immediately launched by the battalion. The attack had barely gotten under way when Co. B intercepted a group of 15 Jerries moving north from Sontheim and led by a Mark IV tank. The Krauts, obviously unaware that we had troops in that area, walked

Heilbronn  
*Germany*







right into our hands. In the ensuing melee, 12 Krauts were killed, three captured, and the tank was knocked out by well directed bazooka fire from two Baker Co. men.

An enemy counterattack against the 1st Battalion's positions at 1731 hours, was beaten off with small arms and 50 cal. MG fire.

By noon of 9 April, Co. B had established a new forward strongpoint in the buildings of the first block north of the Knorr works, the same position that Co. B of the 397th had held before its advance eastward. Eighteen enemy were captured in this operation.

Co. A now fanned out to build a long attack line from the right flank of Co. B, through the Knorr works, and west to the river. A total of 54 prisoners were taken by the 1st Battalion during this advance east of the river, at a loss of one man killed and five wounded.

Also on 9 April, the 1st Battalion 397th continued its advance eastward. At 1000, Co. C jumped off from positions on the Flein road, three blocks east of the river, and drove two blocks farther east with the help of tanks. South of Co. C, Co. B pushed one block east, expanding the bridgehead in their sector.

Cos. A and B of the 399th, having made contact with Co. B of the 397th to their left, pressed out eastward and southeastward from the Knorr works about 1730 hours the afternoon of 9 April, supported by tanks borrowed from the 397th. The Krauts met this threat with 105mm and 150mm artillery, SP, bazooka and small arms fire. Co. B as it advanced across the fork made by the Flein and Sontheim roads was attacked by two Mark IV tanks, which had come up the Flein road. They came so close that the observers with Co. B could not direct artillery fire on them. But when Pfc. Arthur Grimm fired his bazooka on the leading tank, it turned

and fled. Grimm fired three more rounds into the tank and someone hit it with a white phosphorus grenade. Both tanks disappeared and did not return that night. By 1800 hours both A and B Cos. had advanced through about 200 yards of houses and captured 50 prisoners in bitter house-to-house fighting. By 2200, both B and A had reached their objectives on a crescent line a block and a half beyond the Knorr works. One platoon of Co. C established a strong position between the two leading companies. The battalion sustained no casualties during the advance and captured 46 enemy.

P-47s of the 12th TAC again lent valuable aid by attacking Heilbronn along the front of the two battalions.

On 10 April, Co. C of the 399th was ordered to move into the line and take several houses to the right of Co. B, about five blocks out to the next highway beyond the Flein road. The company was unable to advance. It encountered numerous teams of Volksgrenadiers armed with panzerfausts, and snipers hidden in the houses. The enemy panzerfausts were particularly effective against our men hiding behind cellar entrances, windows and stone walls. Many leaflets were found in this area by the 1st Battalion men instructing Volksturm troops in such specific uses for this copy of the American bazooka.

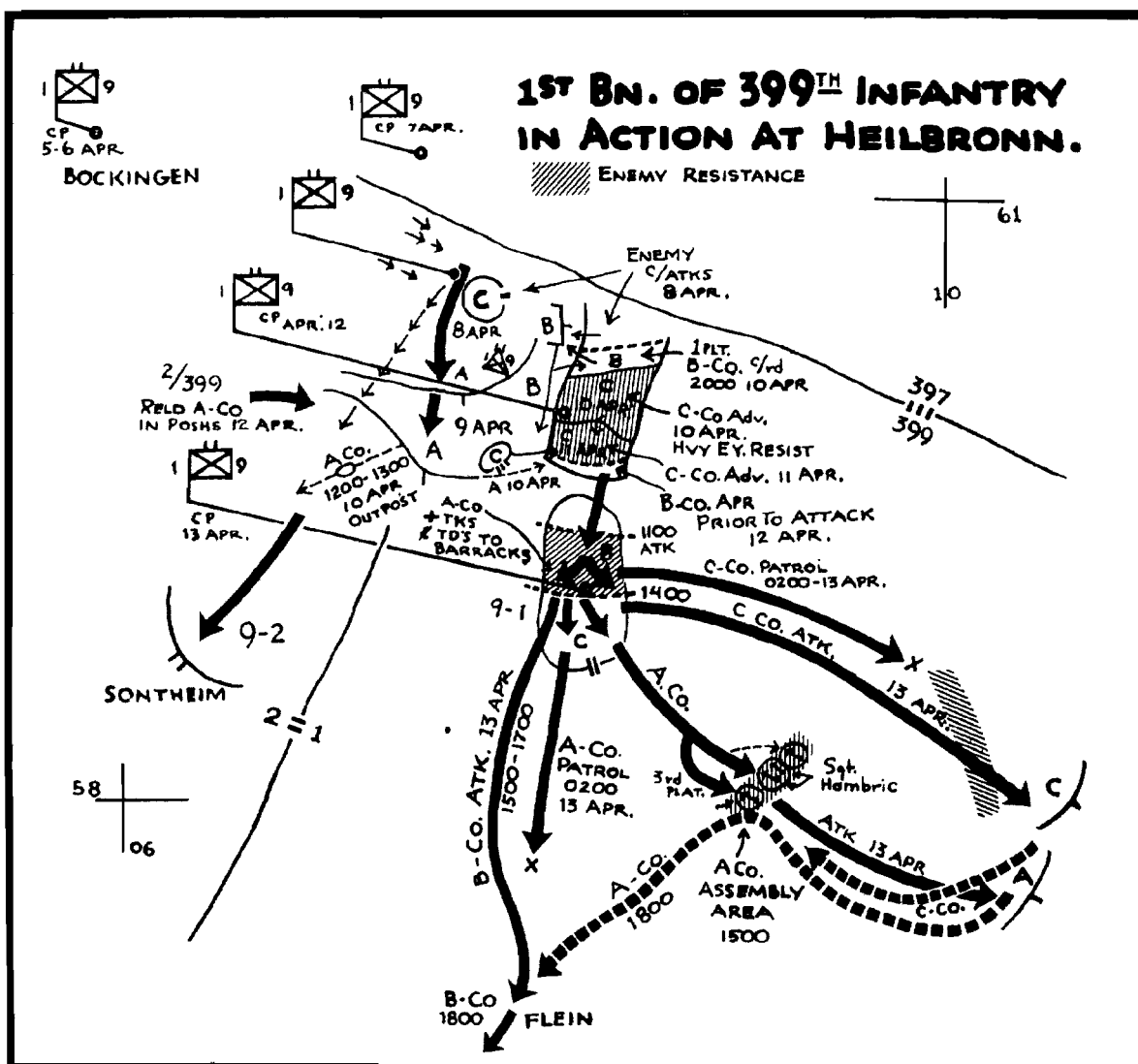
At 1310 hours, a raiding party from Co. A moved southeast across the highway and trolley tracks leading to Sontheim with the mission of clearing the approaches to the formidable enemy military barracks, capture of which would open the way to the wooded high ground beyond. The Krauts had been wreaking havoc on our bridgehead with their observed artillery and mortar fire from this wooded vantage point and it was of paramount importance that the enemy be

*Closeup of ruins of Kilianskirche tells story of fierce struggle.*



*With the enemy forced back, a bridge was finally put in to stay.*





cleared from these positions before our bridgehead could be called secure.

The raid was a difficult one. The Jerries literally clung to the cornerstones of every building and had to be pried out of their miniature fortresses in bitter house-to-house fighting. Nebelwerfers, 88mm, 105mm and 150mm observed fire rained down upon our men from the enemy's positions on high ground to the south-east. Despite this fierce resistance, however, by 1500 hours the last row of buildings had been cleared and Co. A had moved to positions about one kilometer east of the barracks. Thirteen prisoners were captured during this operation.

To the north on 10 April, Co. C 397th, pushed off at 0830 in its attack to further widen the bridgehead to the east. Against much stiffer resistance, the company managed to wrest three more blocks from the Jerries and establish themselves on the next highway parallel to the Flein road. Co. B found no resistance in its zone, however, and pushed four blocks on to the

highway where it joined Co. C. All along Co. B's route, the civilians came out of their houses to display large, white pieces of cloth in token of complete surrender.

On the night of 10 April, the bridgehead line ran from north of Kilianskirche, where Co. A 397th was still fighting, east to the highway beyond the Flein road, thence to the railroad tracks which Co. B of the 399th had cleared, and south around the Knorr works in the area held by Co. A 399th, to the river.

While the battle for Heilbronn proper was raging, an extremely important maneuver was being carried out by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 398th Inf. in the vicinity of Offenau, some ten kilometers to the north. On the morning of 4 April, while the 3rd Battalion 398th and elements of the 2nd Battalion 397th were fighting off savage enemy counterattacks in the northern part of the bridgehead, the 2nd Battalion 398th moved via motor into Hohenstadt, relieving elements of the 253rd Inf., 63rd Div. The battalion

was to establish a bridgehead across the Neckar as soon as practicable so as to effect a flanking drive to the high ground east of Heilbronn.

Originally, it had been planned for the 2nd Battalion 398th to cross the river over a bridge which was to be constructed by the 3rd Battalion 398th and attached engineers of the 325th Engr. Battalion. When enemy artillery fire prevented the building of the span, Capt. Elba W. Bowen, 2nd Battalion S-3, made a reconnaissance of the river to the north and found another crossing site opposite Offenau. That night, a patrol from the 2nd Platoon of Co. F, commanded by S. Sgt. Lawrence W. Curbo, was sent across the Neckar into Offenau to determine if the town was occupied by the enemy.

Luckily, the patrol found a small boat along the western bank, and with makeshift paddles struggled to the opposite shore, laying wire as they went. Upon reaching the muddy right bank, Sgt. Curbo directed concealment of the boat in the brush, and led his small party into the dark streets of Offenau.

The town was deserted of enemy troops, and German civilians, awakened and questioned by the patrol, could give no information of the enemy. After an exhaustive search of the town, Sgt. Curbo and his patrol returned to their hidden boat and recrossed the river to their platoon CP.

Informed of Sgt. Curbo's findings, Lt. Col. Harvey Weisel, 2nd Battalion CO, ordered one platoon from Co. F to cross the river the following morning and secure the far bank so that the engineers could construct a footbridge. Lt. Nick Stalikas, in command of Co. F's 2nd Platoon, was assigned the mission. The crossing was made in three assault boats. While in midstream, the platoon was harassed by enemy MG fire. But the range was long, and no one was hit.

Having gained the east bank, one squad remained near the edge of the town to protect the platoon's flanks while the other two squads moved from house to house up the main streets on the east side of Offenau. Finding no trace of the enemy, Lt. Stalikas, using the wire that Sgt. Curbo's patrol had laid the night before, called Lt. Adams, Co. F commander, and informed him that all seemed clear. Lt. Adams immediately sent another F Co. platoon across. The two platoons searched the remainder of Offenau but found only two German soldiers who had been left behind by their unit.

A defense of the battalion's crossing was established, and the 2nd Platoon of Co. B 325th Engrs.,



*After six days of struggle for Heilbronn, the enemy began to surrender in large numbers.*

under Lt. Samuel Pinnell, began construction of a footbridge. By 1500 of 5 April, the bridge was completed and the remainder of Co. F, followed by Co. E, and a platoon of heavy machine guns from Co. H, crossed the river. Co. F outposted Offenau, and Co. E sent one platoon northeast to Obergriesheim to contact the 63rd Div., while the remainder of the company moved to Duttenberg, about three kilometers northeast of Offenau. There they met Co. G, under Capt. Matthew B. Einsmann, and several attached tanks which had crossed the Neckar at Neckarelz, farther north, where the 63rd Div. had a bridge. After crossing the river, Co. G and the tanks had turned south and passed through a woods northeast of Offenau, where several hastily abandoned enemy pillboxes and a quantity of empty American Red Cross boxes were found. The company arrived in Offenau about 2300 of 5 April, and prepared to spend the night. So far, no enemy opposition had been encountered by any of the 2nd Battalion elements.

The Easy Co. platoon in Obergriesheim set up a defense of the town and awaited further orders, while the rest of the company outposted the town of Duttenberg. Duttenberg is situated on a plain high above the swift-flowing Jagst River, a tributary of the Neckar, and second of three water barriers in the path of the battalion. From their positions, Co. E was able to overlook the proposed crossing site of the battalion, and protect it from possible enemy assault.

The Neckar had been crossed with little difficulty by the 2nd Battalion, but the Jagst and Kocher rivers, tributaries of the Neckar, presented the main problem. Both these rivers flowed into the Neckar at a





point just south of where the battalion crossing had been made, and separated our troops from Heilbronn which they were trying to encircle and attack from the rear. Moreover, the two rivers, at this point roughly parallel and only about three kilometers apart, formed a peninsula which could be easily defended by the fanatical SS troops who had been assigned this sector.

By 0500 of 6 April, following a careful reconnaissance of the Jagst, the companies carried their assault boats, unloaded at Duttenberg, to the river bank. The first wave rolled across the Jagst abreast at 0530. Quickly clambering from the boats, the men ran 200 yards across flat, open ground toward a railroad track at the foot of a steep, heavily entrenched, wooded hill. While most of the men were still in the open, enemy machine guns and small arms began blasting them from high ground to their front and from behind the railroad bed to their right. The 2nd Battalionites continued forward in the face of this heavy fire to the protection of the railroad embankment. This advance was made possible by the quick work of Capt. Einsmann, on the north side of the river, who built up a continuous firing line composed of elements of E and G Cos. and the heavy machine guns of Co. H, which had not yet been sent across. Although one heavy MG was knocked out by enemy automatic fire, wounding two gunners, the forward elements of the 2nd Battalion, immobilized in the dangerous, open ground, were able to reach the embankment under the excellent covering fire of the units on the north bank of the Jagst.

Farther down the river, Co. F was also receiving heavy fire from high ground to their front and right

flank. Some excellent artillery sharpshooting directed by Sgt. Austin, forward observer, and bullseye firing by mortarmen of Co. H, aided by unusually good observation from positions on high ground north of the river, did much to lessen this enemy resistance.

In the meanwhile, Capt. Einsmann, searching for a safer crossing site for the remaining battalion elements, discovered a dam a short distance upstream. Raising the head-gates of the dam, he lowered the water level sufficiently in a few minutes for the troops to infiltrate across to the southern bank. The heavy machine guns of Co. H were left in position until the last moment to give covering fire to the troops negotiating the open field in front of the embankment. When the machine guns were taken across, the mortars of Co. H kept the enemy down with intense, accurate fire. In this way, the 2nd Battalion crossed the Jagst with a minimum of casualties and made their way to the comparative safety of the railroad embankment, although snipers were still active.

By 1030 hours of 6 April, all elements of the battalion were in position to resume the attack. Co. F, however, found it impossible to advance because of intense enemy fire on the open field which led to Jagstfeld. The Jerries covered the field with machine gun fire from positions in a group of railroad cars on a siding, a house in Jagstfeld, only a few hundred yards away, and a hill to the right behind the town.

Co. E reorganized along the railroad track, and moved out in a northeasterly direction along the railroad. Co. G, supported by a section of machine guns from Co. H, jumped off at 1100 and moved across the tracks to high ground. The enemy withdrew slowly, firing as they retreated to apparently better positions. About 1,000 yards past the tracks, the George Co. men hit the main enemy line, estimated at approximately 150 Krauts supported by at least eight machine guns. A bloody fight, lasting several hours, ensued. The G Co. men, trying to batter their way forward with small arms against an entrenched enemy, lost four killed, three captured, and 27 wounded. Co. H suffered three casualties. The valiant Centurymen took a severe toll of the enemy also, killing 40 Krauts and capturing ten. But the Jerries held, and continued firing with such intensity that we were forced to take cover in the shallow furrows scratched by a clumsy handplow in the thin topsoil of Germany.

Meanwhile, the tanks that had been sent across the Jagst farther east, at Wiessbach, arrived and were thrown into the fight, and after some reorganization



*A guitar and accordion provide relaxation between fire missions.*

the attack was continued. But the enemy was too firmly fixed. One tank was knocked out by a Jerry SP gun, and the remaining tanks were forced to withdraw because of the intense enemy artillery and mortar fire.

Capt. Einsmann, realizing the futility of further offense, ordered his company to withdraw to more tenable positions. Enemy fire on the 3rd Platoon of Co. G, on the right flank, was so severe, however, that despite repeated orders to fall back, they seemed glued to the ground. Seeing the platoons plight, Capt. Einsmann and Sgt. Charley Compton stripped off their field equipment and dashed out to the immobilized platoon to give them courage and inspire them to make a run for their lives. Compton, who became almost a legend in the division for his exploits, made three trips over the open, ploughed ground, each time carrying wounded back.

