

COME

OUT

FIGHTING



The **EPIC TALE of**
The **761st TANK BATTALION**
• 1942 — 1945 •

COME OUT FIGHTING



THE EPIC TALE OF THE
761ST TANK BATTALION

1942 - 1945

BY TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON

ART WORK

DRAWN BY: WILLIAM KISER, JR.

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• • •

ACTION PHOTOGRAPHS:

GEORGE SANDERS, 103RD INF. DIV. (TASK FORCE RHINE)

GEORGE MARKER, 71ST INF. DIV. (STEYR, AUSTRIA)

U. S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS

• • •

STILL PHOTOGRAPHS:

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MOSES BALLARD

ALBERT N. CARRINGTON, JR.

1ST LT. JAY E. JOHNSON

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"COME OUT FIGHTING"



And, Damn You! Don't Let Me Down!

GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON, JR.
NOV. 2, 1944

Foreword

This book was done entirely by enlisted men, and with no interferences by the brass.

. . .

The life and deeds of the 761st Tank Battalion are definitely entitled to a unique niche in the annals of American military history, for it was the FIRST armored unit in the history of the American Army ever to enter combat with Negroes manning its weapons and vehicles.

Its story belongs to the 14,000,000 Negroes of America, as a tribute to the military prowess, courage and bravery of their sons, brothers and fathers, against great odds, on the field of battle, for they acquitted themselves well.

What the 761st Tank Battalion did, and how it did it, are of the utmost importance to all the people of America, rather than to a small restricted segment, composed of the men who were in the 761st, and this story was designed to be told to the entire world at large, so that history can pass judgement in an unbiased and fair manner to these sepia sons of the greatest democracy in the world.

In September 1945, at Bad Tolz, Germany, a high officer of General George S. Patton's Third U. S. Army, with which it began and finished its military operations; told the writer of this book: "We were all in suspense when you entered combat, and we were very curious and anxious to know how you would come out, for we knew that you were the first of your kind to ever go into battle."

The whole world had the same curiosity, and also wanted to know!

Well, here is the answer to that question, in "COME OUT FIGHTING", and this material was painstakingly compiled from records, data, and all

sources through which verifiable information could be gotten. It took a long time, and there was no S-2 Report available in the 761st, thus making our task more difficult.

What is written here is our report to the world of what these brave men did, who did it, and how they did it! We have embellished nothing, nor have we glamorized those who, as in many cases, received the rewards for the work done by someone else. Here you will know who did it, and how!

The entire book was written and edited by the undersigned (who got a big kick out of doing it), as well as the designs of the cover, and the overlays for the maps. The photos herein were obtained from various sources.

Our action photos of our Task Force Rhine are used through the courtesy of the 103rd "Cactus" Infantry Division, whose George Sanders made them. Our Steyr, Austria, photos were made by George Marker, of the 71st Infantry Division. Kind-hearted individuals loaned us their private photos in other instances, and much film for our cameras.

The still pictures of our officers and enlisted men of the 761st, were made by the following enlisted men of this battalion, who also reproduced Sanders' pictures for us: Humphrey McCarter, of Columbus, Ohio, whose war-time job was that of communications chief for Baker Company, a former civilian photographer, who set up the studio for the work; Moses Ballard, of Washington, D. C., a Bronze Star Medalist, and tank commander in the Assault Gun Platoon, and later in Baker Company; and Albert N. Carrington, Jr., of New York City and Norfolk, Va., and from Dog Company;

who came to the 761st late, but whose civilian proficiency and experience proved an invaluable asset in the work done, even as his playing of left tackle on Virginia Union University's football teams of 1938-40 helped Coach Hucles teams.

Appreciation goes to Master Sergeant Ernest D. Hill, and Second Lieutenant Horace Alphonso Jones, both of Service Company, for their valuable aid in getting our photographic work started. We also acknowledge the assistance rendered by Lieutenant Clarence I. Godbold's Personnel Section, and especially Tech 4th Samuel Allen, Tech 4th Samuel H. Cooper, and Corporal Joseph W. Hobbs, whose co-operation materially helped clarify previous inaccurate reports.

Appreciation goes to our Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Paul L. Bates, who considerately and understandingly, did not project his rank into the picture, but gave us his willing co-operation, to the fullest extent. Also to the other officers and enlisted men who aided in this effort, and especially to First Lieutenant Jay E. Johnson, of New York City, whose enthusiasm contributed much to the beginning of our photographic work.

The writer expresses his especial appreciation to Colonel Louis V. Germaine, Signal Officer of the Third U. S. Army, who stuck his chin way out, to allow the writer to avail himself of copious quantities of photographic supplies, so that our photomen could do their work.

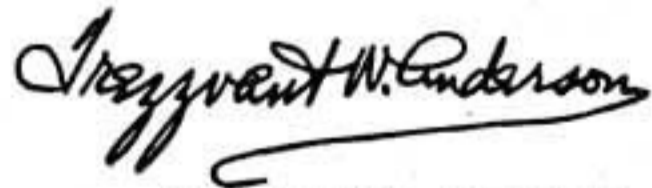
The writer hails from Charlotte, North Carolina (as all the members of the 761st now know), and was a newspaperman in civilian life, and ditto in the U. S. Army. Was for 15 years on the Executive Staff of the Associated Negro Press, founding its Washington, D. C. set-up in 1931; founded and headed the Washington, D. C. Negro Press Club, 1931-33, and came to the Army from the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers, which gave him his first Press Card in 1930. Has worked on other papers,

also. Did the period from August-December, 1944 with the Public Relations Section, Headquarters, European Theater of Operations.

The fine maps, and the cover design and memorial wreath, were drawn by youthful William Kiser, Jr., of Hartford, Conn., crack bow-gunner in the Charlie Company tank "COOL STUD", which (minus its rooster-mascot of the same name) is shown on the cover. Bill's crew had three "COOL STUDS" shot out from under them during combat. He laid aside his beloved 30-calibre machine gun to take up his pens and brushes and do the fine jobs in this book.

This book is the story of how the 761st Tank Battalion piled up the impressive record which won it the praise of the War Department, and brought it into the picture for choice as one of the few "Separate" armored combat units selected for an occupational role in Germany, after having been originally scheduled for battle in the Pacific. It also tells what it was that made the War Department decide to consider the perpetuation of the 761st Tank Battalion as a Regular Army unit, with this record which has garnished the 761st with an enviable color and tradition, which these Negro tankmen, first to ever enter combat, went out and CREATED from scratch.

So, we take pride in giving you your report on one of the greatest combat units in the American Army, anywhere, regardless of color—the 761st Tank Battalion, whose Motto is the title of this book: "COME OUT FIGHTING!"



TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON,
Teisendorf, Germany, 1945.



This Book is dedicated to the Memory of our comrades in arms who have crossed to the far shore, after having made the supreme sacrifice for their country and for the cause of Democracy! It is a fitting tribute to their memory that all Americans will ever remember that for which they have died and strive to insure that forever their deaths will not have been in vain! Our honored dead: We Salute You!

The men of the 761st Tank Battalion

THE HONOR ROLL

OFFICERS:

First Lieutenant *Maxwell Huffman*, Newell, South Dakota.

Second Lieutenant *Kenneth W. Coleman*, Washington, D. C.

Second Lieutenant *Robert C. Hammond, Jr.*, Cleveland, Ohio.

ENLISTED MEN:

Private *Clifford C. Adams* (Nov. 8, 1944), 1104 Kellum Street, Waco, Texas.

ENLISTED MEN:

Sergeant Roy King (Nov. 9, 1944), 520 Palmerton Street, *River Rouge*, Michigan.

1st Sgt. Samuel J. Turley (Nov. 9, 1944), 20-815 Trinity Avenue, *The Bronx*, NYC.

Staff Sgt. Harvey Woodard (Nov. 9, 1944), Box 11, *Howard*, Georgia.

Tech 4th Claude Mann (Nov. 9, 1944), 6506 Champlain Avenue, *Chicago*, Illinois.

Corp. Carlton Chapman (Nov. 9, 1944), *Pembroke*, Virginia.

Private Robert W. Briscoe (Nov. 9, 1944), 1305 Presstman Street, *Baltimore*, Maryland.

Private L. C. Byrd (Nov. 9, 1944), 1505 19th Street, *Tuscaloosa*, Alabama.

Private Emile I. Armstrong (Nov. 9, 1944), 520 West 5th Street, *Cincinnati*, Ohio.

Private Nathaniel Simmons (Nov. 9, 1944), 614 King Street, *Beaufort*, S. C.

Private Willie C. Lofton (Nov. 9, 1944), 412 West 12th Street, *Corsicana*, Texas.