At 1900 hours, battalion headquarters radioed to Co. G to proceed to Heuchlingen, some two kilometers to the northeast. An hour later, hungry and almost thoroughly exhausted, what was left of the gallant company marched into the town. Their reward was K-rations for supper.

Co. E already was in Heuchlingen when Co. G arrived. After leaving the crossing site earlier in the afternoon, Co. E had advanced about 200 yards northeast along the railroad toward Heuchlingen under cover of the railroad embankment. At this point, the 1st Platoon, led by Lt. Sam Passero, was fired on by automatic weapons. A patrol, sent forward to reconnoiter, reported a number of the weapons dug in on a hill to the right. Observed mortar fire by Co. H scored several direct hits. The mortarmen then laid



*A battalion of PW's is marched through a captured German town.*

down a smoke screen to protect the Co. E men from enemy observation while moving into Heuchlingen.

Before advancing into the town, Capt. Garahan, the Co. E commander, sent Lt. Pittman and his platoon into the woods on the company's right to clear out any enemy troops threatening their flank. The remainder of Co. E then entered Heuchlingen where they found a group of American tanks and eight men from the 2nd Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon. The Shermans, together with the Anti-Tankers had crossed the Jagst at Wiessbach and had cleared the town. Co. E remained in Heuchlingen for the night.

Lt. Pittman's platoon, meanwhile, after clearing the woods, was cut off by the enemy who had set up a strong defense line on high ground between the platoon and the Co. E men in Heuchlingen. With the help of a smoke screen laid by the mortars of Co. H, however, he was able to fight his way across the river through intense enemy fire, and arrive in Duttonberg safely. The platoon joined the rest of the company in Heuchlingen the next morning.

Co. F, after having failed to advance across the open ground before Jagstfeld, made a second attempt to reach their objective later in the afternoon. This time the company was more successful, and after knocking out an enemy machine gun which had been threatening the entire field, took three houses on the outskirts of Jagstfeld, where they paused for the night.

About 0300 the following morning, an 18-man Jerry patrol raided the company's positions. One heavy machine gun of Co. H was knocked out by a direct shot down the muzzle, but after a lively fire-



*An ambushed motorized column on a German highway returns fire.*



*Typical pillbox barring the western approaches to Heilbronn.*

fight, the enemy was forced to withdraw. The Germans could be seen in the dark carrying their dead and wounded with them as they withdrew through the rubble. At daybreak one dead Kraut was found lying in the street.

At 0600 of 7 April, Battalion radioed Co. F to proceed into Jagstfeld and clean out the town. The company was then to move to the blown bridge site between Jagstfeld and Bad Wimpfen on the Neckar, and secure this point so that the engineers could throw a Bailey bridge across the river. Lt. Adams sent his 3rd Platoon, under command of Lt. William Kantor, into the town.

Kantor made good progress and Lt. Adams ordered Lt. Joseph Ward, leader of the 1st Platoon, to proceed into Jagstfeld by a different street and meet Lt. Kantor and his men. Lt. Ward's platoon had not gone far before they met strong opposition from enemy located in houses and a small, concrete pillbox which barred the platoon's path across an open field. Three rounds from a bazooka, however, drove 12 SS troopers from the pillbox into the open with their *hande hohe*. The two platoons then made contact and continued toward the blown bridge site. Just as they started forward they received fire from houses to their left, but with the aid of the section of Co. H machine guns which accompanied them, soon silenced the enemy fire.

The platoons moved forward once more. They were having considerable difficulty with a house in which some Jerries were holed up, when they were joined by several tanks which had crossed the Jagst at Weissbach. One of the Shermans blasted the house with one well-aimed shot, and the advance continued.

On this same morning, Co. E had been sent forward to clear the woods southwest of Heuchlingen so that Co. G could move south from that town and assist Co. F in the capture of Jagstfeld. Easy Co. encountered only sniper resistance, a commentary to the excellent work done by G Co. the day before.

Co. G entered Jagstfeld at 1100 hours. Its mission was to clear the houses on the left of the railroad yard, drive hard toward Waldau, and secure the bridge there across the Kocher River, which air reconnaissance had reported intact. Enemy artillery and intense small arms and automatic fire from houses to their front and woods to the left of town, gave the George Co. men considerable trouble. The Krauts defended the Jagstfeld railroad station fiercely, but after a bitter fight in which more than 20 Germans, including the officer in command of the Jagstfeld garrison, were killed, the enemy was forced to flee.

To the south, Co. F continued moving slowly through the factory district at the east end of Jagstfeld. The company sustained heavy casualties in the grim battle from building to building. When the F Co. men finally reached a large pickle factory which afforded perfect fields of fire and excellent observation of the large railroad yards from which the main organized resistance was coming, a halt was called for the night.

Encroaching darkness also forced Co. G to consolidate. That evening, many enemy were killed as they attempted to run from the heavy George Co. fire on the buildings on the left of Jagstfeld. In Lt. Lusitica's words, "the boys had a field-day picking off those Germans as they ran across that open field." Our artillery afforded valuable support, helping to

*A squad worms forward behind the protection of an embankment. The enemy is entrenched on the other side.*

drive the enemy off the open ground and back into the town of Hagenbach, to the northeast.

At 1800, Co. E, which had been routing out snipers in isolated pockets between Heuchlingen and Jagstfeld, was ordered into Jagstfeld to protect the left flank of the battalion, engaged in fighting through the city. Less the 3rd Platoon, which was left to hold Heuchlingen, Easy Co. moved into Jagstfeld at 2000 hours, relieving one platoon of Co. G of left flank duties.

On the morning of 8 April, the 2nd Platoon of Co. F, with two tanks in support, led the company's push deeper into the factory district of Jagstfeld. Upon reaching the railroad yards after clearing snipers from two large factories, the F Co. men were fired upon by mortars, machine guns and small arms. After a lively fire-fight in which we used thousands of rounds of machine gun, 60mm mortar, and .30 cal. ammunition, the enemy was forced to fall back. Co. H machine guns, set up to fire down the railroad tracks and cut off the Krauts' retreat, mowed the enemy down like wheat. The F Co. men lined up at the windows of the buildings they were in and fired in rotation at the Jerries retreating across the open ground, one man firing until he ran out of ammunition and then stepping aside to let another add to the heap of Krauts lying across the tracks.

S. Sgt. Ray Hatley, mortar observer for Co. H, caused such havoc with mortar fire among the Germans caught in this stretch of open ground that the incident was known to the 2nd Battalion men as "Hatley's Slaughter." The mortars also fired extensively on buildings in the yards which the enemy was using as strongpoints.

One building, infested with snipers, was set on fire with a few Co. F bazooka rounds. The sparks ignited the house next to it and chased the Jerries into the open. For days afterward, the buildings in the railroad yard continued blazing. Despite severe losses, however, the enemy clung tenaciously to his battered positions, and little ground was gained during the day. There is no question but that here was one of the main defense lines of the Third Reich.

That night, a large Co. F outpost had a harrowing experience. The outpost, set up in a building in the center of the railroad yard, was attacked by the enemy who used armor piercing bullets in an effort to drive the Centurymen from their position. The F Co. men



lost several killed and many wounded as the Kraut fire pierced the walls of their house and ricocheted around the room. A number of our men were hit while asleep in their bedrolls. But the attempt to knock out the outpost failed as the riflemen drove off the Jerries with heavy counterfire.

Meanwhile, Co. E, less the platoon which had been left in Heuchlingen, had been attempting to clear out a large patch of woods on the left flank of Co. G, which had been holding up their advance. Although the area had been raked by an artillery and TD preparation, the Easy Co. men had not moved 300 yards into the woods before they were fired upon by a flak wagon, rockets, mortars and small arms. Realizing the futility of attempting to clear the woods with only two platoons in the face of such a terrific German defense, Capt. Garahan withdrew his platoons to the north side of Jagstfeld and called for artillery fire. Shortly after withdrawing, Capt. Garahan slipped on a stairway, injuring his back, and Lt. Keddie took command of the company.

At 1500 of 8 April, a second attempt was made to clear the woods. When the platoons had advanced some 600 yards, a patrol was sent to the right to contact Co. G, and another patrol was sent to the left to reconnoiter the woods on the Easy Co. flank. The patrol dispatched to the right, met the left platoon of G Co. which had been held up in an effort to enter the woods in their sector. The patrol which had reconnoitered to the right, however, was fired upon by two machine guns and some small arms, and reported back to the company. Mortar fire now began to fall on the Easy Co. men again, and Lt. Keddie withdrew his platoons once more to the houses on the north side of Jagstfeld where he set up a defense for the night.





*Pushing through the remains of a roadblock along the road to victory. Roadblocks delayed but did not stop our advance.*

The dogged resistance that had been holding up Cos. F and E, also faced G Co., and the fighting for Jagstfeld became, like Heilbronn to the south, strictly a house-to-house battle. While the 2nd Battalion troops were not gaining much ground, however, they were taking a heavy toll of the enemy. Throughout 8 and 9 April, the battalion, supported by the machine guns and mortars of Co. H, bled the enemy white as he counterattacked and withdrew, or stood to fight it out. In effect, Jagstfeld was a war of annihilation with no quarter asked and none given.

Then, on the night of 9 April, a terrific explosion in the vicinity of Waldau told the weary Centurymen that the enemy had destroyed the one remaining bridge over the Kocher River. Once again a crossing would have to be made in the face of an entrenched enemy. Dreams of walking over the Kocher were disintegrated with the blasted bridge. But it was almost too much to hope that the enemy would repeat the error he made at Remingen on the Rhine. There is no concrete highway to victory.

The next day, 10 April, enemy mortar fire continued to fall in the railroad yard, but it no longer seemed to come from the north side of the Kocher. Air reconnaissance confirmed the fact that the bridge at Waldau had been destroyed and that the enemy had withdrawn to the town of Kochendorf, on the south side of the river. The Jerries seemed to have abandoned Jagstfeld.

Since the bridge was now destroyed at Waldau, and there was a strong possibility that F Co. would not be able to establish a crossing site there, especially if the enemy held Kochendorf in strength, Co. E was sent to



*A tank destroyer of the 324th TD Battalion rolls through a captured town. The TDs were an invaluable adjunct in city fighting.*

Hagenbach, 1,000 yards northeast of Waldau. Easy Co. was to take the town, and reconnoiter for a possible crossing site at that point. Upon reaching the outskirts of Hagenbach, a patrol was sent into the town. They had just reached the first house when a machine gun opened fire on them from a knoll on their left near the river. After an exchange of shots in which two Jerries were wounded, the remainder of the gun crew surrendered. Hagenbach was divided into platoon sectors and the doughs proceeded to clean out the town, killing several enemy and capturing 16, including a lieutenant. With the town secured, Lt. Keddie dispatched patrols to reconnoiter for a possible crossing site. None could be found, however, and the patrols returned to Hagenbach where the company spent the night.

After a quiet night, F Co. pushed out of Jagstfeld on the morning of 11 April and moved toward their original objective, the town of Waldau. Supported by two tanks and two TDs, the company advanced to the northern edge of the Kocher River town. An enemy strongpoint was smashed by the TDs and a heavily mined roadblock was cleared by the battalion A & P Platoon, after which F Co. entered Waldau and established a defense.

Two patrols were dispatched to reconnoiter the river bank for possible crossing sites. Both patrols drew sniper fire. One group, however, found a foot-bridge across the canal just before the river, and a likely place to cross the Kocher if the enemy could be cleared from the area.

While the 2nd Battalion 398th was occupied at Jagstfeld, the 1st Battalion of that regiment was active

to the northeast, on the 2nd Battalion's right. Late in the afternoon of 3 April, the 1st Battalion had relieved the 3rd Battalion 255th Inf., 63rd Div., in the Neckar River town of Bad Wimpfen.

They remained in Bad Wimpfen while the 2nd Battalion crossed the Neckar and Jagst. During the period, strong patrols, reinforced by TDs and tanks, cleared Unter Eisesheim and Ober Eisesheim, south of Wimpfen. Platoons from Co. C 398th were placed in each of these towns, as well as in Hohenstadt, north of Bad Wimpfen, and armor was brought into position on the west bank of the Neckar to pour fire into the town of Neckarsulm.

Then, close to midnight on 6 April, Tec 5 Robert A. Mallam and Pfc. Merrill C. Newren, 398th Inf. Message Center drivers, were called upon to deliver Operations Instruction No. 33 to the 1st Battalion. Forced to abandon their vehicle and continue their mission on foot, the two men arrived at the 1st Battalion CP at 0045, 7 April.

OI No. 33 ordered the battalion to proceed on foot without delay to an assembly area across the Neckar at Obergriesheim and attack at 0800 across the Jagst. At 0500, the 1st Battalion moved north out of Bad Wimpfen on the curving narrow road past the fashionable swimming pool that had given Bad Wimpfen its name and pre-war reputation as a resort, to the flat strip of bottom land along the smooth, beautiful Neckar. In the dim light of dawn, the battalion with Cos. B, C, A, D, and Hq. in order, crossed the river in single file over the same footbridge used by the 2nd Battalion several days earlier. The battalion's vehicles crossed the Neckar further north, at Neckarelz.

Two hours later, the battalion was closing into Obergriesheim, only 200 yards northwest of Heuchlingen, where Cos. E and G were spending the night after battling across the Jagst the day before. By noon, the 1st Battalion had forded the Jagst and launched an attack southeast from Untergriesheim toward Ödheim on the Kocher River.

With Co. B on the left, Cos. B and C advanced through the 63rd Div. sector to the northern slope of

an open, gently rising hill. Upon attempting to move over the crest of this obstacle, Co. C was showered by artillery, mortar, MG, and small arms fire from behind the hill and a lesser one to the right. Co. B, moving along a draw to the left of the open hill received intense fire from its direct front and a second hill to its left.

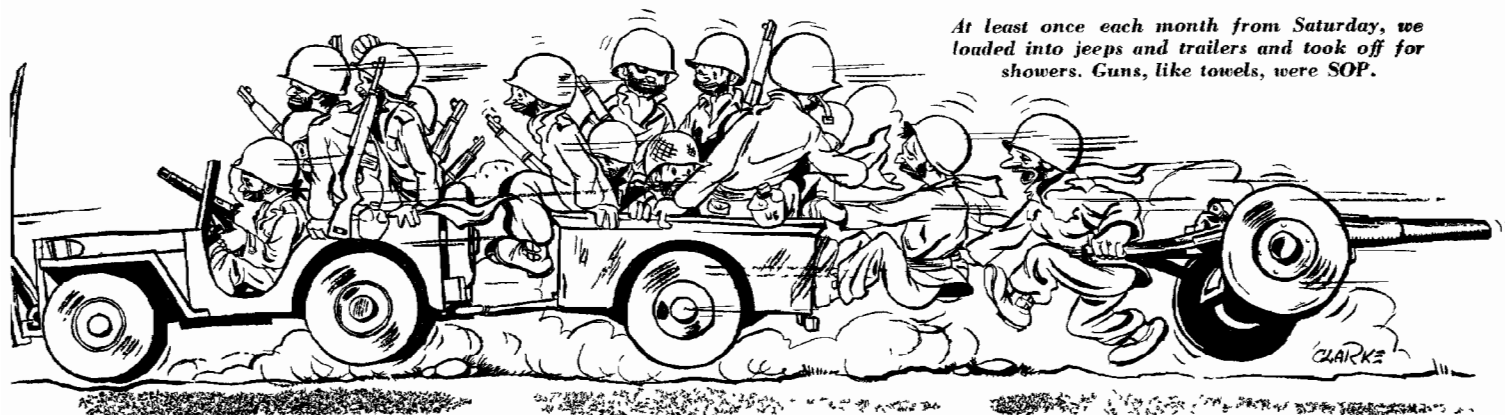
Artillery, TD and tank fire was placed on the Jerry positions, and at 1500 of 7 April, the two companies resumed their drive. Once again, however, they were stopped cold by heavy mortar and artillery fire coming from the hills around Ödheim. Planes from the 12th TAC were summoned to strafe Willenbach Farms to the south, and a patch of woods behind Willenbach. Both missions were completely successful, but no direct help could be afforded the assault companies by the planes due to the closeness of our troops to the enemy.