Sergeant James W. Harrison (Nov. 9, 1944), 117—McDonough Street, *Brooklyn*, New York.

Private Theodore R. Cooper (Nov. 9, 1944), 716 Fair Street, *Camden*, S. C.

Private Alexander S. Anderson (Nov. 9, 1944), 350 Brookside Avenue, *Washington*, Penna.

Tech 4th Horatio Scott (Nov. 10, 1944), 23 Charles Street, *Lynn*, Mass.

Tech 4th Walter J. Campbell (Nov. 11, 1944), 75 Sealey Avenue, *Hempstead*, New York.

Pvt. George Shivers (Nov. 11, 1944), 58 Cooper Street, *Bainbridge*, Georgia.

Staff Sgt. Ruben Rivers (Nov. 19, 1944), Route 1, Box 57, *Tecumseh*, Oklahoma.

Tech 5th Roderick Ewing (Nov. 19, 1944), 515 North Bath Street, *Oklahoma City*, Oklahoma.

Private First Class Ivory V. Hillard (Nov. 19, 1944), 1107 Oliver Street, *Houston*, Texas.

Corp. Ardis E. Graham (Nov. 25, 1944), *Raeford*, North Carolina.

Tech 5th Lane Dunn (Nov. 25, 1944), Post Office, *Scottsville*, Kentucky.

Private Coleman Simmons, Jr. (Nov. 25, 1944), 8751 Greeley Avenue, *Detroit*, Michigan.

"COME OUT FIGHTING"

Private *James Weldborn, Jr.* (Nov. 25, 1944), *Jonesville*, North Carolina.

Tech 5th *Horace G. Johnson* (Dec. 19, 1944); *Im. Del., Tabor City*, N. C.

Sergeant *Robert A. Johnson* (January 3, 1945), 1239 Kenyon Street, NW., *Washington*, D. C.

Staff Sgt. *James W. Nelson* (January 4, 1945), 2284 Clinton Street, *Detroit*, Michigan.

Private *Thomas S. Bragg* (January 4, 1945), 950 East Bragg Street, *Elizabeth*, New Jersey.

Tech 5th *Jessie J. Bond* (January 5, 1945), Route 1, Box 197, *Gates*, North Carolina.

Tech 5th *Willie J. Devore* (January 9, 1945), 740 Oak Street, *Greenwood*, S. C.

Corp. *Fred L. Brown* (April 14, 1945), 1199 Boston Road, *The Bronx*, NYC.





LIEUTENANT COLONEL PAUL L. BATES, COMMANDING

Rutgers University, Western Maryland College (All-America Footballer), who commanded the 761st when it entered combat. Was wounded November 7, 1944, and returned to the battalion on February 17, 1945, and led it to its finish in Austria in May 1945. Home: Boonton, New Jersey. Holds the Bronze Star Medal, with a cluster, and the Purple Heart.

HEADQUARTERS
761ST TANK BATTALION, APO 403
U. S. ARMY

9 May 1945

I Salute You! Officers and Enlisted Men!

*To The Officers and Enlisted Men of the 761st
Tank Battalion:*

It is with the greatest of pride that I review the accomplishments of the 761st Tank Battalion.

You have more than lived up to the many indications of battle success recalled in your training in the United States, and by the fine commendations received from the many officers who inspected you there.

Your conduct in England as you drew your equipment and made final preparations for the fighting ahead was a model for the American soldier. You have fought gallantly in all extremes of climate and terrain. Mud, snow, mountains, rivers, swamp-lands, have all caused you intense discomfort and greatly tried your ingenuity and ability, but did not stop you.

Equipment shortages and the great variety of equipment you have received have called upon you to continually adapt yourselves and modify your concepts of the ability, limitations, and characteristics of weapons and vehicles. These you have mastered.

Fighting in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Germany and Austria, with the 3rd, 7th, and 9th American Armies, with the 17th Airborne, 26th, 71st, 79th, 87th, 95th, and 103rd Infantry Divisions, has required your adjusting yourselves to the requirements of a great number of different units. This you did with such great distinction as to receive written commendations from four Major Generals.

The great courage you have shown in your tanks has been magnificently matched by the truck drivers as they brought up supplies. The maintenance men have worked tirelessly to keep the armor going. They have gone without food and sleep, and used every means possible to obtain spare parts. They have been outstanding.

The mess personnel, radio repairmen, clerks, all have performed their work in a superior manner. At times all have been called upon to lay down their regular work and use their guns. This they have done eagerly.

The medical personnel followed fearlessly and always cared for us regardless of enemy fire, weather, and terrain.

You have met every type of equipment in the German Army, planes, V-Bombs, bazookas, panzerfausts, 88s, 75s, artillery, self-propelled guns, tanks, mines. All have hurt you. All have destroyed some of your equipment. But ~~all~~ are behind you, useless, the German soldier defeated, his politician silent, and you are victorious!

I salute you and look forward to your continued superior work in any assignment received, either as individuals or as a battalion.

Steyr, Austria, 9 May 1945.

PAUL L. BATES
Lt-Col., Inf (Armd), Commanding.

SECTION ONE

THE FIVE PHASES



Major Russell C. Geist, Jr., and later Executive Officer, until September 4, 1945. Home: Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania. Was S-3 Officer when the 761st entered combat, and ended the war as Executive Officer. Noted for his earliness and his presence at the front, where he was a great inspiration to the men. His counsel and advice was frequently sought, and heeded, by the men of the battalion. Holds the Bronze Star Medal, and a cluster, and the Purple Heart.



Second Lieutenant Clarence I. Godbold, who was both the Battalion Adjutant and Personnel Officer, when operations ceased in May 1945, having succeeded Captain Leonard P. Taylor, as S-1, when Captain Taylor became S-3 for Air and Communications. Lieutenant Godbold was a former Warrant Officer, and earned a battlefield promotion to his rank, as a result of his capable handling of both of his difficult and exacting assignments simultaneously. Home: Yonkers, New York, and a former member of the 92nd Infantry Division.



Chapter I

Activation

In the office of the Chief of the Army Ground Forces in Washington, D. C., long before the attack at Pearl Harbor, there was being debated the question of whether or not it would be a paying proposition to include Negro soldiers in the Armored Forces of the Army Ground Forces.

One supporter of the idea was the late Lieutenant General *Leslie J. McNair*, Chief of the Army Ground Forces, who was killed in bombing raids over Normandy, in France, in July 1944. General *McNair* did not find everyone in accord with his ideas, but he was insistent in his contention that the project would pay dividends, and over the objections of some of his colleagues he finally won out, and the project was ordered into existence. (General *McNair* never lived to witness the fruits of his experiment on European and Italian battlefields in World (War II).)

And so, in March 1941, white personnel at the Armored Force School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, were surprised when a group of 98 Negro enlisted men reported from Fort Custer, Michigan, for training in armored warfare. It was the first time in the history of the American Army that Negroes had been in the armored section of the Army, for specific training in that field!

These ninety-eight enlisted men, themselves, were a bit awed by the situation for they found no other Negro tankers at Fort Knox, and they realized that they were the "pioneers" of the Negro armored soldier. They did not know the story behind their presence at Fort Knox, nor did the other enlisted personnel of the Armored Force School, for they had certainly not expected Negroes to report there. But the program went into operation, and the group began its training in the armored branch.

Five times the forked lightning of the fire-power of the 761st's armor-clad battle-wagons lashed out against the Nazi foe—, and five times the enemy was hurled back, reeling drunkenly under the force of the smashing blows dealt by these sepia Americans, first of their kind ever to engage an enemy of their country, under the flag of the United States. And their death-dealing tanks rolled across the soil of six European countries in those five major combat campaigns. "Germany's finest troops" felt their unbending strength and fury, and yielded to these not-to-be-denied veterans, in France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Germany, itself, and Austria! It was the 761st Tank Battalion!

For three months the men trained steadily, their number being augmented all the while by the arrival of more enlisted personnel from other Army camps.

It was thus that in June 1941 there came into being the first tank battalion in the American Army with Negro enlisted personnel, and it was designated: The 758th Tank Battalion (Light). But this is not the story of the 758th Tank Battalion (Light).

After three months of training in tank operations, radio mechanics, and related phases of mechanized warfare, the 758th moved down to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, where it continued to train. At this point the 761st Tank Battalion (Light) comes into the picture!

Ten months after the arrival of the first group of Negro enlisted men at the Armored Force School, at Fort Knox, the 761st Tank Battalion (Light), was activated, at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, on April 1st, 1942.