At 1900, Co. C sent the 1st and 2nd Platoons into a draw around the hill to their right while the remainder of the company covered their advance. The platoons had advanced only a few hundred yards, when they were stopped by intense small arms fire. After an artillery preparation on these enemy positions, five light tanks of Co. D 781st Tank Battalion formed to support the assault.

The tanks passed through the line of infantrymen and drove on ahead, around the right side of the hill. The riflemen, reluctant to follow, due to the heavy machine gun and small arms fire coming from the top of the hill and from other enemy positions in the rolling open ground to the front, stayed in their positions of comparative safety until Pfc. Mike Colalillo, a rifleman in the 2nd Platoon of Co. C, jumped to his feet, and with a shout for his buddies to follow, charged out in the open behind one of the tanks. Inspired by his example, two or three of the men followed him, then a few more, then the whole company.

Using one of the tanks as protection, Colalillo ran toward the enemy positions, firing his grease gun until a shell fragment hit the gun in his hands and rendered it useless. Spotting the light .30 cal. machine gun

*At least once each month from Saturday, we loaded into jeeps and trailers and took off for showers. Guns, like towels, were SOP.*





*Mike Colalillo clambered to the turret of the tank and began returning the whizzing enemy fire from his exposed position.*

mounted on the tank he was following, Colalillo clambered to the turret and, carefully asking the permission of the tank commander first, began returning the whizzing enemy fire from his exposed position. As the tank passed around the hill, the target of every Kraut in the vicinity, Colalillo turned his fire on the machine gun nest at the crest, knocking it out and wounding at least ten men.

Still astride the tank, despite the artillery which was coming closer and closer to hitting it, Colalillo peppered a haystack in the draw behind the hill, silencing the enemy fire from that spot and killing an SS lieutenant. Not pausing in his fire, Colalillo concentrated on a machine gun dug in a few yards behind the haystack, definitely spiking it, killing three of the Germans in the dugout, and wounding several who jumped up and began to run in the face of his fire.

Then the machine gun jammed. Trying desperately to repair it without success, Colalillo borrowed a sub-machine gun from one of the tankers, and jumping down from the turret advanced on foot. Less than five minutes later, the tanks, having run out of ammunition, were forced to withdraw. The company drew back, and Colalillo halted his one-man assault. Drawing back with the company, Colalillo noticed Sgt. John McEvoy, a squad leader in his platoon, trying to crawl to the rear with severe leg wounds. Staying out in the open a few minutes longer, despite the intense artillery and mortar fire, Colalillo dashed to the side of the wounded man and helped him back to the safety of the company's holes.

For this stirring action, Pfc. Mike Colalillo was awarded the third Medal of Honor won by a soldier of the Century.

While Colalillo was waging his one-man attack, S. Sgt. Loma M. Hash, a squad leader, lost his life in a similar action. Also one of the first to leave his hole and charge after the tanks, Sgt. Hash, firing as he ran, became separated from the rest of the company. Alternately running and crawling up the western slope of the hill where the enemy was dug in, Sgt. Hash attacked a machine gun nest, throwing a grenade into the enemy position, and dashing in to finish the job with his rifle. Three enemy were killed and the gun neutralized before Hash turned his attention elsewhere.

Continuing forward, he moved from dugout to dugout, seemingly oblivious of the hail of fire around him, killing the occupants of each hole as they tried to resist. Two Krauts in one hole surrendered to him, but as Hash was taking them to the rear, they suddenly picked up two discarded weapons and began to fire on the C Co. men. Hash promptly killed the two Krauts, and turning, advanced single-handedly, firing into every hole he could find and killing an uncounted number of Jerries.

By this time, he had become the target of intense small arms fire. Refusing to take cover, Hash was finally hit in the leg. As he stumbled forward on the side of the bare hill, he was hit several more times. He died within a few seconds.

The two C Co. platoons had advanced to within 75 yards of Willenbach Farms, where German mortar positions were located, when the tanks ran out of ammunition. Left in an exposed position without tank support, the C Co. men might well have been annihilated were it not for the gallant self-sacrifice of Centurymen such as Lt. Frank Reinhart, Lt. Noel Felix, S. Sgt. Herman Block, and S. Sgt. Charles Earle. Lt. Reinhart deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire, in order to direct covering fire of his mortar and machine gun sections, until he was killed. Lt. Felix, Sgt. Block, and Sgt. Earle heroically stood their ground while the enemy counterattacked the withdrawing C Co. Platoons, pumping lead into the advancing Krauts until they were overrun by the Jerries.

Co. C finally succeeded in forming a defense line behind the hill, where they spent the night. Co. A, in reserve up to this time, now moved up on the right of Co. C, where it was feared the Germans might attempt to counterattack.

Cos. A and B jumped off the next morning, 8 April, at 0545, while Co. C remained in reserve. They were



*Mounted on tanks, Centurymen pursued the enemy relentlessly, permitting the Jerries little time to regroup for a stand.*

met with heavy mortar, artillery and small arms fire. The light tanks and the TDs moved out to join the fight, but after a fierce battle, characterized by small arms duels at distances of 50 to 100 yards, the assault companies were forced to return to their original positions. During this bitter action, feats of heroism by the A and B Co. doughfeet came thick and fast. Tec 5 Johnson, a rifleman of Co. A, single-handedly charged a machine gun nest which had been putting heavy pressure on our troops, wiping out all four members of the enemy crew. Pfc. Francis Crowley, a B Co. machine gunner, voluntarily lead a group of litter bearers 500 yards in front of our lines to evacuate some casualties. He made two such trips under heavy fire.

For the rest of the day, and all of 9 and 10 April, there was little activity. Having forced the enemy to reveal his positions in meeting the hard-driving attacks of our infantry, we were now in a position to lay back while pounding him with artillery—and pound him we did, blasting his forward and rear elements with devastating artillery, mortar and cannon fire. Heavy MGs from Co. D performed indirect fire missions, spraying the Kraut forward lines and forcing the German infantry to remain in their positions while our artillery smashed them to pieces.

At 0530, 11 April, a patrol from Co. B picked up a PW who claimed that his battalion had withdrawn across the Kocher River. Acting immediately, patrols were dispatched to contact the enemy. Three hours later, orders were received from Lt. Col. Robert M. Williams, regimental commander, instructing all 1st Battalion elements to move forward and seize posi-



*The unending stream of "Supermen" with their hands up gained volume as we pushed deeper into the German Vaterland.*

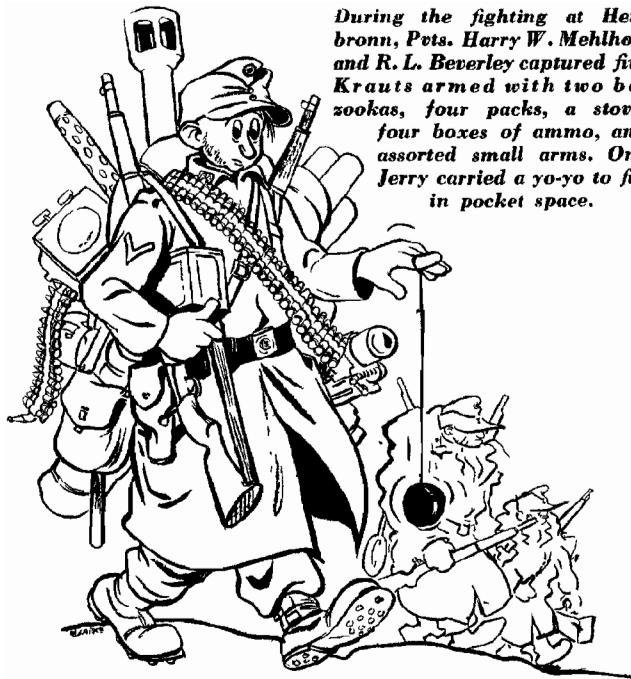
tions on the Kocher River, securing all crossing sites which could be found.

Before the enemy knew what was happening, Co. C, advancing with other units under cover of our artillery, was digging in along the river bank. Once the Germans spotted our troops, they opened up with small arms, MGs, 20mm, artillery and SP guns. But they were too late. By 1515 hours, all companies were in position on the north bank of the Kocher.

Air support by the 12th TAC did much to smash enemy artillery shelling our positions along the Kocher from the vicinity of Ödheim. The planes, bombing and strafing, caused two large fires, neutralized Jerry SP guns, and inflicted an unknown number of enemy casualties.

With all elements in position, a patrol was dispatched to contact the 63rd Div., on the battalion's left flank. During this five-day action, the 1st Battalion had decimated a regiment of SS troopers entrenched in almost impregnable positions, and had aided materially in the ultimate capture of Heilbronn. During the night of 12 April, the 1st Battalion 398th was relieved by elements of the 2nd Battalion of that regiment. By 0500 hours, they had closed into the vicinity of Bad Wimpfen as regimental reserve.

At 2200, 12 April, the 2nd Battalion 398th at Waldau, was ordered across the Kocher. Co. F was selected to lead the battalion across. As soon as the leading elements had crept to the footbridge over the canal which had previously been reconnoitered by F Co., the Jerries poured such intense automatic weapons and panzerfaust fire into them that they were forced to withdraw to the safety of a railroad under-



*During the fighting at Heilbronn, Pts. Harry W. Mehlhoff and R. L. Beverley captured five Krauts armed with two bazookas, four packs, a stove, four boxes of ammo, and assorted small arms. One Jerry carried a yo-yo to fill in pocket space.*

pass. Here they waited while Co. H pounded the enemy positions in Kochendorf with mortar fire. The results could not be observed, but a patrol dispatched across the river at 0200, returned one hour later without having drawn fire.

Accordingly, at 0400, 13 April, the companies made ready to move out. Using the narrow footbridge across the canal, and wading the river proper at a spot where it was only knee deep, Co. F crossed the Kocher and entered the town of Kochendorf where they captured 18 Germans. After clearing the town, they established roadblocks and set up a defense so as to give security to the engineers as they constructed a Bailey bridge.

Co. E, following Co. F, skirted Kochendorf and entered the northern part of Neckarsulm from where they turned southeast to the objective in the vicinity of Affaltrach. Patrols were sent to clear Ödheim. Co. G passed through Co. F and occupied high ground on the outskirts of Kochendorf before continuing to the south.

The 3rd Battalion 398th, meanwhile, had broken out of their bridgehead, and after clearing the lumberyards on 12 April, was heading north to meet the 2nd Battalion driving southward. The Germans, crushed between the two battalions, withdrew rapidly. On the morning of 13 April, the 3rd Battalion entered the southern part of Neckarsulm, and by noon had cleared all enemy resistance and established contact with the 2nd Battalion driving from the north. Both

battalions were then ordered to turn southeastward in pursuit of the fleeing 17th SS Div. troops.

In the southern part of Heilbronn, the going, these past few days, had been tougher. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 399th, assigned the mission of clearing the enemy training barracks, the hills east of them, and the towns of Sontheim and Flein to the south, were meeting a stubbornly resisting enemy reinforced by tanks.

Co. C drew the job of clearing the houses between the Knorr works and the field which lies to the north of the barracks. The attack was begun on the afternoon of 10 April against determined enemy opposition. Indications, moreover, were that the enemy planned a counterattack that night. Two enemy tanks had been observed moving down from the barracks to a point 300 yards from Co. C's left flank; two more tanks were reported grinding toward Co. A's front; while the entire battalion sector, including the Knorr works, the sugar refinery, the battalion CP, and the bridgehead were subjected to heavy shelling toward dusk.

Plans were made for a defense in depth and a withdrawal, if necessary. Medium tanks were sent to reinforce Co. C, on the right; Anti-Tank units were dispatched to Co. A's support near the river; and a platoon of TDs and the battalion Anti-Tank Platoon were shifted to Co. B's position at the railroad station.

Sharpshooting by our artillery and the regimental Cannon Co. on targets to the battalion's front, the barracks, and the town of Sontheim, apparently dispersed enemy concentrations and the attack did not materialize. At 0400, 11 April, artillery directed by Co. C knocked out one of the enemy Mark IV tanks. Forty minutes later, artillery shells again found their mark and blew up an ammunition dump at the barracks.

Under cover of early morning darkness, 2nd Battalion 399th, less two platoons of Co. G, two platoons of Co. E, one machine gun section and one mortar section of Co. H, moved from assembly areas in Schluctern, Grossgartach and Bockingen to Biberach, northwest of Heilbronn, to act as a mobile Division reserve. At 1100, the two Co. E platoons left their positions on the west bank of the Neckar opposite Heilbronn. One platoon of Co. G and the mortar and machine gun sections of Co. H followed later. One platoon of Co. G established an outpost line to include the positions vacated by Co. E.

At 1600, 11 April, elements of Co. C moved eastward in a successful advance across the Heilbronn-





*The mudsloggers enjoyed the luxury of riding the noisy tanks.*



*Directing TD fire against enemy positions near Welsloch, Germany.*

Flein highway. The company encountered only slight resistance from sniper fire, but the panzerfaust teams provided some fierce house-to-house fighting for our men. Five blocks of houses had been cleared by night-fall when Co. C, reaching a position directly north of the Schlieffen Barracks, halted their advance.

The enemy relied heavily upon artillery and mortar fire to slow our advance and prevent reinforcements from pouring across the Neckar. Rocket fire and 105mm artillery fire fell unceasingly upon our ferry site and our front line troops were under concentrated 88mm, SP, 120mm and 210mm shelling during the entire period. The enemy, however, seemed incapable of launching a sustained counterattack of more than company strength. His defense was confined to important high ground designed primarily to slow our advance. But with the Jerries picking the spots and our troops forced to follow and clean them out, our progress was slow and costly.

Despite the enemy's efforts to prevent us from reinforcing our 1st Battalion on the right bank of the Neckar and continuing our attack southward, the 2nd Battalion 399th, released from division reserve at 0515 hours, 12 April, began the difficult operation of crossing the river. Moving from their assembly point in the vicinity of Biberach, with one platoon of tanks and one platoon of TDs in support, they passed through Frankenbach and Bockingen to reach the ferry site just as dawn was lighting the banks of the river. Then, while the tanks and TDs were shuttled across the water on the ponton ferry, infantrymen paddled across to the opposite bank in assault boats and rafts. By 0845 hours the crossing had been completed and 2nd Battalion moved into an assembly area

in the southern end of Heilbronn. One-half hour later, Co. F had relieved Co. A on positions gained the previous afternoon, north of the German garrison.

The enemy shelled all battalion positions heavily throughout the day, exacting a toll of 11 casualties and the destruction of several vehicles.

At 0815 hours the next morning, Co. B moved through C, clearing and occupying the last houses, preparing for the attack southward across the 300 yards of open field into the barracks. Co. C was to follow B. (Co. A, at this time, was still on the right of the line.) Capt. Harry G. Flanagan, commander of Co. C, placed two heavy machine guns in houses on the edge of the field to cover the attack, and called for an artillery barrage. The shelling set one barracks on fire and drove a large number of Jerries out of the trenches on either side of the field. Then the attack jumped off. The 1st Platoon of Co. B, supported by two tanks, moved down the road on the eastern side of the field; the 3rd Platoon, also with two tanks, moved down the road on the western side. By 1030 both platoons had reached the abandoned trenches and were only 150 yards from the barracks. But now, the Germans' machine guns from the barracks windows, mortars from the center of the barracks, and a heavy gun in the hills to the east were firing almost continuously. Co. B's tanks fired into the barracks and the riflemen tried to hit faces in the windows. After a fierce 20-minute fire-fight, the two Co. B platoons climbed out of the trenches and ran alongside the tanks toward the barracks. Five men were wounded on the way as the enemy fire continued unabated. But the tanks finally quieted the German fire in the two corner barracks, and the riflemen rushed in. By 1400





*4 tank crew from the 781st Tank Battalion takes a break behind a sheltering wall.*

the northern half of the garrison was cleared and the Jerries had fled to the southern half. Co. C came down to join Co. B.

In a deep cellar under the center barracks they found some 60 civilians and foreign workers, ranging in age from three to 70 years, half starved and still terrified. When the heavy barrage that our artillery had laid down on the southern barracks was lifted, Co. B went down into them and took 50 dazed Jerries prisoners. The battalion sustained casualties in the attack on the barracks, one man being killed in the action. Near the southernmost barracks they found a smashed German tank, evidently one on which forward observers had been firing the previous night. By mid-afternoon, Co. A of the 399th came down to join the rest of the battalion in the garrison and plans were made for the next day's attack.

With their left flank cleared, the 2nd Battalion, led by Co. F, launched an attack on the town of Sontheim at 1630 hours. Moving south with a platoon of tanks and a platoon of TDs, Co. F had advanced to the northern outskirts of Sontheim against light opposition by 1900 hours. But after clearing a few blocks of the town, the enemy showed his hand. From a factory building which the enemy had converted into a fortress, severe small arms, automatic weapons, and SP fire stopped our troops cold. An attempt to encircle this enemy resistance from the west was frustrated by a road block.

The fight for Sontheim continued under artificial moonlight long after darkness had thrown a protective mantle over our troops. Inching ahead, the 399ers finally overcame the fanatical resistance of the enemy in the factory and by 2215 hours had reached the center of the town. Here the advance was again halted when the enemy unleashed a terrific artillery barrage

combined with raking machine gun fire from every road vantage point.

There was no sleep for the tired 2nd Battalion fighters that night. With Co. E on the left flank, Cos. F and E, following an artillery preparation, resumed the attack against an estimated 200 Krauts still holding the southern half of Sontheim at 0340 hours of 13 April. The Krauts continued their stubborn resistance, but with two companies driving through the town abreast, our weight began to tell. By 0530 Co. E had overrun the Sportplatz in the southern part of town, and by 0840 had cleaned out the Wilhelmsruhe to the southeast against heavy machine gun opposition.

Co. F, moving parallel to the river, advanced along Heilbronner Strasse to Adolf Hitler Strasse, clearing the town on the west. By 0940 hours, Sontheim had been fully occupied, the Jerries who had not been killed or captured retreating southward. Mid-day found a Co. F patrol probing the outskirts of Horkheim, one kilometer to the southwest.

At 1300 hours, Co. G, which had been relieved from attachment to 1st Battalion at 1200, advanced on Horkheim with the infantry mounted on tanks. Flanked to the east by Co. E's advance south of Sontheim, the Krauts relinquished Horkheim without a struggle and Co. G had fully occupied the town by 1315 hours.

While the 2nd Battalion was chalking up these important advances, the 1st Battalion, having reduced the Schlieffen Barracks the previous afternoon, dispatched reconnaissance patrols on the night of 12 April from both Cos. A and C to investigate the edge of the large woods to the east of the barracks. These woods, situated on high ground, completely encircled Heilbronn from the east. Actually, they consisted of a huge ridge segmented by deep ravines, a picture of

*German civilians pour back to the remains of their homes after the Wehrmacht withdrew.*



tortured topography which rose sharply to the height of 373 meters in our sector. The western slopes of this hill, besides being exceedingly steep, were bare and open, and made a formidable natural fortress. In the woods on the ridge were placed great numbers of enemy mortars and artillery, which had been plaguing our troops in their advance southward, and its clearance was of paramount importance before we could press on southward.

Working their way over open ground with utmost caution, and calling upon every trick they had learned in six months of unbroken combat, the two patrols reconnoitered the western approaches to the woods under the very noses of the enemy and returned with the information that each of two houses at the edge of the woods was occupied by the enemy.

Probably realizing that this would be their last opportunity to use their artillery from these positions, the Krauts continued to pound elements of the 1st Battalion in and around the barracks with terrific artillery and nebelwerfer fire. The 1st Battalion took everything that the Jerries could throw at them. And then, at 0400 hours of 13 April, with Co. A on the right, C on the left, and B behind Co. C, the 1st Battalion moved stealthily southeast along the road under the cover of darkness toward the woods and the high ground.

They reached the edge of the woods while it was still dark. As Co. A advanced up the stretch of open slope, the enemy blasted at the two lead scouts with machine guns, seriously wounding both of them, and immobilizing the company. To reach its objective, Co. A had to penetrate this line. But the enemy had at least five machine guns concealed along the edge of the woods, covering any advance from Heilbronn and the open ground on either side.

As a company aid-man tried to reach one of the two wounded scouts, he was fired upon by the enemy. Seeing this, Sgt. James Amoroso and Sgt. Gilbert Moniz, squad leaders of the 1st Platoon, advanced directly into the face of the machine gun fire to reach the wounded soldier. One rendered first aid, while the other directed covering fire. Forming a coordinated team, they killed four enemy and silenced one of the machine guns. Five more Jerries came out of the woods with their hands over their heads. These captives were forced to carry the wounded Americans back to the Co. A lines.

The 3rd Platoon of Co. A had veered to the left of the highway and was moving forward on the northern slope of the hill southwest of the point where the road entered the woods, when they, too, were stopped by enemy fire. Sgt. John Hambric, a squad leader, called for volunteers. Recruiting five men, he crept with them into the woods and then snaked, alone, to the rear of one of the enemy machine gun positions, while the other men in his patrol covered him. He then angled back toward the gun. Crawling into close range, he arose with a shout and killed each of the surprised Krauts with rifle fire. A second MG position was dug in a short distance to the north. Calling for his covering squad, Sgt. Hambric made his way toward this gun. As the enemy gunner swung his weapon to fire on him, Sgt. Hambric killed him. A second Kraut climbed from the hole and charged the intrepid Hambric, firing a machine pistol at point blank range. Hambric coolly stood his ground, holding fire until the fanatical Jerry was within 40 yards of him, and then dropped him with one shot.

A fourth enemy machine gun was knocked out through skillful action led by Sgt. Murel Mumbower, also of the 3rd Platoon, who penetrated the woods



*Allied soldiers liberated by Centurymen after capture of Weisloch.*



*The beauties of spring were often passed unnoticed.*

on the extreme right flank and forced the enemy out. By these actions, Co. A was enabled to enter the woods, encountering thereafter only minor resistance from isolated snipers and one roadblock at the edge of the woods. By 1100, the company gained Hill 333.1, 1,400 yards to the east, at the top of the ridge. From this hill, they controlled the road and could look down upon the town of Donnbronn. The company held these positions until contacted by Co. C, attacking on the left.

As Co. C moved into the woods at daybreak, at a point several hundred yards north of the Heilbronn-Donnbronn road, it stumbled upon a platoon of Jerries who were so well dug in, and so sure of their positions that all were sound asleep. The Co. C men killed several, took 20 prisoners, and moved on into the woods.

Farther on, the Co. C advance was delayed by a machine gun nest and several snipers. When a tank they had called for came up from the garrison and helped knock out the machine gun nest, the rest of the way over the hill was clear.

That afternoon, Co. B moved out on the road leading to Flein. As they approached the town, they paused while Capt. Harry G. Flanagan, Co. B commander, Lt. George W. Everett and Lt. Russell Leahy went ahead to reconnoiter a more covered route into the town. They walked into three German officers in a foxhole and after firing on them, found them eager to surrender. Other Jerries, 15 in all, climbed from nearby foxholes and gave themselves up. The company was ordered to continue to attack, and after a short fire-fight, 15 more prisoners were taken. Not

many of this enemy rearguard got away. When Co. B entered Flein, it found very few Jerries there. Lt. Ayotte, artillery FO, had directed fire on a long German column he had observed pulling out of the town before Co. B's entrance.

That evening, when B Co. went down to clear the woods south of Flein, they found along the eastern edge of these woods an abandoned "88," probably one of the guns which had worried them most in the barracks, whose flash they had been unable to find.

Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion continued their attack. Supported by tanks, Co. E rapidly overcame weak enemy resistance one kilometer south of Sontheim at 1400 hours. Then, teaming with Co. G on its right flank, it pivoted southeast at 1515 to seize the high ground dominating Sontheim. Advancing steadily despite heavy enemy artillery fire and an S-mine field encountered by Co. E, Co. G was 1,700 yards south of Horkheim by 1800 hours. At approximately the same time, Co. E reached a position southwest of Flein and northeast of Talheim, approximately halfway between the two towns.

At this point, Co. G encountered three enemy pillboxes similar to those we had come against in the Siegfried Line. These pillboxes were easily disposed of, however, and by 2100 hours, Cos. E and G had joined forces approximately two kilometers northwest of Talheim.

In the heart of Heilbronn, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th Inf., driving from the north, had joined forces with the 1st Battalion pushing from the south. Then, having regrouped its forces, the regiment attacked eastward between the 398th and the 399th



*A map is utilized to interrogate a PW as to enemy positions.*



*A wounded Kraut gets first aid from a GI at scene of capture.*

to clear the eastern, residential half of Heilbronn, the hills beyond, and the road running through these troublesome barriers to Weinsberg, once a picturesque, thriving community.

The 2nd Battalion, on the 397th's northern flank, jumped off on the morning of 11 April. Co. F ran into fierce resistance soon after leaving the factory district, but managed to clear the workers' houses to the base of Tower Hill, where the company dug in for the night. During the day, 20 prisoners had been captured by the F Co. men and more than 300 civilians, found hiding in cellars, had been sent back to civilian collecting points. G Co., advancing on F Co.'s right, was stopped by machine gun and burp gun fire from two houses near the railroad tracks. The leading platoon crossed the rails about a block further north and flanked the buildings. Two tanks, supporting the company, then blasted the houses with their heavy guns, and the squad closed in with grenades. Sixteen Krauts were taken prisoners in one house and four Jerry machine gunners were snared in the other. After this, the company advanced with relative ease. Two tremendous cellar shelters filled with some 600 foreign workers and German civilians were "liberated." By nightfall, Co. G had dug in beside Co. F at the foot of Tower Hill.

In the 3rd Battalion sector to the right of Co. G, houses to the junction of the railroad with the Heilbronn-Weinsberg road were mopped up by Co. I. At this point, Item Co. was stopped by a road block constructed of rock and steel girders and defended by snipers. Lt. Alvin W. Leber's tank pushed the block down and clanked onto the Weinsberg Road with

Capt. Ulysses J. Grant, Co. I commander, firing the tank's turret machine gun at the snipers. The riflemen followed and flushed the Krauts out. The company then pulled back to the railroad where they set up a defense for the night.

Southward, Cos. B and C of the 1st Battalion 397th, pushed 1,500 yards farther east, crossing the railroad tracks and advancing beyond them. Co. B, on the regimental right flank, had easy going, driving to the southern end of a tunnel 1,900 yards south of the Weinsberg road, where they halted upon order. Co. C, on Baker Co.'s left, slashed ahead against no opposition to the railroad, crossed the tracks north of the tunnel, and pulled up at a large German hospital. Charlie Co. then continued in a northeasterly direction to a large factory where they met sniper fire. After silencing the few Jerries in the building, Co. C moved in and spent the night in the shelter of the structure's thick walls.

Early in the morning of 12 April, Cos. L and K, having advanced four blocks the previous day against almost no opposition, pushed to the railroad tracks to tie in with Co. I, on Co. K's right. From here, Co. K started out along the Weinsberg road. The company had gained about 300 yards along the highway when snipers opened up on the leading elements from a group of houses, wounding four men. After a spirited exchange of fire, the Centurymen were forced to withdraw to the railroad. Later that afternoon, they returned with a TD which blasted the enemy from the houses. The company then moved on.

Co. L, on the right of Co. K, was assigned the mission of reducing the hill which guards the Weinsberg

road from the south. As the company started up the hill, the leading elements were immobilized by heavy fire from a roadblock some 200 yards ahead. The Love Co. men deployed and returned the fire. Capt. Weiler, who was at the head of the column, saw four or five Jerries dart from a house marked as a hospital, and dash to the roadblock to join their comrades. At first the hospital had not been fired upon by the L Co. men, but now that he had visible evidence that the Krauts were using it for combat purposes, Capt. Weiler sent a platoon into the hospital. The platoon flushed six Jerries, made them prisoners, and herded them back to the company waiting on the road. Weiler immediately brought up the TD which had been supporting him, and placed it in the center of the road in full view of the roadblock. Then, lining up the six Krauts in front of the TD's big gun, he yelled in German for the Jerries behind the obstacle to look at their comrades. Seventeen Krauts took one quick look and walked into the road with their hands over their heads. From this point onward, the road to the top of the hill was clear.

Meanwhile, on the left of the regimental line, Co. F of the 2nd Battalion was attacking Tower Hill, and Anti-Tank Co., fighting as infantry, was driving against Cloverleaf Hill.

Anti-Tank Co. moved through Co. F's lines at the foot of Tower Hill and continued northeastward toward the southern side of their objective. Crossing the road between Tower and Cloverleaf Hills, the Anti-tankers entered a deep draw which ran parallel to the road. While attempting to cross the draw, however, the two leading platoons were immobilized by intense machine gun fire. Capt. Carl Cusanelli, the company commander, moved one platoon 100 yards west in an effort to flank the enemy gun. But even here fire continued to sweep the draw. Capt. Cusanelli thereupon ordered his men to dig in along the southern bank of the draw. The company held these positions until dusk when they drew back to the highway. Early the next morning, Co. E, which had been holding a line along the highway at the western base of Cloverleaf Hill, advanced up the hill to find that the Jerries had pulled out during the night.

Co. F did not have so much difficulty with the hitherto bothersome Tower Hill. During the afternoon of 12 April, a patrol of 15 men, led by S. Sgt. James K. Russell, set out for the castle at the crest of the hill. Climbing straight up the hill's southwestern face, bare except for the occasional shelter of houses and

shacks, the patrol bypassed a large, square, gray-brown cement fortress, and approached the driveway that encircles the castle. Here they were fired upon by several Jerries in foxholes, but after a flurry of shots, all nine defenders of the castle surrendered. After carefully scouting the shell-damaged castle and the woods at the top of the hill without encountering any enemy, the patrol moved to the castle door. On the oak pannel was tacked a piece of paper with the message: "Please take note. There are only civilians in here." Inside, the F Co. men found an old caretaker, his wife, and their two young daughters. Another part of the patrol found 500 men, women, and children crowded together in the squat, fortress-like building across the driveway. The only other "enemy" founded by the F Co. patrol was a gentleman named Demon Rum, in the form of a well-stocked cellar of vintage champagne.

With the hill signaled clear by S. Sgt. Russell, the balance of F Co. climbed to the top. They were followed by the entire 2nd Battalion. That night, the graves of three Centurymen of the lost 1st Platoon of Co. K 398th, were shown to the Americans. The three riflemen had been buried by the caretaker and some civilians.

So, with the capture of this thousand-year-old castle, the battle for Heilbronn was ended. Late that night, the training barracks to the south fell to the hard-hitting 399th. On 13 April, Neckarsulm succumbed to the onslaught of the 398th, while the 399th captured Sontheim and was pressing into Flein.

By this time, the entire pocket of German resistance had disintegrated and the enemy was in full flight. Only 15 miles east of Heilbronn, the 10th Armored Div. had pushed into Neunstein and Ohringen, and was swinging south, followed by the 63rd Div., which, having swarmed down from the north, was mopping up scattered enemy rear-guards in the 10th Armored's wake.

The enemy who had turned at Heilbronn like an enraged tiger, was leaving like a jackal. During the nine days of the struggle, from 4 to 12 April, 1,769 prisoners had passed through the Century cage. There is no way of estimating the number of German dead and wounded, but it was far larger than our own losses. In these nine days, approximately 60 Centurymen were killed, 250 wounded, and 112 listed as missing. Heavy toll though it was, our losses were remarkably low considering the nature of the battle and the gains achieved. As Gen. Burress remarked





*After capture of an enemy town, arms were confiscated and civilians questioned. This scene was in Waiblingen, Germany.*



*A column of 397th Inf. dogfaces swing through the budding orchards on the outskirts of Fischbach, Germany.*

later when we were chasing the Krauts toward Stuttgart, "I think we beat Jerry at Heilbronn. He hasn't fought us since then."

### *Unconditional Surrender*

*So ends the bloody business of the day.*

—HOMER, *Odyssey*.

But there was no rest for the weary. The next day, the 397th and 398th Inf. were chasing the enemy eastward while the 399th continued on the rough road to the south. Once more the enemy had to be pursued and engaged before he could have time to set up a defense for another costly stand. Speed was essential. In war, the enemy must be caught, surrounded and annihilated. To permit him to escape, means to fight him another day. Our troops were motorized to keep up with the armor as it slashed after the enemy fleeing toward the possible National Redoubt in the mountains to the south.

Pressing east from Heilbronn on 13 April, the 397th Inf. captured the towns of Weinsberg, Ellhofen, and Lehensteinsfeld, some six kilometers east of the city's outskirts. Directly southeast of Heilbronn, the 3rd Battalion 397th extended our lines as far as the town of Donnbronn. Upon attempting to advance to Ober Gruppenbach, however, they were held up by a roadblock and forced to withdraw to more tenable positions for the night when the Krauts began concentrating artillery and mortar fire on their lines.