The War Department had toyed with the idea of an Armored Division, but briefly, and had given more of a preference to the idea of armored "groups", consisting of three tank battalions. These "groups" possessed higher maneuverability and flexibility than the larger armored divisions, and offered a greater certainty and security for overseas movement, especially in view of the domination of the air and shipping lanes by German aircraft and submarines. Five armored groups were activated. Four of these had white personnel, and one had Negro personnel. The group with Negro personnel was the "5th Tank Group", commanded by Colonel *LeRoy Nichols*. And in the making of this group the 761st formed the second of the three units activated with Negro personnel for its enlisted strength.

The activation of the 761st Tank Battalion (Light)



Captain August W. Bremer, Port St. Joe, Florida, who was the Battalion S-2 Officer, after having commanded Service Company, during combat. He is a versatile athlete, and became an "Armored" soldier, as a result of the flipping of a coin, to decide whether to join the infantry or the armored section. The armor won. Attended the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. Is a Bronze Star holder.

Captain Leonard P. Taylor, known to the men as "Chief", who was formerly the Battalion Adjutant, when it entered combat, but wound up as a captain, and the Battalion S-3 Officer for Air and Communications in combat, winning a combat promotion. Had a hand in the reorganization of the ambushed supply train on TASK FORCE RHINE in March 1945. Home: Atlanta, Georgia. A former schoolmaster, and college professor at Clark University, Atlanta. Was in the CCC when the draft call came.



Captain David J. Williams, II, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who commanded Able Company, when the 761st first jumped off, and made the first contact with the enemy. Was hospitalized in January 1945 in "The Bulge". Holds the Silver Star Medal, and two clusters to his Purple Heart. Attended Yale University, and was one of the most popular officers in the Battalion.



Captain Philip W. Latimer, of Silesbee, Texas, one of the hardest-working officers in the 761st, who was the Battalion S-4, Supply Officer, when the unit entered combat, and when it ended operations. He supplied the men in all their six European combat countries, and never let them down. He worked right along with his enlisted men, and never shirked his job. Was an athlete at Baylor University, in Texas.



Capt. William H. Bruce, Jr., of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the Battalion Surgeon, who was Assistant Surgeon during combat. He joined the 761st in England in September 1944, and stayed with it through thick and thin. Graduated from the Meharry Medical School.

Captain William L. O'Dea, Newark, New Jersey, the Battalion Motor Officer, during combat, who became S-2, when Captain Bremer got off to go home in September 1945. One of the most likeable officers in the battalion, and an indefatigable worker.



was ordered on March 15, 1942, by the War Department, and the actual activation came on April 1, 1942, when Lieutenant Colonel (then Major) *Edward E. Cruise*, of Poughkeepsie, New York, assumed command.

The 761st Tank Battalion (Light) was made up of a cadre of officers and enlisted men from the 758th Tank Battalion (Light), plus other officers and enlisted men from the Armored Force School, at Fort Knox. Its strength on the date of activation was: 27 officers and 313 enlisted men. The authorized strength under the established T/O was: 36 officers and 593 enlisted men. All officers were white, upon activation.

The original staff of the 761st consisted of the following officers:

Major *Edward E. Cruise*, Poughkeepsie, N. Y., Commanding.

Captain *John R. Wright, Jr.*, Beverly Hills, Calif. Executive.

2nd Lt. *Leonidas D. Word*, Knoxville, Tenn., S-1, Adjutant.

1st Lt. *Tillmer E. Davidson*, DuBois, Idaho, S-2 and S-3.

1st Lt. *Richard S. Gowdy*, Philadelphia, Pa. S-4.

2nd Lt. *Frank H. Balfour, Jr.*, Orlando, Fla. Personnel Officer.

Capt. *Sidney Storch*, Brooklyn, N. Y. Bn Surgeon.

1st Lt. *James T. Griffin*, Motor Officer.

Commanders of the companies were:

HQS CO.: Captain *George L. Barrier*, South Carolina.

Co "A": Captain *Charles W. Calvert*, of Missouri.

Co "B": Captain *Lewis S. Griffith*, of New York.

Co "C": Captain *John D. Seals*, of Georgia.

Serv Co.: Captain *Arthur W. Whitmore*.

There was no Company "D", for all tank battalions were equipped with light tanks, or mediums, with three letter companies by T/O.

*

On May 28, 1942 the strength of the battalion was raised to 529 enlisted men, by the arrival of 216 enlisted fillers from the Armored Force Replacement Training Center at Fort Knox. A month later the 761st received the national colors, on June 30, 1942, when a ceremony was held. The Battalion's own colors were not received until a year later.

The first testing of the training received came on August 23, 1942, when the 761st moved out to Camp Livingston, Louisiana, for a week of maneu-

vers with the 78th Infantry Division. The 32-mile road march was made with full field equipment, and a strength of 34 officers and 545 enlisted men. The results were satisfactory.

During the period from April 1st to September 7, 1942 the training and indoctrination period was going on, and the misfits were being weeded out, and either re-assigned or transferred. On September 7th the battalion received 158 enlisted fillers from the AFRTC, and reached its T/O strength. Major *Cruise* had, meanwhile, been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

FIRST NEGRO OFFICERS

Three months and sixteen days after the activation of the 761st it received its first Negro officers. They were three second lieutenants, who comprised the first group of Negro officers to ever serve in the 761st. They had just completed the Officer Candidate School of the Armored Force, at Fort Knox, and arrived at the 761st on July 16, 1942. They were:

2nd Lt. *Charles H. Barbour*, Junction City, Kansas.

2nd Lt. *Samuel Brown*, Charleston, South Carolina.

2nd Lt. *Ivan H. Harrison*, Detroit, Michigan.

They were assigned as tank platoon leaders in Companies "B", "A", and "C", respectively.

Between September 10 and October 28, 1942, 23 officers and 232 enlisted men received the American Defense Service Medal (also known as the "Pre-Pearl Harbor Medal"), and five more Negro officers joined the Battalion. The five, who arrived on September 25, 1942, were:

2nd Lt. *Carl Bowman*, Los Angeles, Calif. — to Co. "B".

2nd Lt. *Spencer Hardy*, Chicago, Ills. — to Co. "C".

2nd Lt. *John D. Long*, Detroit, Michigan. — to Co. "B".

2nd Lt. *Irvin McHenry*, Leavenworth, Kansas — to Co. "C".

2nd Lt. *Warren F. Taylor*, Philadelphia, Pa. — to Co. "A".

They were assigned as tank platoon leaders.

Intensive training was being pursued by the Battalion which was now a part of the 5th Tank Group, with Headquarters at Camp Claiborne. On November 22, 1942, Lieut-Col. *Cruise* was transferred, and Major *John R. Wright, Jr.*, assumed command of the 761st.

And the year of 1942 ended.



Captain Irvin McHenry, who commanded Headquarters Company at the end of the war. Started combat as CO of Charlie Company, and was injured in the battle of Honskirch. Was the first Negro to ever command a tank company in the 761st, taking over Charlie Company on June 20, 1943. Home: Leavenworth, Kansas. Is a Regular Army man. The fellows called him "The Burner".

Captain Ivan H. Harrison, of Detroit, Michigan, who started off as the CO of Headquarters, ended up commanding Service Company, and then became the Battalion Executive Officer, succeeding Major Geist in September, 1945. Was the second Negro company commander in the 761st, taking over in October 1943, back in the U. S. A. Became the first Negro CO of the 761st on Nov. 3, 1945.



Captain James T. Baker, Indianapolis, Indiana, Commanding Able Company, who began as an officer in Dog Company, but took over Able, when First Lieutenant Maxwell Huffman was wounded at Nieder Schlettenbach on March 20, later dying of those wounds. Captain Baker is a Bronze Star Medal holder, and has the Purple Heart. It was his Able Company which led the way into Austria, seizing the dam over the Inn River above Braunau (birthplace of Hitler), at 0430 hours on the morning of May 2nd, and one of his platoons reached Steyr, Austria on May 5, and crossed the Enns River, getting in ahead of Charlie Company, as was previously reported.





Captain Samuel Brown, Charleston, South Carolina, CO of Baker Company, and the third Negro to command a company in the 761st, having headed Able Company on November 30, 1943. It was his company which was on the point in TASK FORCE RHINE in March 1945.

Captain Charles A. Gates, Kansas City, Missouri, graduate of Hampton Institute (Virginia), athlete, most decorated officer in the 761st, holding both Silver and Bronze Star Medals, and came overseas and into combat as Commander of the crack Assault Gun Platoon, became CO of Charlie Company, and then was made Battalion S-3 (Air & Comms), and then took over as the S-3 for the Battalion. Holds the Purple Heart, and is affectionately known to the fellows as "Pop" Gates. Was right in there all the time, and was noted for his considerateness for his men.