The 398th turned east from Neckarsulm to take the town of Erlenbach. A heavy ponton bridge was

finally constructed across the Neckar at 1730 hours. This time, it was in to stay.

In the 399th sector, Co. G, under the leadership of Capt. Millard B. Hayes, was the first to continue the attack on Talheim on the morning of 14 April. Surging forward at 0615 hours from positions gained under cover of darkness approximately 500 yards northwest of Talheim, George Co. had reached the northern outskirts of town 35 minutes later. The advance on Talheim was a bloody fight all the way. The enemy had prepared a crossfire machine gun defense perimeter around the southern edge of the town with at least two machine guns firing from the patch of woods to the southeast; one from a vineyard to the south, and another from a field to the southwest. Fifty and 80mm mortar fire backed up the Krauts holding the northern edge of Talheim with unusually heavy fire concentrations which kept the Co. G men hugging the ground. From farther south, shells hit the bridge in the center of Talheim and fell accurately on the important road junction on the western edge of town.

In the meantime, Co. E, which had started moving south toward Talheim at 0620 hours, had reached the medieval castle one kilometer northeast of the town by 0700. Striking across a vineyard and through an orchard toward a junction with Co. G for a combined assault, the Co. E men by 0830 had advanced to a point 300 yards north of the George Co. positions by the time Co. G had fought its way to the northern end of Talheim. With the coordinated attack now in full swing, the Krauts began to give ground more rapidly, and by 0915 hours, Cos. E and G were in possession of Talheim.



*German men and women remove a roadblock. The logs were ineffective, but made excellent firewood.*

At 1100, 14 April, Co. F, in battalion reserve, moved to Flein. Co. G dispatched patrols to Lauffen at 1130. The patrols found the French in full control of the town, while the Jerries still held the ground between Talheim and Lauffen.

At 1700 hours, while Co. E moved to clear a patch of woods 600 yards southeast of Talheim, Co. G started south to rout the enemy from a pillbox located on the crest of an open hill overlooking the town. With the 3rd Platoon leading, the company moved into the clearing at the foot of the hill and began to work its way up the treeless slope. Suddenly, the Krauts opened fire with machine guns and small arms. The George Co. men, caught in the open, were forced to withdraw. But the 3rd Platoon, pacing the assault, had already advanced too far up and were immobilized.

Sgt. Vincent Q. Kelly and Pfc. Lonnie Jackson were caught in direct line of fire, but realizing that their platoon faced possible annihilation, they began to crawl toward the pillbox. When they were within accurate rifle range of the enemy position, Kelly and Jackson began leap-frogging, one man running forward a short distance while the other covered him, and then reversing the procedure. Jackson was closing in rapidly, when he was hit by fire from one of the machine guns.

With extraordinary courage, Jackson quickly bandaged his own wounds and dragged himself forward while Kelly rushed the pillbox alone. The enemy concentrated fire upon the intrepid sergeant, but one Kraut gunner showed himself. That was what Jackson had been hoping for. He took careful aim and killed the Jerry who had wounded him. Kelly immediately dashed to the wall of the pillbox, threw a grenade

through the bunker opening, and dropped four more of the enemy squad. The remaining defenders surrendered readily, and Kelly continued forward with the rest of his men while Jackson was evacuated for medical treatment.

The enemy now launched a counterattack, and Kelly was ordered to withdraw his squad from its advanced position. Relaying this order to his men, Kelly remained in his precarious position, covering his squad as it fell back, and keeping Capt. Hayes informed as to the situation by radio. Just as the last of his men moved out of danger and Kelly prepared to follow, a mortar shell exploded at his side, killing him instantly.

At this point, sustained artillery and mortar fire began to fall along the entire 2nd Battalion front, and Co. G was forced to withdraw to the vicinity of Talheim for the night. Co. E had been making good progress through the woods when they were halted by Jerries upon attempting to cross a stretch of open ground. Also under artillery and mortar fire, the Easy Co. men joined forces with Co. G in Talheim.

The 1st Battalion 399th launched its attack at 0600 hours of the same day. Leaving Flein to be occupied by Co. B, which went into battalion reserve at 0730 hours, Co. A passed through the Baker Co. positions and continued south along the Flein-Ilsfeld road. In the narrow waist of the woods two kilometers southeast of Flein, they encountered two roadblocks defended by about 60 Krauts. The enemy, a rearguard to cover the withdrawal of an estimated 300 Jerries seen falling back on Ilsfeld, fought furiously to delay the Co. A advance. Four machine guns emplaced along the road leading from the woods and heavy small arms fire from the 60 entrenched Krauts made

*Our armor blasts a strong-point in Heilbronn during the final stages of the struggle for that key city..*



further advance impossible. Artillery and some 50 rounds of SP fire was finally placed on the road-blocks and the wooded area to the southeast. But it was 1700 hours before the Krauts were driven from their positions and Co. A was able to continue its advance along the road leading southeast, skirting the edge of the woods to their objective, a point half way along the road between Flein and Ilsfeld, where they were to meet Co. C.

Co. C, on the left flank, joined the 1st Battalion drive at 0700 hours, 14 April. Leaving positions on high ground in the woods northeast of Flein, Co. C continued southward through the woods with the mission of meeting Co. A. The Unter Gruppenbach-Heilbronn road was crossed at 0800 and the advance continued over the extremely rough, forested terrain. By 1430, Co. C had reached a point two kilometers due west of Unter Gruppenbach, meeting only slight resistance. In attempting to swing southwestward through the woods toward a junction with Co. A, which would pocket the Jerries in the 1st Battalion sector, resistance on the Co. C front began to stiffen considerably. Upon reaching the Unter Gruppenbach-Talheim road, Co. C hit a strongly defended roadblock. Enemy artillery fire was added to the fierce small arms opposition. Despite valiant efforts to disperse the Jerries, they continued to hold up the Co. C men.

While this fight was raging, a reinforced Anti-Tank Platoon from 1st Battalion Hq. Co. took up positions southwest of Donnbronn to block any attempt by the enemy to withdraw from the town, which had been bypassed by Co. C.

After three and one-half hours of indecisive battling, Co. C was still short of their objective, the spot where they were to meet Co. A. At 1800, Co. B was sent

to the aid of the hard-pressed Co. C. Reinforced, the 1st Battalionites finally smashed the enemy resistance at 2240. Then, leaving one platoon each from Cos. B and C in positions south of the Unter Gruppenbach-Talheim road, Co. C withdrew to reserve positions in Flein, and Co. B joined Co. A at the rendezvous point on the Flein-Ilsfeld road just east of Talheim. The 1st Battalion then paused in its drive for the night.

At 0135, 15 April, machine gun and anti-tank platoons from Co. D and 1st Battalion Hq. Co., respectively, relieved Co. A. Co. A, thereupon, moved southward to the southern edge of the woods northwest of Wüstenhausen, reaching the objective line without opposition. Co. B, which had taken up positions on an extension of Co. A's left flank the previous night, also pushed south to the objective line east of Co. A. Following this move, the Co. B platoon which had been attached to Co. C in reserve reverted to Co. B's control.

During the day, the 397th had continued to move to the east, against stubborn resistance. The 2nd Battalion battled its way into Ober Heinriet, fighting persistently from house to house, finally subduing the enemy at 1450, having been opposed by small arms, automatic weapons, panzerfaust, rocket and 75mm fire. The enemy launched a strong counterattack at 1530, cutting the battalion supply line and pressing steadily until 1730. But our lines held, and the supply block was cleared by 2000. The 1st Battalion moved from reserve positions in Weinsberg to clear out enemy who had infiltrated through the 2nd Battalion lines and were preventing the engineers from filling a large shell crater in the Lehrensteinsfeld-Ober Heinriet road.

Early in the morning of the 14th, the 3rd Battalion



*Red Cross girls serve coffee and doughnuts within a mile of the front. At this stage, just talking to an American girl was a treat.*

had moved out on the road to Ober Gruppenbach. Co. I on the right, ran into a fire-fight in the woods west of the town, the leading 2nd Platoon encountering machine gun and self-propelled fire while the rear of the column suffered from enemy mortars. The tanks supporting the company were brought up to help the leading platoon, and after about an hour, the enemy was forced to withdraw.

Co. L, on the left of Co. I advanced south-southeast toward Ober Gruppenbach. About one kilometer from town, the company found a roadblock. Eight of the enemy were killed and wounded at this obstacle. Moving on to the edge of the woods surrounding Ober Gruppenbach, the two tanks with the company eliminated two machine gun nests that were holding up the advance.

Heavy and light machine guns were set up on the high ground surrounding the town, and, under their cover, the 1st Platoon with the tanks moved into the village. As they tried to enter, the town was shelled heavily by enemy artillery located to the south. Accordingly, Co. L pulled back to allow our own artillery and mortars, including the 4.2 mortars of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion to go to work. At 1200, Co. L jumped off and entered Ober Gruppenbach in the face of spasmodic small arms fire. For about ten minutes, Co. L was under intense self-propelled fire. After the concentration, Co. L was joined by Co. I. Having secured the town, Co. L posted the outskirts and Co. I pushed off to the east about 2,000 yards to cut the Autobahn and the road net in that area.

While Cos. I and L were taking Ober Gruppenbach, Co. K was clearing Donnbronn. Stiff opposition from enemy 88s, self-propelled guns, mortars, and automatic weapons was effectively reduced by our own artillery, after which Co. K entered the town.

As the 2nd Battalion moved south toward Unter Heinriet, approximately 250 enemy, supported by artillery and mortars, delayed the advance into Unter Heinriet for several hours. Enemy shelling continued after the 2nd Battalion had entered the village. But the 2nd Battalion held and sent elements two kilometers west on the road to Heilbronn to occupy bypassed Happenbach.

Farther west, the 3rd Battalion 397th drove south to the town of Unter Gruppenbach. A reinforced patrol from Co. I was sent to Happenbach to contact elements of the 2nd Battalion, but no direct hook-up could be established.

Southward, in the 399th sector, Co. A, motorized, moved northeast at 1620 hours of 15 April, following their rendezvous at the edge of the woods with Co. C, and relieved the 3rd Battalion 397th in Unter Gruppenbach. Relief was completed at 1730, after which Co. A dispatched a patrol to Wüstenhausen, about two kilometers to the southeast. The patrol found the town occupied by the Jerries who opened up with machine gun fire. Co. C, reinforced by the Anti-Tank Platoon of 1st Battalion Hq. Co., held their reserve positions in Flein.

On the afternoon of the 15th, the 2nd Battalion 399th, relentlessly probing enemy defensive positions in an attempt to find his weak spots, dispatched a task force consisting of two rifle squads from Co. E and two squads from Co. G, supported by two tanks and two TDs, with the mission of clearing two patches of woods southeast of Talheim. If contact could not be made, the task force was to proceed to Schozach and then continue southeast to Ilsfeld. In the most northern patch of woods, the task force discovered 50 enemy dead from the previous evening's heavy fighting when Cos. E and G had been forced to move back into Talheim in the face of heavy opposition. Crossing the open field between the two woods, the task force discovered 12 enemy in the houses. The Jerries were taken prisoners and the advance continued into the patch of woods due north of Schozach.

These woods proved to be deserted, but upon reaching the southern line of trees at 1615 hours, the enemy began pouring 50mm and 80mm mortar, artillery, and machine gun fire onto our troops from emplacements within Schozach. With their mission of clearing

*With the end in sight, even the German brass began throwing in the sponge. They generally brought their arrogance with them.*

the woods accomplished, however, the task force returned to Talheim.

At 1500 hours, Co. F moved from Flein to Talheim, closing at 1550 hours without incident. Co. E joined their platoon, which was holding positions on the southern edge of the woods northeast of Schozach, at 1855 hours. Co. G shifted southeast from Talheim to the patch of woods due north of Schozach at 2045.

The next morning, 16 April, Co. G began to send patrols from their positions at the edge of the woods in an effort to make contact with the enemy. After testing enemy positions without encountering too much opposition, a platoon from Co. G launched a drive to the town at 1320 hours.

The Krauts countered the Co. G attack with heavy mortar and artillery fire from the vicinity of Neckarwestheim, two kilometers to the southwest. Hitting the dirt at almost every step, the Co. G men pushed southward over open ground toward the town.

It required one hour and twenty-five minutes for the Co. G platoon to cover the 600 yards from their woods positions to the southern end of Schozach. But by 1445, Capt. Millard B. Hayes' men had entered the town.

The remainder of Co. G followed the leading platoon into Schozach at 1610, despite the murderous artillery bombardment which continued from enemy positions near Neckarwestheim. At 2240 hours, the hard-hitting Co. G men were reinforced in Schozach by a platoon from Co. F.

To the east, the 1st Battalion 399th had been working on the town of Wüstenhausen. A patrol from Co. A, dispatched at 0830 to investigate, reached the town at 1025 to find it deserted, confirming A and B Cos.' reports of enemy movement the previous night. Co. B then moved from positions along the southern edge of the woods northwest of the town and occupied Wüstenhausen at 1300 hours.

Co. C left Flein at 1200 and closed into Unter Gruppenbach at 1315 hours after dispatching one platoon to take over the vacated Co. B positions at the edge of the woods.

Fifteen minutes later, Co. C sent a motorized patrol to scout Abstatt. The patrol had reached a point one kilometer north of the town when an artillery liaison plane dropped a message that at least 40 Jerries with



six machine guns were entrenched south of their objective. Reversing its direction, the patrol turned west and proceeded south over secondary roads to a point about 300 yards south of Wüstenhausen where they met hostile fire from the south.

The patrol battled the Jerries until 2245 hours when, with the aid of a platoon from Co. B and two tanks, it was able to withdraw to Unter Gruppenbach.

The emphasis of the 399th attack on 17 April shifted to the left flank. Almost two weeks of hitting enemy positions frontally had convinced Col. Edward J. Maloney, commanding the 399th, that the price we were paying and would continue to pay would be too costly for the value of the ground gained. The enemy, taking full advantage of the rough, wooded, easily defended terrain, was falling back. But the casualties he was inflicting upon us would make the victory a Pyrrhic one by the time we reached our final objective.

Accordingly, Col. Maloney secured permission to shift his forces eastward in an effort to envelop the enemy by a drive around his right flank. Such a maneuver, if successful, would bypass enemy positions on high ground, to be mopped up later at our leisure, and prevent them from withdrawing southward.

The plan of attack called for the 399th, supported by Co. A 781st Tank Battalion, Co. A 824th TD Battalion, and a Provisional Rcn. Sqdn., which included the 100th Rcn. Tp., to attack southwestward in a column of battalions with the 1st Battalion leading and 3rd and 2nd Battalions following in that order.

The 3rd Battalion, relieved from a 15-day attachment to the 35th AAA Brigade, was engaged in shuttling to our sector and was scheduled to reach the regimental zone late in the afternoon. Upon arrival, they were to close into an assembly area southeast of Unter Heinriet and remain in readiness to follow the 1st Battalion toward the regimental objective.





*After Heilbronn, German losses began to show. Taken in one batch of PWs were a 73-year old grandpa and a boy of 15.*

Leaving their positions in the vicinity of Unter Gruppenbach and Wüstenhausen to be occupied by the 2nd Battalion, the 1st Battalion, at 0930 hours, moved to their attack line at the edge of a woods one kilometer south of Unter Heinriet. By 1230, all 1st Battalion elements were in position and the attack was under way. The advance moved forward slowly along an axis between Unter Heinriet and Beilstein, with Co. A to the north, Co. B to the south, and Co. C in reserve.

By 1430 hours, Co. A, pushing southwest, had reached the edge of the woods northeast of Helfenberg. Every attempt to cross open ground and seize the town, however, was met by such intense machine gun and small arms fire that the Co. A men were unable to continue their advance and were forced to dig in at the edge of the woods. After four hours of futile efforts to disperse the enemy, Co. C began to move forward to the aid of Co. A, seeking to flank Helfenberg on the south while Co. A maintained pressure from the northeast.

Swinging southeast from their original positions, Co. C had reached the outskirts of Gagernberg by 1900 hours. At this point, they were forced to pause in their advance while Co. B, on their left flank, supported by a platoon of tanks, cleared the town.

Enemy resistance was not crushed in Gagernberg until 2230, and by that time, the harassed Co. A had been forced to withdraw from their advanced posi-

tions under threat of being enveloped by the enemy from the south and southwest.

One platoon from Co. F moved into Unter Gruppenbach at 1600 hours, the balance of the 2nd Battalion remaining in the former 1st Battalion positions.