Captain Richard W. English, of New Orleans, Louisiana, who commanded Dog Company, into, and through, combat. "Bulldog" English, his men called him, a jolly guy, with a gay disposition, and quite a fighter. Put in some strong likes at Salival, crossing Germany, and in the reorganization of the ambushed supply train on TASK FORCE RHINE. In the "Battle of the Bulge" it was his company which kept the supply lines intact, and how!





A Group of Company Commanders

Taken just after Captain Harrison, of Service Company became Executive Officer, this photo shows the commanders of five of the six companies. They are: (L-R) Captain James T. Baker, Indianapolis, Ind.; First Lieutenant William H. Griffin, Marshallville, Ga. (Service Company); First Lieutenant James R. Burgess, Jr., Chicago, Illinois (Charlie); Captain Richard W. English, New Orleans, La. (Dog), and Captain Samuel Brown, Charleston, South Carolina (Baker). Captain Baker commanded Able Company.



Chapter II

Training

In April of 1943 the Battalion celebrated its first anniversary of existence, with a gala field day, climaxed by elaborate entertainment and amusement features, attended by visitors from the surrounding communities.

During this same month the 5th Tank Group was rounded out by the activation of the 784th Tank Battalion (Light), with the cadre personnel being furnished from the 761st. It was the third and last of the three Negro-composed tank battalions to be activated under the War Department program for the project.

BIG-TIME MANEUVERS

In April 1943 the 761st left Camp Claiborne for the Second Phase of the Third Army Maneuvers, which lasted until June 6, 1943. During these maneuvers the 761st operated with the 85th Infantry Division, and the all-Negro 93rd Infantry Division, and was attached to the 3rd Armored Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General (then Major General) *Willis D. Crittenger, Sr.* The 761st also worked with the famed 100th Infantry Battalion, composed of Japanese-American troops, the Nisei Battalion.

Morale was high, condition was excellent, and the members of the Battalion went about their tasks with fine spirits, coming through the maneuvers with flying colors. Many angles of mechanized warfare were revealed in the field, under varying conditions, which served to acclimate the members of the 761st to armored field operations in a far more definite manner than could ever have been achieved through the routine training program.

Visits came from high ranking Army officers on several occasions during this period. Among them were Lieutenant General *Ben Lear*, former Commanding General of the Army Ground Force Reinforcement System of the European Theater of Operations, and later Deputy Theater Commander of

"Some of the fellows were mixed up in some of the unpleasantness which occurred around Alexandria, Louisiana, but most of them kept in the clear, and mastered all the intricacies of the M-5 light tank, and the M-4, General Sherman, and the Assault Gunners set records with their 105 howitzers in Texas. For—they had a job to do—somewhere!"

the ETO, and also the late Lieutenant General *McNair*, the "father" of Negro tankmen.

The fact that the 761st was shaping up satisfactorily was indicated in the following commendation received from the Chief of the Army Ground Forces, General *McNair*, who said: *"Vehicles and weapons of the 761st Tank Battalion were in excellent condition and well-disposed in bivouac on May 12, 1943"*.

On June 6, 1943 the 761st returned to Camp Claiborne with a new feeling of confidence as a result of the performance on these maneuvers. This mental attitude was to be later reflected on the battlefield as was attested in a commendation from Major General *Manton S. Eddy*, Commanding General of the XII Corps, almost two years later in France. The return trip was made by a mounted road march over a distance of approximately 83 miles. The total strength at this time was: 43 officers and 593 enlisted men.

On Independence Day of 1943, July 4th, Lieutenant Colonel *Paul L. Bates*, of Boonton, New Jersey, then a major, officially assumed command of the battalion. It was a post which he never relinquished, except for hospitalization from wounds received in action in 1944, and he had actually been in command of the 761st for two months prior to the issuance of the official orders, due to the fact that Lieut-Col. *Wright* had been in the hospital, and the command had fallen to Colonel *Bates* "pro tem", in April. Colonel *Wright* was transferred in July 1943.

During the month of July 1943 eight officers and 267 enlisted men received the "Pre-Pearl Harbor" Medal. Training continued at Camp Claiborne until September 14. And on that date the 761st moved.

Packing bag and baggage the entire battalion moved to Camp Hood, Texas, for a permanent change of station, arriving there on September 15, 1943, with a strength of 42 officers and 601 enlisted men.

The Guided Able Company



Left to right: Captain James T. Baker, CO until leaving for home in September 1945; First Lieutenant William Kitt, of Milstead, Alabama, battlefield-commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1945, and promoted to First Lieutenant in the same year; Second Lieutenant Theodore A. Weston, of Washington, D. C., and First Lieutenant Harold Kingsley, of Chicago, Illinois, Bronze Star holder, who took over the command when Captain Baker left. In fact, ALL are Bronze Star Medalists.

The Baker Company Ramrods



Left to right: Second Lieutenant Warren G. H. Crecy, "baddest man" in the 761st on the battlefield; First Lieutenant Harold B. Gary, of Abilene, Kansas, who spent more time on the front lines than a other officer in the battalion, and whose platoon spearheaded TASK FORCE RHINE; First Lieutenant Elyseo J. Taylor, Chicago, Illinois, who was another officer with a heluva lot of front-line hours, and Captain Samuel Brown, Charleston, South Carolina, the Company Commander.

AN IMPORTANT CHANGE

On October 29, 1943, a change took place which was to affect the entire future of the Battalion and its history, when it underwent a reorganization, by order of the War Department. Orders for the change came in a letter, subject: "Reorganization of Tank Battalions", dated October 27, 1943.

Under this reorganization the Battalion changed both its name and equipment, for it then became "THE 761ST TANK BATTALION", instead of the 761st Tank Battalion, Light, and its equipment was changed from the light tanks to the M-4 medium tanks, the General Shermans. It also received an additional company, designated as "Company D", and composed of light tanks only. This company was actually formed on November 2, 1943, and was commanded by Captain *Arthur E. Campbell*, of Saint Augustine, Fla.

The new name of the Battalion followed it throughout the remainder of its military career.

Another item of importance caused by this reorganization was a shifting of a number of white officers from the 761st to the 784th Tank Battalion (Light), and vice-versa.

FIRST NEGROES ON STAFF

From this change the Battalion received its first Negro Staff Officer. He was First Lieutenant *Albert J. Leiteau*, of New Orleans, Louisiana, who had been the Personnel Officer of the 784th. Lieut. *Leiteau* became the Battalion Adjutant, S-1, of the 761st.

Prior to the reorganization there had been thirteen Negro officers among the forty-two comprising the Battalion's commissioned strength. After the reorganization there were twenty-two Negro officers and twenty white officers in the Battalion.

Captain *Wince A. D. Johnson*, of Orlando, Florida, was on the staff as Assistant Surgeon, with First Lieutenant *Wendell P. Earling*, of Burlington, New Jersey, as the Dental Officer. Captain *Johnson* later became the Battalion Surgeon, its first such officer. Captain *Garland N. Adamson*, of Chicago, Illinois, came from the 784th, and became the assistant to Capt. *Johnson*, and after returning to the 784th, came back to the 761st and became its surgeon, succeeding Captain *Johnson*, in 1944.

On November 1, 1943 the Battalion Staff consisted of the following officers:

Major *Paul L. Bates*, Boonton, New Jersey, Commanding Officer.

Capt. *Charles M. Wingo*, Dillwyn, Virginia, Executive Officer.

1st Lt. *Albert J. Leiteau*, New Orleans, La. Adjutant, S-1.

1st Lt. *Frank H. Balfour, Jr.*, Orlando, Florida. S-2.

Capt. *Edwin W. Reynolds*, Billings, Montana. S-3.

1st Lt. *Philip W. Latimer*, Silesbee, Texas. S-4.

1st Lt. *William L. O'Dea*, Newark, New Jersey. Motor Off.

Capt. *Wince A. D. Johnson*, Orlando, Florida, Surgeon.

1st Lt. *Wendell P. Earling*, Burlington, N. J. Dental Officer.

* * *

Second Lieutenant *Leonard P. Taylor*, of Atlanta, Georgia, succeeded Lieut. *Leiteau* as Adjutant, on December 19, 1943, and the staff remained static through the close of 1943.

* * *

In the officer shifts between the 761st and the 784th, the following Negro officers had come to the 761st:

Captain *Garland N. Adamson*, Chicago, Illinois.

1st Lt. *Wendell P. Earling*, Burlington, New Jersey.

1st Lt. *Albert J. Leiteau*, New Orleans, Louisiana.

1st Lt. *John D. Long*, Detroit, Michigan.

2nd Lt. *Richard A. Williams*, Philadelphia, Pa.

WOJG *James E. William*, Detroit, Michigan.

2nd Lt. *Kenneth W. Coleman*, Washington, D. C. (Deceased.)

2nd Lt. *Jay E. Johnson*, New York City.

2nd Lt. *James C. Lightfoot*, Washington, D. C.

During the twelve months of 1943 the unit had acquitted itself well in field tests, with the Assault Gun Platoon making an excellent firing record, as did the gun crews of the tanks. Training had been arduous, and there had been a few casualties of a minor nature during the period. But the overall picture showed that the unit was making fine pro-



These Men Made Charlie Company Click!

Left to right: First Lieutenant Thomas E. Bruce, Fort Scott, Kansas, whose platoon hammered through the Maginot Line at Kalhausen, and tore up Jerry fortifications at Reisdorf, so TASK FORCE RHINE could break through the Siegfried Line in March 1945; First Lieutenant James R. Burgess, Jr., of Chicago, the former CO of the Assault Gun Platoon, who took over Charlie Company in July 1945, after "Pop" Gates left it; First Lieutenant Steven B. Mayo, Brooklyn, New York, who joined late, but made a whale of an impression in Charlie Company, and Second Lieutenant Frank C. Cochrane ("The Devil"), of Beacon, New York, who started out in battle with Charlie Company as a staff sergeant, and then won a battlefield commission. (His last act was to contact the Russians at Steyr, Austria, after having calmly shot a Jerry transport plane out of the sky at the airfield at Wels, Austria, on May 4.)



gress in its preparation for the execution of its mission, and it had been praised by both Lt-Gen. McNair and Lt-Gen. Lear, who visited it.

In the month of November 1943 the first Good Conduct Medals were awarded to enlisted men of the Battalion, with 93 receiving this award which is given for one year of sustained good conduct and exemplary performance. The 761st was still a part of the 5th Tank Group.

FIRST NEGRO COMPANY COMMANDERS

In the interim there had been some changes in the commanding officers of the companies. Certain companies had received their first Negro Company commanders during the year.

On June 20, 1943, Second Lieutenant *Irvin McHenry*, of Leavenworth, Kansas, became the first Negro to ever command a company in the 761st Tank Battalion, when he succeeded Major (then Captain) *Charles M. Wingo*, as commander of Company "C". Four months and ten days later, on October 30, 1943, the second Negro company commander assumed command, when First Lieutenant *Ivan H. Harrison*, of Detroit, Michigan, took command of Headquarters Company, succeeding Major (then First Lieutenant) *Russell C. Geist, Jr.*, of Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. Just one month later, to the day, a third Negro officer took over a company, when Captain (then First Lieutenant) *Samuel Brown*, of Charleston, South Carolina, became the CO of Company "A", on November 30, 1943.

The formation of Company "D" had been effected by taking an officer and enlisted cadre from the other companies of the Battalion, and on November 2, 1943, the activation had been completed, with enlisted shortages being filled on January 7, 1944,

when 128 enlisted men were received from the ARTC at Fort Knox.

And so, in 1943 the Battalion had been changed from a light tank battalion to a medium tank unit, equipped with medium tanks, armed with 75 mm cannon in three letter companies, and augmented by a light tank company of M-5s, and with a 105-howitzer Assault Gun Platoon, an 81 mm Mortar Platoon, and the Reconnaissance Platoon operating out of Headquarters Company. The new T/O authorized a total strength of: 39 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 713 enlisted men, including the medical detachment.

With the letter companies intended for strictly combat missions, the purpose of the light tank company was for use as a reconnaissance and screening unit.

And so stood the official situation at the end of the year of 1943. Before the passing of another year the 761st was destined to undergo some thrilling adventures and experiences, and its opportunity, to demonstrate the worthwhile part of the investment in training of men and the issuance of armored equipment was to come.

The enlisted men had adjusted themselves to the vigorous training program, and had also found time to enjoy relaxation in Alexandria and other Louisiana cities, as well as some of the Texas cities and towns.

New friendships had been made, and comradeships had been moulded which were to carry over into the field of battle under conditions where the Battalion Motto "COME OUT FIGHTING!" was the central theme of either living or being killed! And the 761st looked forward to 1944!





Officers of the "Mosquito Fleet" (Dog Company)

Left to right: First Lieutenant Lawrence R. Bagwell, of Palestine, Texas, First Lieutenant Richard A. Williams, Jr., of Philadelphia, Penna., who took command of Dog Company upon the departure of Captain Richard W. English, in September, and Second Lieutenant Leonard Just Holland, of Detroit, Mich., last battlefield commissioned officer of the 761st, and supply hero of "The Bulge".



Chapter III

Overseas

During the early portions of 1944 the Battalion reached its allotted strength, through the arrival of enlisted fillers, and transfers and reassignments, which reduced the overages to the number required by the authorization.

During February and March of 1944 another Negro was added to the Battalion Staff, when Warrant Officer (JG) *Clarence I. Godbold*, of Yonkers, New York, became Personnel Officer, coming to the 761st from the Headquarters of the 92nd Infantry Division, at Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

Other officers joined the battalion at various intervals, coming from the AFRTC, the AF OCS, and from the Cavalry Replacement Center, at Fort Riley, Kansas. Among them was Second Lieutenant *Jackie Robinson*, the former UCLA football star.

The 761st had been making a fine record for itself here at Camp Hood, and the Commanding General of the Tank Destroyer Center, Brigadier General *Ernest A. Dawley*, had taken a great interest in it. He had spoken to the members of the 761st on three occasions. One of these speeches made a lasting impression on the men, and carried over into the combat zone, with the 761st.

It was the occasion when he made his notable speech on "The Fog of War". Telling the men about the various things that would, or could, happen during war-time, and for which there would be no obvious explanation, and just couldn't be figured out, General *Dawley* said: "Just lay it to the 'Fog of War'!"

General *Dawley* had also told the men that he felt that they were going to do fine things in battle, and "when you get in there, put in an extra round of ammunition, and fire it for General *Dawley*!" Months later, and in the same year, those remarks paid dividends. And when the 761st entered combat in that year, there was a tank on the battlefield called "The Fog of War". And to top it off, several extra rounds of ammunition were put in, and fired "for General *Dawley*".

In the course of the operations at Camp Hood,

—Few, if any, of the men of the 761st had ever crossed a body of water bigger than one of the Great Lakes, but they all "got on board" when the blue-green Atlantic loomed on the horizon. Eager, anxious, and yes, even worried, they "went for a long ride" — some of them would never come back, but, then, that was part of "it"! —

the 761st was the key unit in the Troop Training Brigade, consisting of the combined arms of the tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery up to battalions. Here the 761st gave the Army Ground Force tests to the tank destroyers.

In these operations the 761st proved its ability to master every test. It operated against tank destroyers and thoroughly mastered the job, doing the "impossible" at times, and showing a spirit of complete aggressiveness and the finest type of competitive attitudes in the tactics of mechanized warfare.

So well did it perform that on one of his inspections at Camp Hood Lieut-General *Ben Lear* paid it a signal honor, at a mass post formation, where all the units of Camp Hood were lined up.

With all these units lined up in formation, General *Lear* called the officers and first sergeants of the 761st to "front and center", and told them: "All the reports coming up to Washington about you have been of a superior nature, and we are expecting great things of your battalion in combat."

The fire tests of the gun crews had been excellent, and all the Army Ground Force tests at Camp Hood had been met and passed with flying colors, and by the middle of June 1944 the 761st Tank Battalion was just about ready to undertake the mission for which it had been activated.

It was not over-important that the mortar platoon had corrected its aim, to the satisfaction (and safety) of a Brazilian general. But it was outstanding that Captain (then First Lieutenant) *Charles A. Gates*' Assault Gun Platoon had zeroed in on a target with one shot, and destroyed it with the second.

On the 9th of June 1944 came the "big moment". Orders were received from the War Department through the Replacement and Command School, at Birmingham, Alabama, alerting the 761st for overseas movement! This was it! Instructions were to have the advance party ready for movement on July 20, and the remainder of the Battalion on August 10, 1944. The Port of Embarkation was to



These Men Ran the Service Company

Left to right: First Lieutenant William H. Griffin, Marshallville, Georgia, who became the CO in September 1944; Second Lieutenant Moses E. Dade, of Washington, D. C., formerly a tank platoon commander in Charlie Company, during combat, and a terror in his tank; Second Lieutenant Horace A. Jones, Detroit, Michigan, former First Sergeant of the Company, whose work won a battlefield commission, and First Lieutenant Charles H. Barbour, Jr., of Junction City, Kansas, who was a platoon commander, and led his platoon of Able Company out on the morning on November 8, 1944, in the first 761st battle engagement.

Guiding Headquarters Company



First Lieutenant John P. Hairston, of Toledo, Ohio.



First Lieutenant Edward E. Cannon, Brooklyn, N. Y.