At 2200 hours, the Provisional Rcn. Sqdn. relieved our 2nd Battalion on position. Reinforced by Co. E, the Squadron held a zone of approximately 800 yards which stretched from the Neckar River through Talheim and along the southern edge of the woods to Unter Gruppenbach.

Moving from their assembly area at 0600 hours, 18 April, the 3rd Battalion 399th took the lead in pressing the attack southwestward to secure the high ground northeast of Beilstein and capture the town beyond. With Co. K in the van, the 3rd Battalion advanced upon their objective. By 0700, Co. K was passing through Co. C, holding a section of woods east of Helfenberg. The advance continued slowly over the difficult terrain until Co. K had reached a road junction near the edge of the woods. At 1000, Co. K paused to combine with Co. I in an attack against the high ground to the south. This high ground was a steep hill, covered by a patch-quilt of farmland, with a pine woods near the crest. To reach the summit, the 3rd Battalion had to push through an exposed draw, and climb the hill under perfect observation from whatever enemy troops might be entrenched at the top.

Co. K, on the left of Co. I, was the first to start across the clearing at the foot of the hill. Enemy 80mm and 120mm mortar shells were falling around them, but the Co. K men managed to make the first patch of woods and then continue across the short stretch of open ground to high ground beyond. They reached the woods at the crest of the hill with only two casualties. Co. I, following the lead of Co. K, also gained the shelter of the woods at the top of the hill with only a few casualties.

Then, Cos. L and M moved into open ground. Leading elements were about half way through the draw when seemingly every enemy 80mm and 120mm mortar on the Seventh Army front opened up on them.

The ensuing attempt to climb that hill proved to be the costliest effort made by CT-399 in 168 days of fighting. To the terrible mortar fire, the Krauts added artillery and small arms. Within a few minutes, hundreds of artillery and mortar shells fell on the slope and in the tiny wooded area at the top of the hill. One veteran of Anzio contended after the shelling was over

that the enemy barrage exceeded anything he had experienced in Italy. Our men hadn't even time to dig in. Smoke was employed extensively, but the Jerries covered almost every foot of ground with superbly directed fire.

Fighting to reach the dubious cover of the hill, the 3rd Battalion men paid a heavy price for those few hundred yards of ground. Within less than two hours, the 3rd Battalion lost 17 men killed and 101 wounded. By 1445 hours, however, the battalion had clawed its way to the comparative shelter of the woods on the crest of the hill, and prepared to continue the attack southward to the town of Beilstein.

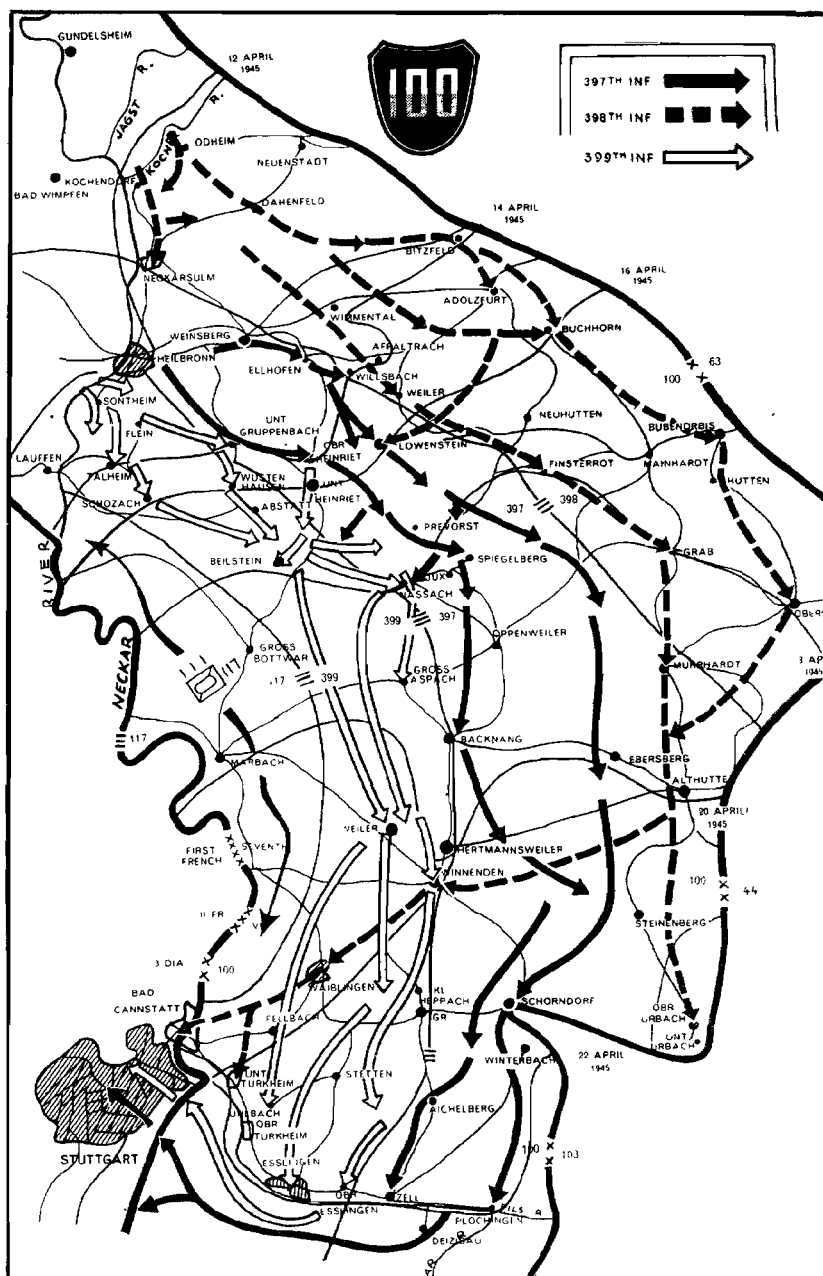
But the enemy had ideas of his own. At 1500, following a severe artillery preparation, the Jerries launched a counterattack to drive us from the hill, with 60 elite OCS men and an estimated 20 in reserve. Climbing the hill from the south along a trail which wound through terraced vineyards to the summit, the Jerries came on, seemingly oblivious to our fire. Our men used every weapon they had, even resorting to pistols. Finally, at 1600 hours, the enemy attack was broken, leaving the 3rd Battalion clinging to the top of the hill.

During the day, the 2nd Battalion, minus Co. E, which was helping the Recon hold the sector from Beilstein to the Neckar, and one platoon from Co. F, which was holding Unter Gruppenbach, moved into a new assembly area southeast of Unter Heinriet.

In the 1st Battalion sector, to the right of the 3rd Battalion, both Cos. A and B dispatched patrols at 1300 to the towns of Helfenberg and Sohlbach respectively. After the return of the patrols, Co. A immediately attacked toward Helfenberg and Co. C headed for Sohlbach, 1,000 yards south of Helfenberg. Helfenberg was taken at 1700 hours and Sohlbach fell at 1900. Co. A dispatched a patrol to Abstatt and found the town deserted. Co. C sent patrols west to Auenstein, which was also clear of Jerries.

During darkness hours of 18-19 April, patrols were dispatched to reconnoiter the ground north of Beilstein, where the 3rd Battalion had met such stiff resistance the previous afternoon. On the information of the patrol, Co. I moved into Beilstein at 0830 hours, completing occupation of the town two hours later against artillery, mortar and small arms fire from a Jerry rear guard force. Harassing artillery fire continued to fall in Beilstein from enemy positions to the south.

According to patrol reports, the enemy was with-



drawing to Obersteinfeld, about to kilometers south of Beilstein.

At 1800 hours, the 2nd Battalion moved into their positions in the vicinity of Prevorst, about six kilometers east of Beilstein, in the area cleared during the day by the 397th. At 1930 hours, the 1st Battalion moved from their positions in the towns of Helfenberg, Sohlbach and Gagernberg to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Nassach, two kilometers south of Prevorst. The sudden shift of troops to the east was made in order to clean out pockets of resistance bypassed by the 397th in their drive to the south. The pocket was cleared of some 300 Germans that night, and the attack was begun again the next morning.

On 20 April, the 399th advanced to sweep the enemy from the wooded ridges south of their area.



*A partially destroyed bridge at Backnang was quickly repaired by our engineers and we continued toward Stuttgart.*

Soon, however, it was seen that this was to be the final blow.

The 2nd Battalion was the first to jump off. Moving from its assembly area in the vicinity of Prevorst to the high, wooded ground northwest of the town, the 2nd Battalion slashed westward toward Groneau. Forty minutes later, the 1st Battalion, from Nassach, pushed southwest two kilometers to a dominating hill, and advanced due west toward Völkeshofen. Co. C, in the lead, slugged ahead three kilometers before meeting enemy resistance at a roadblock northeast of Altersberg, while Co. A, following Co. C, captured Kurzach. By 1000, Altersberg was in Co. C's hands.

Meanwhile, Cos. F and G, with Co. F on the left, had cleared the three wooded ridges to the north of the 1st Battalion and the drive began to gain momentum. With high ground to the north in our possession, the 2nd Battalion pivoted due south toward the enemy stronghold of Backnang.

The 3rd Battalion then swung into action. Supported by a platoon of tanks and a platoon of TDs, they moved south on the Beilstein-Klein Aspach road toward a junction with our 1st and 2nd Battalions which would snap shut the Jerry pocket. South of Beilstein they encountered T-mines and heavy enemy resistance was met in the wooded and rough terrain in the vicinity of Obersteinfeld. However, the town was taken by 1030 hours, and the battalion pushed on to the southeast.

When the towns of Völkeshofen and Klein Aspach fell to the 1st Battalion at 1130, the possibility of an enemy debacle began to materialize. Accordingly, Co.

A was motorized and began a rapid drive toward Backnang. Passing through Cos. B and C, Co. A reached a point one kilometer northwest of Gross Aspach.

Roadblocks and blown bridges impeded our drive, but the columns pushed through the roadblocks, simply detoured the blown bridges, and kept on driving. The 2nd Battalion in particular met heavy opposition in Obershontal, a tiny town west of Backnang, from a company of Germans who engaged our troops in a bitter fire-fight, using small arms and panzerfaust. But they were dispersed, and the troops entered the village.

Having reached the western section of Backnang, the 1st Battalion began to drive again. A blown bridge across the Murr River halted the push momentarily. Ingenious repairs by the engineers, though, enabled the 1st Battalion columns to push on in the chase.

By now, the fight in the 399th sector had become a race between greyhounds and rabbits. The Krauts only turned once in a while to fire back over their shoulders, and spent most of the time running. The infantry in the line companies, hopped onto the tanks, and kept after them. The only thing that would greet the riding infantrymen as they entered a town would be white flags hung out of the upstairs windows of the houses.

There were a few spots of resistance. At Maubach, direct artillery fire fell on our troops, and on the outskirts of Hertmannsweiler, on the road to Winnenden, a small arms fire-fight developed during which one of our tanks was destroyed by a camouflaged 75mm gun. After knocking out the tank, the enemy retreated in a jeep and a GI truck which they had previously captured. Here, the 1st Battalion held up for the night. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions moved into Backnang.

At 2330 hours, a former German army chaplain and a German civilian were picked up by 1st Battalion outposts. The chaplain, who had been trying to contact our troops, excitedly told them that 10 Volksturm under the direction of three "Wehrwölfe" were preparing to blow the important bridges across the Zipfel and Buchen Rivers in Winnenden. The clergyman offered to lead a group of men to the bridge by a covered route. He said that the civilians in Winnenden were afraid that if the bridges were wrecked, food could not come into the town, and if a stand was made there, our artillery would wreck the city.

A squad from Co. C, followed by a full platoon, and then all of Co. C was immediately sent to the

bridge. Led by the German chaplain, the squad crept up to the Buchen River bridge without being observed by the Jerries. Pouncing upon 13 Krauts, they cut the wires that were to set off dynamite charges, and saved the bridge before the astonished Jerries could snap the explosive switch.

With this important bridge in our hands, the 1st Battalion lost no time in pushing southward into the city, occupying Winnenden against no resistance at 0200 hours of 21 April. Two additional bridges across the Buchen and one bridge across the Zipfel were saved due to the aid of the clergyman.

The 3rd Battalion followed the 1st Battalion into Winnenden at 0300, and both battalions stayed in the town for a few hours of badly needed rest.

At 0900, 21 April, the 3rd Battalion took the lead in the race. Pushing aggressively southwestward from Winnenden, they moved to Korb, entering the town 50 minutes later against only token resistance by Volksturm troops.

At 0920 hours, the 2nd Battalion, in regimental reserve, reached Winnenden from Waldrems.

At 1000 hours, 1st Battalion left Korb, bypassed Hanweiler within one hour, and took Klein Heppach at 1145 hours. The 3rd Battalion, paced by Co. I, cleaned out Hanweiler and moved quickly into Waiblingen, in spite of slight resistance at two roadblocks outside the town. The tank-mounted infantrymen found two bridges across the Rems River intact in Waiblingen, and the drive continued. Co. G was moved up to guard the two vital Waiblingen bridges and the 3rd Battalion pressed on toward Rommelshausen.

Farther east, the 1st Battalion had taken Gross Heppach at 1345 hours, and while Co. A was completing occupation of the town, Co. C took Beinstein and two more bridges across the Rems River. Co. A

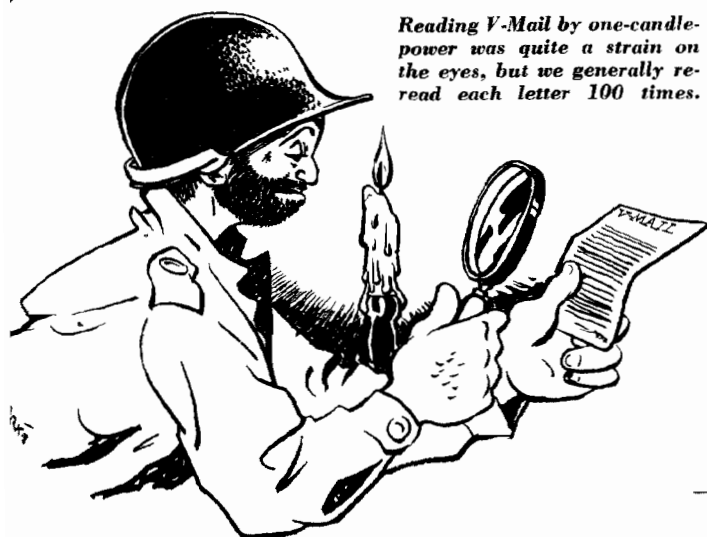
then crossed the Rems at Beinstein and headed for Endersbach. Flanked on the east, northeast, and northwest, the town fell easily, intact except for several spans of the railroad bridge outside the town.

Back on the right, the 3rd Battalion took Rommelshausen, and together with the 1st Battalion began to drive on Stetten, over difficult terrain. The 1st Battalion reached the town at 1715 hours. The 3rd Battalion, trying to join with the 1st Battalion, was met with intense self-propelled and small arms fire from the ridges south of Rommelshausen, but the tanks dispersed the Krauts, and the advance continued toward a junction with the 1st Battalion.

Resistance now gave evidence of collapsing completely, and we continued to push southward toward the Neckar River, the Corps objective. Schanbach, four kilometers south of Stetten, was occupied by Cos. B and C at 2000, after which the 1st Battalion paused for the night with Cos. B and C remaining in Schanbach and Co. A in Lobenrot. The 2nd Battalion, still in reserve, moved from Waiblingen to Stetten at 2000.

But the 3rd Battalion began to encounter difficulties as it advanced through the woods 1,500 yards south of Stetten toward Waldenbronn. Small arms fire held up the advance, and sniper fire in the thickly wooded ridges began to take a toll of our troops. With the enemy being driven across the Neckar by the advance of the French into Stuttgart, large numbers of Jerries began to filter into the 3rd Battalion positions. The 3rd Battalion men would clear a ridge and advance a few hundred yards only to find that abatis had been thrown across the road to their rear, with the result that they would be forced to clean out the area time and time again. On one instance, several Jerries walked out of the woods with their hands raised, and when our men walked toward them, an anti-tank gun opened up on our troops at point-blank range, killing one man and wounding the Co. K commander. It was not until the 3rd Battalion had sealed up all the roads leading into Waldenbronn that resistance began to slacken and the battalion was able to pause in Waldenbronn for the night. Prisoners taken during the day by the 399th numbered 319.