Second Lieutenant Joseph A. Tate, Baltimore, Md.

be either New York City or Boston, depending upon the call of the Port Commander. These instructions were followed, and the Advance Party went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and the Battalion left Camp Hood, and went to Camp Shanks, New York.

The 761st Tank Battalion was the first of the three activated Negro tank units to move out for the execution of its mission, heading for combat. Reasons surmised for its getting the first call included the fact that it had a better training record than the other battalions, and that it was a standard battalion, whereas the 758th was a light tank unit, with limited employment possibilities for that reason.

Few members of the 761st ever knew that the Battalion came within inches of becoming an Amphibious Tank Battalion, and going to the Pacific for service, but that almost happened. But plans were changed at the last moment before the issuing of orders to convert the unit.

And on August 1, 1944 the Advance Detachment left Camp Hood, and proceeded to Camp Kilmer. In it were: Major Charles M. Wingo, WOJG Mark Henderson, of New York City, and Technical Sergeant William H. Newkirk, of Detroit, Michigan.

At 1900 hours on August 9, 1944 the main body of the 761st left Camp Hood, for Camp Shanks, N. Y. The Battalion had a strength of: 36 officers, 2 warrant officers, and 676 enlisted men, and it arrived at Camp Shanks on August 13, 1944.

The Advance Detachment sailed on August 7, and the Battalion left the New York Harbor on August 27th, 1944, arriving at Avon-Mouth, England, on September 8, 1944. The Battalion sailed on H. M. S. *Esperance Bay*, at 1040 hours on that August morning. It was the first time in the history of the United States that a Negro armored unit had ever left American shores. †

Typical of the well-disciplined and exemplary conduct of the 761st, is this letter of commendation from Captain Peter W. Jacoby, Transport Commander, addressed to Lieut-Col. Bates, Commanding the 761st, upon the completion of the trip:

"1. I wish to express my appreciation to you and your officers for your hearty cooperation in making this voyage most successful and pleasant.

2. I commend your unit for its discipline, military courtesy, high moral and soldierly conduct throughout the voyage. It has been by far one of the best disciplined units of its kind on this ship since the undersigned has been Transport Commander.

3. My staff and I wish you Godspeed in your future missions, and the best of luck and success to final victory."

The Battalion went to Wimborne, Dorset, England, and there remained in camp awaiting equipment and further orders. It had been assigned to the Twelfth Army Group, and to the Ninth Army of that Group. Shortly after its arrival in England it was alerted to stand by in readiness for movement within six hours on 20 September, upon notice, on or after 30 September. Liaison couriers went to Southampton, the Channel port to establish contact and prepared to facilitate cross-channel movement when it came.

There was no doubt as to what awaited the 761st Tank Battalion, for everyone knew now that France was the destination! While in England Captain (then First Lieutenant) William H. Bruce, Jr., of Winston-Salem, N. C., joined the unit as Assistant Surgeon. The Battalion strength was: 38 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 687 enlisted men.

Three weeks were spent in preparations, check-ups, and last-minute overhauling of equipment, records and all was in readiness. Relaxation was comparatively light, for everyone had a full sense of realization of the responsibility which rested upon their shoulders, for the time was approaching when the late Lieutenant General McNair would either be vindicated, or discredited, for his faith in Negro tankers.

New tanks were received on October 7, and the 761st Tank Battalion was ready for whatever was to come! On that same day the battalion left Wimborne, for Weymouth on the English Channel.

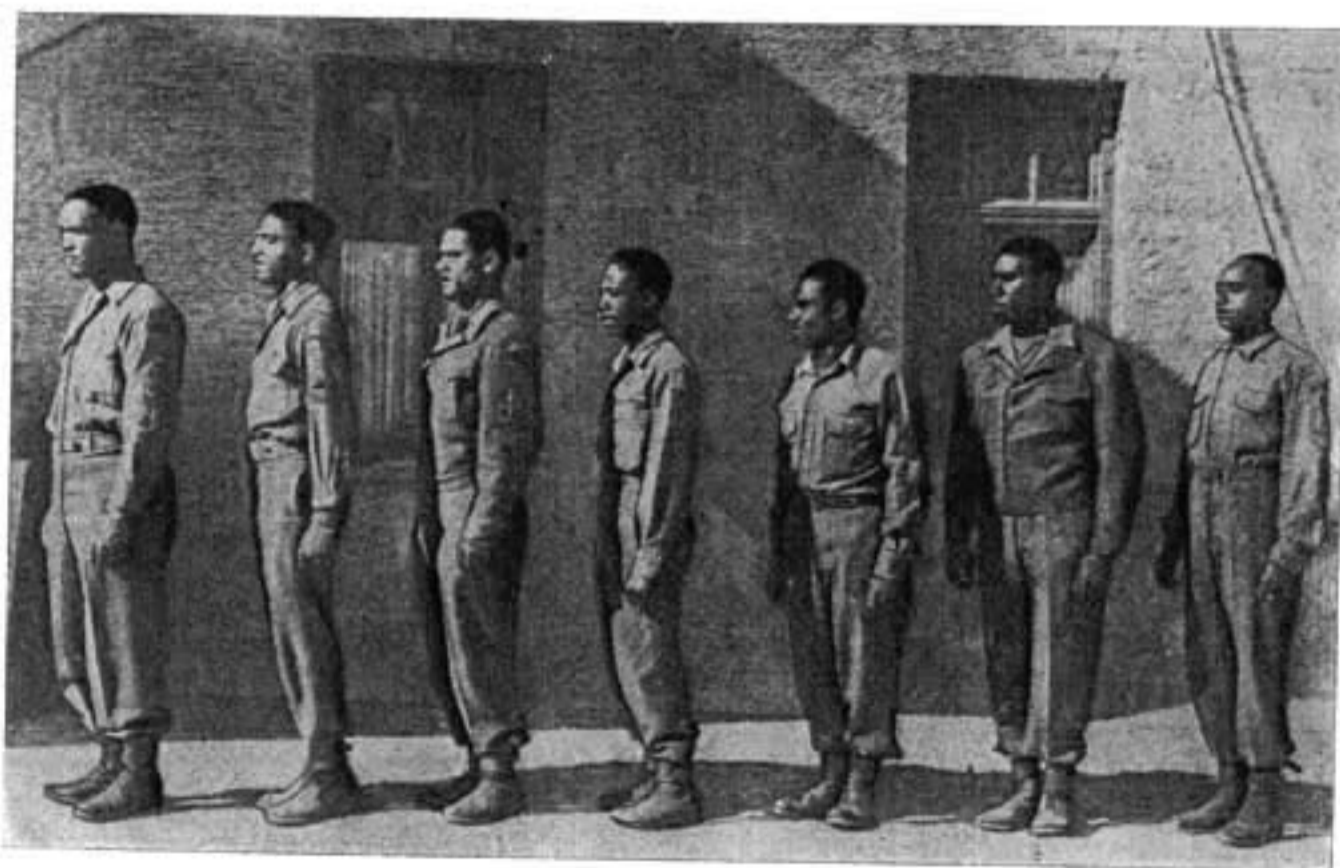
The Battalion, per VO the Commanding General, Twelfth Army Group, was relieved from assignment to the Ninth U. S. Army, and was assigned to General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third U. S. Army, on October 5, 1944.

That was its status when it boarded LSTs and LCTs at Weymouth, and pulled out into the English Channel on October 9th. It landed at Omaha Beach, France, on the Normandy Peninsula, on October 10, 1944. When the tanks rolled ashore it was a momentous day in history, for while there had been Negro soldiers in France in World War I, this was the first time in military history that Negro tankers had ever been on foreign soil, in their tanks, and especially where their fathers had fought twenty-six years before! The time was near!



*They Handled the
Heavy Paper Work*

Here are the Battalion Sergeant-majors, of the 761st. Shown left to right they are: Master Sergeant Robert L. Jenkins, Brooklyn, N. Y., the Battalion Sergeant-Major ever since its activation in 1942; Master Sergeant Joseph Thomas, of Gadsden, Alabama, of the S-1 Section, and Technical Sergeant James F. Hall, of Raleigh, North Carolina and Philadelphia, Pa., the Personnel Sergeant-Major. All but Sergeant Thomas left us in September 1945.

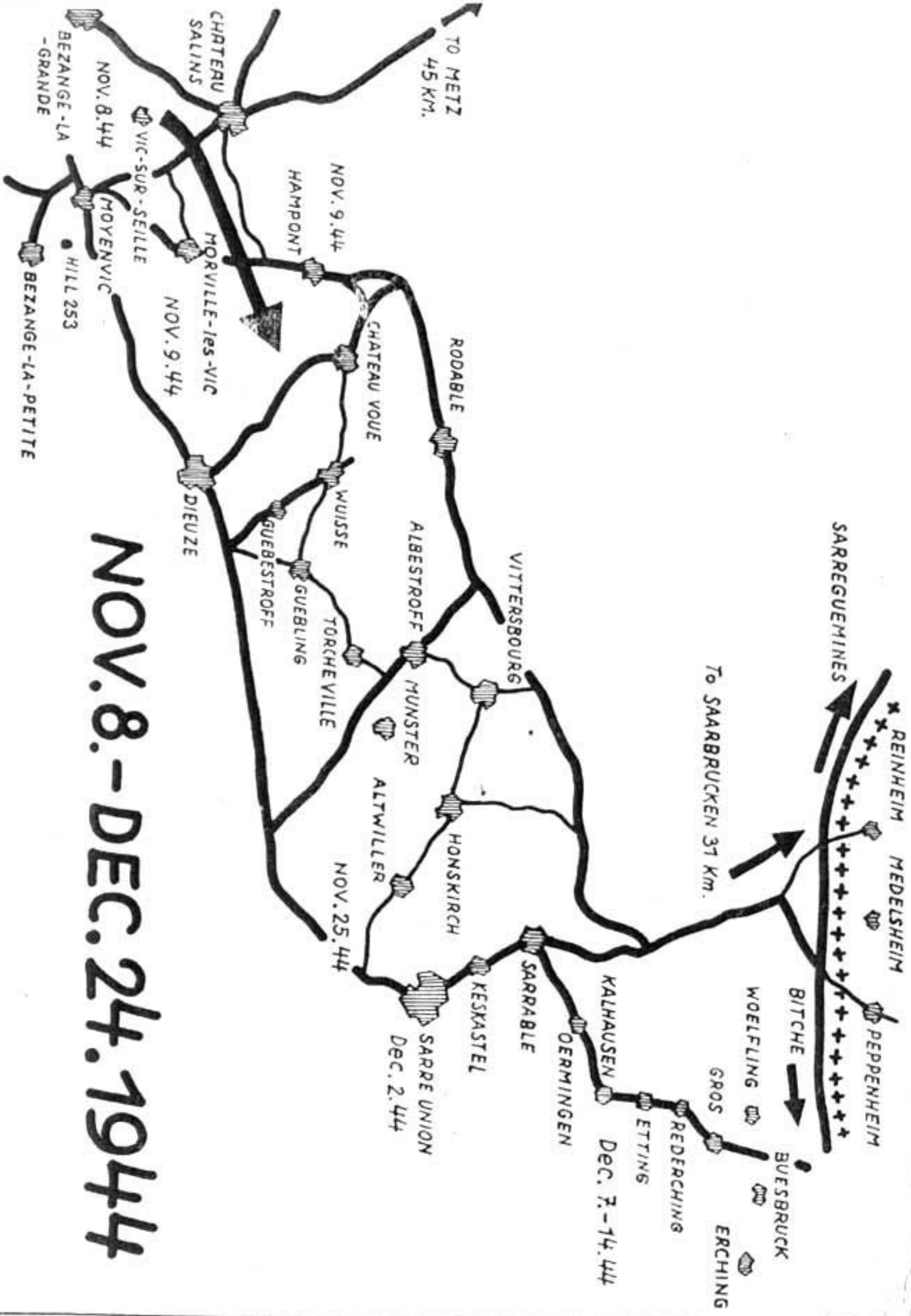


"Topkicks"

Here are the men who were "the right arms" of their company commanders during the operations of the 761st, the First Sergeants. Reading from left to right, they are:
Fred L. Cornelius (Hqs Co); Hubert H. House (Able); Purvis Easley (Baker); McClinton C. Kelly (Charlie); Emmett W. Parker (Dog); George A. Williams (Service Co); and Tech Sgt. Howard Bown (Medical Detachment).

PHASE ONE

BREAKING INTO THE SAAR BASIN



NOV.8.-DEC.24.1944

Chapter IV

Preparation for Battle

On October 13, 1944 the 761st was assigned to the 26th Infantry Division of the XII Corps, in the Third Army. The division was commanded by Major General Willard S. Paul, of Springfield, Mass., and the Corps by Major General Manton S. Eddy, who led a division ashore in the D-Day landings in Normandy. The Division CP of the 26th was located at Hoeville, France, several miles northeast of Nancy, in the Moselle Valley, 43 miles south of embattled Metz.

On October 22nd the tanks of the Battalion moved out of the bivouac area at La Pieux, where it had been since October 12, and headed for the front. The tanks travelled approximately 400 miles, consuming approximately 70,000 gallons of gasoline, 700 gallons of oil, and with no vehicular losses. Only one tank arrived one day late, due to mechanical failure. On the 28th of October the 761st pulled to a halt at Saint Nicholas de-Port, just east of Nancy, and there paused for the breather before entering battle. Here the final check-ups were made, for the big moment was at hand!

With the call to arms but a few days off, the Battalion received a visit from the Division Commander, Major General Paul on October 31st, and he gave them a rousing welcome.

Standing atop a half-track he told the assembled tankers and their officers: "I am damned glad to have you with us. We have been expecting you for a long time, and I am sure that you are going to give a good account of yourselves. I've got a big hill up there that I want you to take, and I believe that you are going to do a great job of it."

On November 2, 1944, the Battalion received a visit from the head of the Third U. S. Army, General George S. Patton, Jr., "ole Blood 'n Guts". Standing atop the same half-track used by General

"Men, you're the first Negro tankers to ever fight in the American Army. I would never have asked for you if you weren't good. I have nothing but the best in my Army. I don't care what color you are, so long as you go up there and kill those Kraut sonsabitches. Everyone has their eyes on you and is expecting great things from you. Most of all, your race is looking forward to you. Don't let them down, and, damn you, don't let me down!"

GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON, JR.
St Nicholas, France, Nov. 2, 1944

Paul, General Patton told the men the words inscribed at the head of this chapter, and then smartly stepped down, and left the men that feeling that if there was anything "The Old Man" wanted, he sure could have it, if they could get it for him. It was a tense moment!

At that time the Third Army had been stalled in front of Metz since September, and there were reports that a big offensive was about to jump off in the very near future.

The tactical situation showed that three Third Army Divisions were hammering at Metz on the north of the 26th Division, while the XV Corps of the Seventh Army was holding down the front on the south side. The area which had been assigned to the 26th embraced a number of key towns and cities along escape and supply routes for the citadel of Metz, untaken in 1,000 years. Here, with 22 forts around them, the Germans were standing off the 5th, 90th and 95 Infantry divisions, which were driving at Metz from three sides, with encirclement as the object.

It was a big item on the program that Metz should be taken, for from that point fanned out routes of communication and contact for the rich upper Saar Basin, and the 26th had for its objective the lower part of that Basin, and the elimination of the escape and supply routes to and from Metz. Those points had to be checked.

The German defenses were strong, even stronger than when they halted the Third Army drive. For, while General Patton was building up his stock of supplies for the big drive, the Germans were digging in, and building more concrete fortifications, with steel reinforcements on every side. Artillery positions were carefully concealed, and lined on a zero point along all major roads, and possible



Group of Staff Officers of 761st Tank Bn. in France

Left right: 1st Lt. Nelson Be. Nelson, Brooklyn, N. Y., Lt. Col. Paul L. Bates, Boonelon, New Jersey, Capt. Philip W. Latimer, Silesbee, Tex., Capt. Wm. L. O'Dea, Newark, N. J., Capt. Russell Geist, Sharon Hill, Pa., 1st Lt. Leonard P. Taylor, Atlanta, Ga., Lt. Col. Paul L. Bates, points out future plans to officers of Tank Unit near Nancy, France.



avenues of approach for the American troops. Reserves were in stock, and the roads leading into France, from the Saar Basin held camp areas in which were enemy infantry, armor, and ordnance reserves. The *Luftwaffe* was in the air, and "Bed-check Charlie" was operating on his regular schedule, calling each night dead on the minute. It looked as if it was going to be a tough battle. The skies had begun to be overcast with the signs of approaching winter snows, early for that part of France, and the drizzling rains had already started falling, converting the parking fields into seas of slimy, gooey mud, in which the wide tracks of the tanks slipped and stuck.

The Battalion had been officially committed to battle on October 31, 1944, when the words of General Paul rang in their ears, and that "*big hill up there*" loomed on the horizon, as one of the first objectives. It was almost examination time for the lads from the schools of Claiborne and Hood, and the teachers who had instructed them were right with them to accompany them into the din of battle, and whatever it held in store for these men, who faced an uncertain future with hearts that carried hope, and faith, in themselves, their weapons, and their training. They had confidence, and with that confidence they were ready to engage the enemy with everything they had. And the time for that was not far off.