At 1000 on 22 April, the 2nd Battalion 399th left Stetten to clear the bypassed woods to the southwest and west of the town. The terrain was thickly wooded, with difficult ravines and hill masses. But the 2nd Battalion went about their task methodically and by 1200 hours, E and F Cos. had cleared the hills southwest of Stetten and were swinging northwest in a combined



*Reading V-Mail by one-candle-power was quite a strain on the eyes, but we generally re-read each letter 100 times.*



Three "Wehrwölfe" captured at Winnenden after German civilians had told us of the terrorists' preparations to blow up the important bridges across the Zipfel and Buchen Rivers.

drive on Fellbach with the help of Co. G. By 1430, the battalion had fought northwest to a point south of Fallbach and east of Untertürkheim. The battalion then turned while Co. F moved across open ground to the southwest to take Rotenberg and Co. G dashed south to take Uhlbach. Patrols were then sent to Untertürkheim and Obertürkheim. When no resistance was met, the battalion moved into both towns. An hour later, all of the 2nd Battalion closed into Obertürkheim, slightly south across the Neckar from Stuttgart.

The 1st Battalion 399th also pushed southwest and west in its sector. At 1100 hours, the battalion advanced into the woods west of Schanbach. By 1530, Co. B was about one kilometer northeast of Hegensberg, and later co-operated with Co. A to take the town, after which Co. C pushed on south to the Neckar at Ober Esslingen.

In the 3rd Battalion sector, our doughs moved toward the city of Esslingen, also on the Neckar. Supported by tanks and TDs, they had reached the river without meeting any opposition by 1115 hours and by 1230 this city of 50,000 population, with 10,000 Displaced Persons, surrendered to our troops. At 1300, Co. K, reinforced, cleared the area between Mettingen and Uhlbach, along the river. Wäldenbronn gave the 3rd Battalion something of a headache. During the early morning, as a last gasp of a dying monster, one of our kitchen trains, returning to the rear for supplies, was ambushed. The attack was beaten off, but sniper fire continued to harass our troops until cleared out by the attack of the 2nd Battalion. It was late in the afternoon before resistance was finally eliminated.

The 3rd Battalion sector contained a good many prizes of war. A completely loaded munitions train

and a small-parts aviation plant were captured in Wäldenbronn; a V-1 bomb motor plant was found in Mettingen; and four hospitals were taken over in Esslingen.

The 399th, on 23 April, paused in their pursuit of the enemy to await further orders while continuing to mop up enemy stragglers who by now seemed only too happy to be given the opportunity for surrender.

Preparing for possible movement to the east, the 399th I & R Platoon and Co. C 325th Engr. Battalion conducted road and bridge reconnaissance for suitable fords and bridges across the Neckar. A rocky ford was discovered near Oberesslingen which, along with a factory bridge across a canal further south, could afford transportation for our heavy vehicles and tanks across the Neckar river. A cement and steel bridge at Esslingen had been partially destroyed, but was judged passable for jeeps by our engineers. The buttresses of this bridge were still intact, and although two large craters had been blown in the paving, jeeps could maneuver past.

All three of the battalions were alerted for a possible move to the east. But at 1600, the alert of the 2nd Battalion was called off, and it was ordered to Bad Cannstatt, where it closed in at 1745 hours. At 1730 hours, the alert of the 1st and 3rd Battalions was also called off.

Co. A, 781st Tank Battalion, which had been attached to the combat team since the drive on Bitche, was relieved from the control of the regiment at 1800 hours.

The regiment was again placed on a four-hour alert notice at 2240 hours and prepared to move as a motorized combat team if so ordered.

On 24 April, task forces from the 1st and 3rd Battalions, consisting of heavy weapons and reserve companies, supported by TDs, crossed the Neckar River by the Oberesslingen ford and the Esslingen bridge and proceeded to mop up the territory in the 399th zone south of the river. The 1st Battalion moved two task forces across the river at 0830. They were followed by three task forces from the 3rd Battalion at 0900. Advancing through their assigned sectors, the 3rd Battalion began sweeping the towns on the right while 1st Battalion took care of the towns on the left.



The task forces, with the TDs expediting the movement of our troops, worked methodically, clearing every foot of ground in their assigned zones. By 1500, the 1st Battalion had mopped up Berkheim, Nellingen, Sielmingen, and Neuhausen and combed the surrounding territory. One hour later, the 3rd Battalion had completed operations involving the towns of Brühl, Hedelfingen, Ruit, Kemnat, Scharnhausen, Bernhausen, and the eastern outskirts of Esslingen south of the river. All elements thereupon returned to their respective battalion assembly areas in the vicinity of Esslingen and Wäldenbronn.

The 2nd Battalion continued mopping up operations in Bad Cannstatt and supplied a guard in platoon strength for a captured German military hospital there. Guards were also stationed by the 1st Battalion over hospitals, factories, the water plant, and other military and public utility installations in Esslingen.

While the 399th was driving through to Esslingen, the 397th combat team was fighting on their left, slicing its own way through Germany. After being relieved by Co. A 399th in Unter Gruppenbach on 15 April, the 3rd Battalion 397th, preparing to go into regimental reserve, was ordered to send Co. L and a platoon of medium tanks to the control of the 1st Battalion 397th, fighting northwest of Lowenstein. Co. L then moved on foot to Unter Heinriet where it received intense shelling from enemy field-pieces located to the south. The company marched north to Ober Heinriet, from where it moved by truck about five kilometers north to Willsbach. At 2000, Co. L pivoted south along the Lowenstein highway to Hösslinsülz and Brietenau, where it relieved elements of the 1st Battalion 398th. The rest of the 3rd Battalion 397th, in

regimental reserve, moved north to Heilbronn and then east to Willsbach through Weinsberg.

Pushing southeast from Ober Heinriet, the 1st Battalion 397th, after undergoing heavy shelling, reached the outskirts of Vorhof, where it met resistance. Co. B skirted the town to the south, and succeeded in cutting the roads leading to the southeast. Cos. F and G jumped off from Unter Heinriet at 1700, meeting little opposition on the march to Etzlenswenden, four kilometers to the east, which it took at 2115.

The following day, 16 April, the 2nd Battalion continued to clear out its area, taking Farnersberg and Kaisersbach in the face of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Cos. G and F again were subjected to artillery and direct fire. At the end of day, the battalion was on the outskirts of Billensbach, several hundred yards southwest of Kaisersbach.

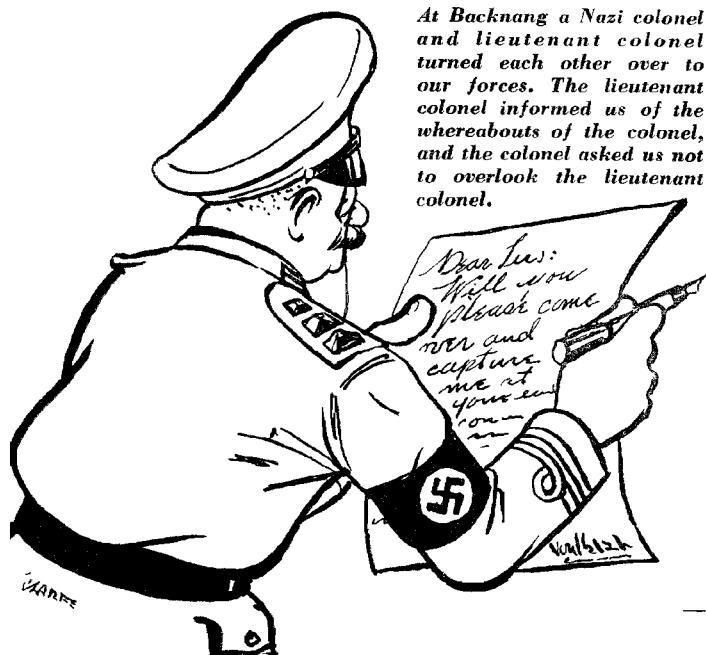
Also on the 16th, the 1st Battalion, plus Co. L, took Vorhof and continued in a full-scale offensive against the comparatively large town of Lowenstein. Closely supported by tanks, the reinforced battalion entered the town and cleared it of enemy by noon. Cos. B and C jumped off from the high ground around Lowenstein, and attacking eastward, made gains of about four kilometers, Co. C going on to Stangenbach, where they remained for the night. Co. L veered to the northwest, capturing Rillelhoff, and then reverting to the control of the 3rd Battalion which, from its positions in reserve, took Frankenhof and Reisach.

On 17 April, the 1st Battalion moved on eastward to Wüstenrot, clearing the towns of Hirrweiler and Bernbach on the way. Numerous abatis and road-blocks slowed down the advance to some extent. In the afternoon, concentrations of nebelwerfer were laid on our troops in Wüstenrot.

The 2nd Battalion zig-zagged across its broad front, clearing the small towns and the woods in its zone. Considerable difficulty was had in maintaining the supply routes for a time since a weasel was the only vehicle able to reach the front line troops. A temporary supply route was later established along a narrow dirt road that twisted through the darkly wooded hills between Unter Heinriet and Etzlenswenden.

The 3rd Battalion, following the 1st Battalion, remained in reserve; Co. K occupying Stangenbach and Schmellenhof and sending patrols to Greuthof and Altlauren. Co. I went to Hirrweiler, and Co. L remained in Lowenstein.

The I & R Platoon located an abatis and encountered an enemy force, which it dispersed, taking 15



*At Backnang a Nazi colonel and lieutenant colonel turned each other over to our forces. The lieutenant colonel informed us of the whereabouts of the colonel, and the colonel asked us not to overlook the lieutenant colonel.*



*German soldiers making the rounds of hospitals to cart away enemy dead.*



*French slave laborers start for home in a captured vehicle.*

prisoners. Anti-Tank Co. sent a patrol to investigate a castle 1,500 yards south of Unter Heinriet, finding it unoccupied, but drawing small arms and light artillery fire from Stein-Berg, a few hundred yards to the southeast.

Continuing on its mission 18 April, the 1st Battalion 397th pushed relentlessly southward, clearing in order the towns of Vorder Buechelberg, Neufuerstenhuetten, Ober Fischbach and Gross Hochberg. The final objective, Spiegelberg, was reached by Co. A by nightfall, and the doughs dug in for the night.

The 2nd Battalion, acting upon information gained by patrols the previous night, overcame enemy resistance at Jettenbach, south of Etzlenswenden and occupied the town. Small arms fire continued to harass our troops in the town for several hours, but when the battalion turned east and cleared Klingen, Stocksberg and Prevorst, it met only small arms resistance.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion met no opposition except scattered small arms fire in clearing the towns in its sector. The 3rd Battalion, still in reserve, met no resistance at all in mopping up Neulautern and Spiegelberg, two kilometers to the south. Battalion supply lines were maintained with some difficulty.

Many abatis and mined roadblocks were found on the roads. A captured document revealed orders given to local burgomeisters and district leaders to use civilians in constructing roadblocks and obstacles.

On the 19th, in a rapid advance east of the Sulzbach-Spiegelberg road, no resistance was offered by the reeling enemy. In the town of Sulzbach itself only weak blows met the troops of the 1st Battalion. West of Sulzbach, minor resistance was encountered: small

arms and moderately light self-propelled fire; numerous roadblocks defended by a few infantrymen. In addition to Sulzbach, the 1st Battalion cleared the towns of Siebersbach, Klein Hochberg, Berwinkel, Liemannsklinge, Esehenstrüt, and Zwerenberg.

Co. E, at 0700, moved south to take the town of Nassach, then west to Kurzach, becoming engaged in a fire-fight on the outskirts of town.

The 3rd Battalion 397th passed through elements of the 2nd Battalion continued to move to the south. Co. L drove south and east from Lowenstein to take the town of Jux, just outside of Spiegelberg, securing it for the night. Co. K moved out of Stangenbach, on the battalion right flank, and passed through the 2nd Battalion in the vicinity of Nassach. When the company tried to take a group of farm buildings on the high ground south of the town, it ran into severe resistance. The enemy used everything at hand: panzerfausts, automatic weapons, self-propelled guns and mortars. Co. K dug in and called for artillery support. As darkness came on, Co. K withdrew to Nassach where they spent the night while artillery and 4.2 mortars wiped out the enemy positions.

Co. I attacked down the road which leads south from Spiegelberg, taking Bernholden against no resistance except lightly defended roadblocks.

Early in the morning of 20 April, a representative of the Volksturm from Backnang reported to the





*Enemy radar equipment abandoned by the fleeing Wehrmacht.      A tank cuts a road through the trees to skirt a blown highway near Lewenstein.*

troops of the 397th that Backnang and Oppenweiler were clear of the enemy and that the townspeople were willing to surrender the towns. This was probably the result of a propaganda leaflet campaign picturing the razed villages that had resisted our advances, comparing them to the untouched towns that had surrendered. As Cos. I and K arrived in Backnang, met by only a few snipers and light shelling from a 75mm gun in the south end of town, they found all the bridges across the Murr River blown. One, however, could be easily repaired, and the infantrymen, mounted on the tanks, pressed on after only a few hours delay. Continuing south, the 3rd Battalion reached and cleared Allmersbach at the close of day.

The 1st Battalion crossed the Murr River at Murrhardt, encountering moderate shelling, but continued the advance as far as Rudersberg, ten kilometers east of Winnenden. In this area extensive roadblocks had been carefully erected. Other towns taken were Eulenhöfle, Waltersberg, Horschhof, Rottmannsberg, Sechselberg, Ebersberg, Lippoldswiller, Daefern, Hohnweiler, Siebenknie, Unter Weissach, Ungeheuerhof, Heiningen and Almersbach, and many other places. In the 397th sector, too, the war had become a race.

The battalions of the 397th continued their relentless push of the previous night, reaching the Rems River against little resistance on 21 April. The 3rd Battalion occupied Grunbach and Geradstetten, completely surprising and capturing 90 prisoners, most of them Volksturm. The 1st Battalion 397th entered Schorndorf about 0400 hours, meeting no opposition. Advancing across the Rems River, and moving south to the Fils River, the Centurymen were held up only

by roadblocks. Among towns taken by the 1st Battalion on the 21st were Ober Weissach, Seelach, Unter Schlechtbach, Mittel Schlechtbach, Michelau, Asperglen, Metzlinweilerhof and Schornbach. After entering the outskirts of Schorndorf, the battalion veered west, reorganizing in the vicinity of Winterbach and resuming the attack south across the Rems River.

The 2nd Battalion left its reserve positions in the vicinity of Unter Brüden, five kilometers east of Backnang, at 1100 to check the towns and roads in the regimental area to the rear of 1st and 3rd Battalions. At the close of the day, units of the battalion had penetrated as far as Hösslinswart. The 3rd Battalion cleared Königsbrunnhof, Rettersberg, Oppelsbohm, Steinach, Rohrbronn, Hebsack, Grunbach and Heppach. Roadblocks, abatis and blown bridges continued to constitute the whole of the enemy opposition.

The 397th reached the Neckar on 22 April. The 1st Battalion continued its steady advance to the south, clearing the wooded area on the route to its objective and becoming engaged in a heavy fire-fight against small arms and automatic weapons in the woods north of Plochingen. The towns of Winterbach, Engelberg, Hohengehren, Baltmannswir, Reichenbach and Plochingen were taken, while contact with the 3rd Battalion was established and crossings of the Neckar were reconnoitered. The 2nd Battalion checked and cleared the towns of Schnait, Aichelberg, Schanbach, Krummhardt and Aichschiess in the rear of the rapidly advancing 1st and 3rd Battalions. Towns occupied by the 3rd Battalion included Beutelsbach, Schönbühl, Manolzweiler, Altbach, and Zell. The units had no sooner reached the objectives, when the enemy began



*Liberated Polish slave laborers cheer Century men in Backnang. Left, a group of Poles rests along a roadway.*

to harass the rear of our troops. As a result of this unexpected development, two men were killed and several wounded when Hohengehren was raided at 1100 by about 50 Germans. Our supply routes were also harassed by small arms fire, necessitating details of tanks and infantry to patrol them. After dark, the enemy began blocking roads behind us by felling trees. Wire teams were constantly prevented from completing their lines by small groups of raiding Jerries.

Having reached the battalions' objectives in surprisingly rapid time, the troops of the 1st and 3rd Battalions on 23 April patrolled the north banks of the Neckar River within the regimental zone and conducted a reorganization. No enemy activity was reported during the day. The 2nd Battalion, attacking south from positions in the vicinity of Aichshies found three bridges intact across the Neckar at Altbach, which enabled the troops to cross without incident and clear Deizisau and other towns south of the river.

There were no definitely established front lines and the only contact with the enemy was in the form of stragglers. No defensive organization had been set up by the fleeing foe, and his only capabilities seemed to be the harassing of our supply lines and minor acts of sabotage.

There were no actual combat operations for the troops of the 397th on 24 April, and the units busied themselves solely with routine patrolling tasks. The 1st Battalion, billeted in Plochingen, patrolled the north bank of the Neckar within its assigned zone. Service Company moved up 30 miles from Oppenweiler, north of Backnang, to Plochingen, and showers were available along with a much needed change of

clothing. Taking advantage of the break, the men used the time to freshen up, write letters, and, of course, clean their weapons. The wonderful novelty of meals that steamed, served with coffee that actually warmed the canteen cup, inspired the more loquacious ones to gripe about the cubed vegetables.

And some merely slept.

While the 399th and 397th were chasing the Jerries south to where the Neckar bends east at Stuttgart, the 398th, to the north, circled the city widely and drove south parallel to the two other regiments.

After the 3rd Battalion 398th moved out of Heilbronn to meet the 2nd Battalion, which had come down from Jagstfeld at Neckarsulm, the two battalions moved east toward their objectives. On 13 April, the 2nd Battalion, taking Kochendorf and skirting the northern edge of Neckarsulm, headed directly east, sending patrols to clean out the town of Ödheim. The 3rd Battalion, having cleared Neckarsulm, moved out the next day to capture Sülzbach and Willsbach, on the road to Lowenstein.

From here, the regiment fanned out with the 2nd Battalion on the left, 3rd on the right, and 1st in reserve. The 1st Battalion passed through the 3rd Battalion in Willsbach, and began the attack southeast toward Lowenstein, receiving heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire from the flanks and front. Intense artillery and rocket concentrations fell on the troops from the vicinity of Lowenstein. Fighter-bombers from the 12th TAC strafed and bombed the town and the high ground to the south.

The 2nd Battalion, attacking farther to the northeast, cleared the towns of Affaltrach, Eschenau, Wim-



*Long lines of PWs awaiting processing. Those not deemed dangerous were released soon after Germany's surrender and permitted to return to their homes.*



mental, Dimbach, Schwabbach, and Waldbach, and sent patrols into Bitzfeld. The 3rd Battalion protected the right flank while moving to the east and southeast.

During the night of 14-15 April, the 1st Battalion 398th patrolled extensively to maintain contact with the enemy. At 0800, Cos. A and C jumped off southwest in the direction of Weiler against heavy automatic weapons fire on their right flank. By 1000, Co. A had taken Hösslinsülz, northwest of Weiler. Co. C relieved Co. I, and Cos. A and B relieved Cos. K and L. The 3rd Battalion consolidated its position and cleared small pockets of resistance in the regimental area, moving north to the vicinity of Bretzfeld by the end of the day.

The 2nd Battalion continued its attack from the left flank of the regiment and the division. At 1000 hours, the battalion jumped off to seize the towns of Sheppach, Adolzfurt, Windischenbach, Verrenberg and Pfedelbach. Elements of the battalion were responsible for maintaining and keeping contact with the 253rd Inf. of the 63rd Div., on our left flank.

On 16 April, the 1st Battalion jumped off at 0800, Co. B on the right, Co. C in the center and Co. A on the left. Co. B attacked from Weiler to the southeast to capture Friedrichshof and drive on to the southeast. Co. C attacked from Echenau to the east and southeast, and Co. A advanced to take Wieselndorf. The entire battalion encountered intense small arms, automatic weapons and direct artillery fire.

The 2nd Battalion, to the north, motorized, prepared to advance in the rear of elements of the 10th Armored Div. at 0800. Detrucking in Pfedelbach, the battalion attacked to the south at 1330. Cos. E and G.

at the head of the battalion, encountered heavy SP fire at the beginning of the attack from south of Pfedelbach. At 1430, the battalion took Heuberg. At 1745, Co. E captured Buchhorn and advanced 300 yards to the south, meeting heavy resistance from the south and southeast. The 3rd Battalion, from positions in the vicinity of Adolzfurt, followed the 2nd Battalion, clearing bypassed pockets of resistance.

The following day, the 2nd Battalion co-ordinated its attack with that of the 10th Armored Div., continuing its advance to the southeast with Co. F on the right, E on the left, and G in reserve. The battalion seized the towns of Gleichen, Geisselhardt, Gailsbach, Lachweiler, Ziegelbronn, and Maibach. Numerous pockets of resistance, most of which were quickly cleared, were met along the way. The 3rd Battalion continued to mop up isolated groups of Jerries in the rear of the 2nd Battalion. The town of Geddelbach was taken by Co. K.

In the 1st Battalion zone, Co. A encountered heavy resistance north of Hohenacker. After neutralizing the enemy fire, the company continued in the direction of Unter Heimbach, and marched south to the aid of Co. C which was engaged in a heavy fire-fight north of Neuhütten. Co. B continued its attack southward, encountering little resistance except mined roadblocks, and maintaining contact with the 397th on the right.

On 18 April, the 1st Battalion started out at 0700 from the vicinity of Ammertweiler and cleared the towns of Neuhütten, Lauxenhof, Finsterrot, Ammertweiler, Wiedhof, Hals, Hohenstrassen, Böhringsweiler, Hohenegarton, Hammerschmiede, and Grab. At the end of day, the battalion was in the vicinity of Grab, six kilometers north of Murrhardt.

The 2nd Battalion dashed southeast to assist ele-





*Bomb-battered Stuttgart, headquarters of the Century Division during the major portion of our occupation of southern Germany.*

ments of the 10th Armored Div. During the period, the battalion crossed the Mainhardt-Hall road and swept through the towns of Rötendorf, Sittenhardt, Buchhof, Wioldansweiler, Marhördt, Ofenberg, Kornberg, Obermühle, Brennhof, Ebersberg, and Ober Rot. The 3rd Battalion followed behind the 2nd Battalion, mopping up groups of bypassed Jerries who still had some fight left in them.

On 19 April the end was in sight so far as the 398th was concerned. The 2nd Battalion, on the left flank, was pinched out by a battalion of the 71st Inf. Div. early in the morning, whereupon the 2nd Battalion regrouped and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Hütten, closing at 1300. The 3rd Battalion, in regimental reserve, moved to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Lowenstein.

Remaining on line, the 1st Battalion 398th proceeded to the south, clearing town after town. Co. B took Marbaeche, Co. A, Steinberg, and Co. C, Wolfenbrück. That night, advancing through the thick, inky, evergreen woods north of Murrhardt, in co-operation with tanks and TDs, the battalion seized two bridges across the Murr River at Murrhardt. The 1st Battalion objective was reached at 0730, 20 April. The battalion remained in the vicinity of Althütte until the 3rd Battalion passed through them at 1100. The 3rd Battalion continued to positions 500 yards south of Klaffenbach before stopping.

The 2nd Battalion was detached from the regiment and detailed to Öhringen as a guard for VI Corps.

On 21 April, the 3rd Battalion slashed forward once more, taking the towns of Langenberg, Eselshalden, Ober Steinberg, and Steinbrück, and pass-

ing through to Ober Urbach and Unter Urbach, east of Schorndorf. In the operation, the battalion overran a total of 11 roadblocks, five of which were defended. At Eselshalden in particular, strong resistance was met, but the Jerries withdrew after a sharp fire-fight. It was early morning by the time the 3rd Battalion reached Urbach. Here they reorganized and proceeded by motor to Winnenden, where, by this time, the rest of the regiment had assembled.

During the next few days, the 398th, pinched out of their area by the 71st Div., helped the other two Century regiments clean out their areas. With Winnenden as a base, patrols from the 1st and 3rd Battalions were out constantly, mopping up the areas bypassed by the 399th and the 397th in their respective dashes to the Neckar. The 1st Battalion cleared Leutenbach and Heofen and mopped up Winnenden itself. The 3rd Battalion stayed in Winnenden also, with the exception of Co. L, which was part of a 3rd Battalion task force, consisting of, in addition to Co. L, the 3rd Platoon of Co. B 781st Tank Battalion and one platoon of Co. B 325th Engrs. The task force cleared out the towns of Waiblingen, Fellbach, Bad Canstatt, Unter Türkheim, Beinstein, Endersbach, Heppach, and Korb, cutting down the isolated spots of resistance that would spring up as soon as the bulk of the division in this zone had passed on. Elements of the French 3rd Armored Div. were contacted in the northeastern section of Stuttgart. The Co. L CP was moved to Stuttgart during this period.

The 2nd Battalion 398th remained as a guard for VI Corps Hq. in Öhringen. Co. E was in Öhringen, Co. F in Sittenhardt, Co. G in Langenbeutlingen, and Co. H in Kochersteinfeld.

On 23 April, the 1st Battalion 398th was sent to

# ETO WAR ENDS

Unconditional surrender of all German forces was announced yesterday by the German radio at Flensburg. Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, successor to Adolf Hitler as Fuehrer of Germany, ordered the surrender and the German high command declared it effective, the German announcement said. No immediate confirmation came from the capitals of the Allied

## U.S. Celebrates Victory 2nd. Time in Ten Days

NEW YORK, May 3.—American light aircraft exploded today for the second time in 10 days over the unopposed report that Germany had surrendered unconditionally to the Allies.

In New York, crowds of late passers—German's traditional term of collaboration—began walking through the city's granite curbs as a quarry at an hour after the news flash reached the population.

Official writers by the thousands gathered at the high windows of the Empire State Building to witness the broadcast. It was estimated that 100,000 people were watching the broadcast from the top of the building. At 100,000 people in the great city drive the day off.

## King Expresses Thanks to Ike

LONDON, May 3 (UPI)—The king expressed his thanks to General Dwight D. Eisenhower for the unconditional surrender of Germany.

The king's message, broadcast by the BBC, said that the king and the British people were proud to have fought alongside the American people in the great struggle against the Axis powers.

The king said that the British people were proud to have fought alongside the American people in the great struggle against the Axis powers.

## New Sand S Is Off To a Rousing Start

There's not a new sand-s in the world, but the Stars and Stripes, which has been a part of the life of the American people since 1877, is now a part of the life of the German people.

The new sand-s is a part of the life of the German people, and it is a part of the life of the American people. It is a part of the life of the German people, and it is a part of the life of the American people.

powers, but President Truman and Prime Minister Churchill will broadcast at 3 p. m. ETO time today, and King George VI will broadcast tonight at 9 o'clock.

In London, the British Ministry of Information announced that today would be V-E Day, and that today and tomorrow would be holidays in Britain. In Washington, President Truman said he had agreed with London and Moscow to make no announcement of surrender until a simultaneous statement could be made by the three governments.

Had waiting for formal confirmation of the news from New York and London began peace celebrations. Downtown New York was reported shrouded under by the American Standard paper thrown out of office buildings in years.

AP and Radio correspondents struggled to break up the crowd of people who had gathered in front of the White House to see the president.

## King Leopold Rescued

WITH THE U.S. ARMY also rescuing King Leopold of Belgium, the king of the Belgians, was rescued from the clutches of the German army.

clear the woods from east of Winnenden, south to Winterbach. Then it moved on order to the vicinity of Ellwangen, where, under the control of Seventh Army, it continued to clear out resistance points.

During this period, the 117th Ren. Sqdn. was attached to the 398th Combat Team, and patrolled the roads southeast of Stuttgart, from the Neckar River northeast to the Rems River, and then south again to the Neckar.

On 24 April, the Regimental CP closed into Waiblingen. The 1st Battalion, still attached to Seventh Army, moved into Stuttgart.

With assignment of the 399th Inf. to Seventh Army reserve on 25 April, the division was officially off the line for the first time in 175 days of sustained combat. The next ten days were spent in guarding important captured enemy installations such as factories, hospitals, various public utilities, roads, and bridges. Mopping up operations continued in individual unit sectors. What free time there was, we spent in cleaning equipment, personal hygiene and just relaxing. Chow, even with dehydrated vegetables and C-rations added, was a delightful experience. Some of us were becoming epicures again.



Shell of famous Stuttgart Rathaus stands amid leveled structures over which it once towered. Air bombing did most of damage.

And then, at 2000 hours of 5 May, under the commonplace heading of Operations Instructions No. 82, the following breathtaking message was dispatched to all division units:

EFFECTIVE AT ONCE, 100TH INF. DIV. TROOPS WILL NOT FIRE UPON ENEMY TROOPS UNLESS FIRED UPON OR UNLESS NECESSARY IN CONNECTION WITH POLICE DUTIES. PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN HQ. SEVENTH ARMY AND GERMAN FORCES OPPOSING SEVENTH ARMY REGARDING UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER BECOME EFFECTIVE 1200, 6 MAY 1945. THIS ORDER EFFECTS SEVENTH ARMY TROOPS ONLY. THIS INFORMATION IS NOW BEING ANNOUNCED OVER SEVENTH ARMY RADIO AT FIFTEEN MINUTE INTERVALS.

BURRESS  
Maj. Gen.

For the next day, every Centuryman within a mile of a radio had his ear cocked. Exactly thirty-one hours later, a second, even more stirring message, was received from SHAEF over Gen. Eisenhower's signature.

A REPUTABLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND SIGNED THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF ALL GERMAN LAND, SEA, AND AIR FORCES IN EUROPE TO THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO THE SOVIET HIGH COMMAND AT 0141 HOURS CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME, 7 MAY UNDER WHICH ALL FORCES WILL CEASE ACTIVE OPERATIONS AT 0001 HOURS, 9 MAY.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY ALL OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS BY ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WILL CEASE AND TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN PRESENT POSITIONS. MOVES INVOLVED IN OCCUPATIONAL DUTIES WILL CONTINUE. DUE TO DIFFICULTIES OF COMMUNICA-



*Centurymen line up in Geislingen for passes to Paris, the Riviera, Switzerland, Belgium and England.*



*The EM Recreation Center at Nancy provided occupation-judged GIs with dancing and entertainment.*

TION THERE MAY BE SOME DELAY IN SIMILAR ORDERS REACHING ENEMY TROOPS SO FULL DEFENSIVE PRECAUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN.

ALL INFORMED DOWN TO AND INCLUDING DIVISIONS, TACTICAL AIR COMMANDS AND TROOPS, BASE SECTIONS, AND EQUIVALENT. NO RELEASE WILL BE MADE TO THE PRESS PENDING AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HEADS OF THE THREE GOVERNMENTS. EISENHOWER.

Strangely, the official announcement of Germany's surrender was greeted with the calm of an anticlimax. Some of us got drunk. A few of the more volatile Centurymen shot off steam by firing small arms into the air. But most of us, choked with happiness, merely shook a buddy's hand, laughed like a boy again, or just sat quietly and gave thanksgiving to God in his own way.

We had come a long way since that rainy afternoon on 1 November when we first crossed swords with the enemy and were ordered to attack at St. Remy. In those six months the Century Division had battled through the Vosges Mountains, a feat which had never before been accomplished in military history. We had liberated Bitche, a fortress which had not bowed to an invading army in over 200 years. We had survived a winter campaign and a serious enemy counteroffensive. We had slashed through the Saarland, covering 100 miles in two days. We had crossed the Rhine, captured Heilbronn against fanatical resistance, and chased a bewildered and beaten enemy clear south of Stuttgart. Those were six months which had changed us from rookies to battle-hardened veterans. A glorious half-year of victory after victory in which we had

taken the best punches the enemy had to offer and then knocked him on his back.

We had taken losses. In those 185 days of combat operations, 916 Centurymen had been killed, 3,656 wounded, and 180 listed as missing in action. That is the sad part of war. How wonderful it would have been if the dead could have drunk with us in victory.

But the enemy had taken losses, too, and we had given him far more than we had received. There is no accurate means of counting the number of casualties we inflicted upon him, but in prisoners alone we had amassed a total of 13,351 men—almost a full infantry division.

Thus ended "the bloody business of the day." Methodically, we turned toward the duties of Occupation with a prayer for a quick end to the war in the Pacific.

### *Occupation and Home*

*They spoke, I think, of perils past.*

*They spoke, I think, of peace at last.*

*One thing I remember:*

*Spring came on forever,*

*Spring came on forever,*

*Said the Chinese nightingale.*

—VACHEL LINSAY,  
*The Chinese Nightingale.*

"Change the sheets, Mom! I'm coming home!"

That cablegram, sent by Sgt. "Mickey" Dunay of Co. H 399th Inf., on the occasion of one of our numerous "shipping alerts," was the sum and substance of our thoughts and desires during occupation. Oh,