— And after a few days of greasing the moving parts of their vehicles, oiling their guns, making sure that all swinging machine gun traverses were in good working order, breeches checked, ammunition put into the right place under the floor of the tanks, ready for instant use, and with the service units all set to bring up any auxiliary needs, the 761st Tank Battalion left the field of Saint Nicholas, and moved up to the Line of Departure, or the point from which their initial attack was to be launched.

The day before the tanks rolled into battle, this Army War Correspondent had come to the unit, with two Signal Corps photographers, and had gotten photographs (see Staff Sergeant Harvey Woodard and crew in this book) of some of the tankers of Company "C", little realizing at the time that the same men who were snapped by the photographers, would be among the very first tankers to answer the call of the Great Reaper. Less

than seventy-two hours later every man in that crew was dead! But that's getting ahead of the story of the 761st.

Underneath cloudy skies, and in slowly-falling rain which made mud which clung to the tracks of the tanks, the 761st moved its tanks up to the town of Athainville, France, the Line of Departure.

The tactical strategians who were master-minding the checkerboard on which this great game of war was to be played, had mapped out the situation, and their plans called for two task forces, which were to jump off from that little town, and swing out on a front twelve kilometers wide, and sweep everything before them, and then converge, and funnel their way into the heart of the enemy's stoutest defenses, which they were expected to rip through, and push forward to the town of Rodalbe, a junction point for both roads and communications, and a railroad center, some thirty miles northeast of Nancy.

The first task force was composed of the 101st and 104th Infantry Regiments of the 26th Division, with engineers, and the tanks of Company "A" attached to the 104th, and one platoon attached to the 101st. Captain David J. Williams, II, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was in command of the two platoons, and First Lieutenant Charles H. Barbour, of Junction City, Kansas, commanded the other platoon.

On the other task force, which was designated as "Provisional Task Force A" was the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion, an engineer company of the 26th Division, and the 328th Infantry Regiment, of the 26th, along with the remainder of the 761st Tank Battalion, all under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kopcsak, of the 602nd TDs. The 81 mm Mortar Platoon, commanded by Second Lieutenant James C. Lightfoot, of Washington, D. C., and the Assault Guns under Captain (then First Lieutenant) Charles A. Gates, of Kansas City, Missouri, and the Reconnaissance Platoon, commanded by Second Lieutenant William E. Blake, Jr., of Atlantic City, N. J., were standing by. Air support was on call, and the heavy artillery was lined up, and everything was in readiness!

And so the situation stood at 0600 hours on the morning of November 8, 1944, at Athainville, France, and it was D-Day in the Saar Basin!



Capt. Garland N. Adamson, Chicago, Ill., unit
Surgeon 761st Tank Bn.



2nd Lt. Jay E. Johnson, New York City.



Field officers await action Near Nancy, France. Left
to right: Capt. Ivan H. Harrison, Detroit, Mich.,
Capt. Irvin McHenry, Leavenworth, Kansas, and
2nd Lt. James C. Lightfoot, Washington, D. C.

Chapter V

The First Battle

There was something eerie about that first day, for there was that very definite tension in the minds of all the tankers. There was that great unspoken question: "What's going to happen? Will I make it? Will Jerry get me?" And a thousand and one other queries which yet were unspoken, but ran rampant in the minds of all.

Over in Able Company, dashing young Captain Dave Williams, II, a former Yale man, and scion of the Pittsburgh Williamses, whose father was the OPA Director for the State of Pennsylvania, tried a new angle in psychology.

Dave called on the fellows, in strict Harlesemese. "Now, look here, ya cats, we gotta hit it down the main drag, and hip some of them unhepped cats on the other side. So let's roll right on down ole Seventh Avenue, and knock 'em, Jack!" That eased the tension, just before the first tank moved off to its objective.

This was the moment for which all that training back in the USA had been aimed. There still lingered a slight catch in the throats of all. Everybody was thinking: the inside of a tank is a heluva place to be, when red hot, white hot steel fragments from an armor-piercing shell are ricocheting around, and just can't go anywhere else but the inside of that tank. God, how those things would tear the insides out of a man, spilling them all over the clean white walls of the tank, and its glistening floors! And, the hellish part about it was the fact that once it got in there, there just wasn't a damned thing you could do about it! Oh, well, there must always be a first time, so it looks like this is the day on which we find out what the score is. And Ruben Rivers led the way! Joe Kahoe's platoon moved out first, and after traversing a few hundred yards of suddenly quiet territory, there came the ear-piercing whine of one of those German 88s, whistling

Everybody was scared; only a liar would deny that. But then, the job just had to be done, for General Paul had said that he wanted the tankers to take "that big hill up there", and so, after the first few rounds had been fired, and enemy 88s had oriented them, the battle got underway in earnest, and when the day was done Bezange La Petite, Bezange La Grande, and Hill 253 all had fallen. But one heluva time was had by all before the sun set on France that 8th day of November 1944.

into the range, and then exploding off to the right, with a great cloud of black smoke spiraling up into the sky. Jerry had missed his first shot, and that was what did it! The tension eased. Throats got better, and wetter, where they had been dry, and we felt that if Jerry had missed his shots, then he had better look out, for we didn't intend to miss any of ours. Not now! For this wasn't the practice range at Camp Hood. Nossir, this was the real McCoy, and shots counted for more than score up here, and we got hepped to that quick, and from then on, things were different. The rattle of machine guns and their steel jacketed bullets clanking off the sides of the tanks, was re-assuring. Here was one thing that couldn't hurt us! And we knew the score. Unless Jerry got in his armor-piercing pieces, we had it made. Or, if the "HE" didn't burst too close over our turret tops we still had it made, cause we could escape the concussion, and that counted for a heluva lot, too.

And here is where our drivers came in for their great job. And all through the war they kept it up, even though they didn't get the praise our gunners and tank commanders got. That instant lever movement, when the radio said softly, but calmly: "Back up", "Go forward", that saved our lives many times, and that's what made our heavy Shermans so elusive for the Jerries. Of course it didn't mean too much when we were in minefields. But when Jerry was zeroing in, it really counted. We found that out that first day. The first shot would be long, the next one would be short, and that third shot from "Ripsaw" would be right in there, dead in the middle, and it paid to not be there when it came. And our drivers kept us from being there. Two-handed work, and no "petting-in-the-park-while-driving-stuff". We learned, the hard way!



Byrd

Members of a tank crew of the 761st Tank Battalion, now fighting with the Third Army, are shown here just a short while before they received their battle orders, as they put their M-4 tank through its paces in the mud, near Nancy, France.



Simmons

In the tank are: Staff Sgt. Harvey Woodard, Howard, Ga. tank commander; Tec 4. Claude Mann, Chicago, Ill., driver; Pvt. Nathaniel Simmons, Beaufort, South Caro., assistant driver; Cpl. Carlton Chapman, Pem-



Chapman

broke, Va., the gunner, and Pvt. L. C. Byrd, of Tuscaloosa, Ala., the cannoneer of the tank. The group is part of Capt. Irvin McHenry's Company C, which had the roughest opposition of any unit on their D-Day in battle, and emerged with flying colors.



Mann



Woodard



You know it's rather crowded in a tank, even though the ordnance folks have doped it out systematically, and arranged everything so it would be most convenient. We reached on the side walls for MG ammo; we got under the floor for HE and AP shells, those long gleaming deadly-nosed things which we send to the enemy with the compliments of the boys who "Come Out Fighting". We have our fire extinguishers, first aid kits, telephones, radios, water, food, extra periscopes, in case ours get hit, searchlights, and everything. But it's still a bit crowded, and we have to sorta "scrunge" up to move around. But when a man gets hit, and somebody has to "sub" in his job, damned quick, you'd think we were in Central Park, or the desert, with all the space in the world, judging from the speed with which the men get round in that crowded tank!

We thought about all those things, just before that first Jerry 88 landed on the right, and off the target. And then we went to it! From then on, it was a team moving, with the re-assuring voice of Dave Williams coming in over the "mike" at the right time. And that guy surprised us, too, for we had had our doubts about him, back in the US, but he came through, and proved that you can be wrong, and we found out that we were wrong, for Dave Williams was alright. We found that out on the battlefield, when the Jerries were sending everything our way. In fact, we felt that Dave Williams actually *liked* killing up there, and it became a sort of secondary "sport", after the primary one, which, of course, was "keeping from getting killed".

And so, with Joe Kahoe's platoon, and Rivers' in the lead tank, we moved on to the battle.

The preliminary preparations for the all-out attack in this Lorraine Sector, found the 26th Division fighting in a sector where it had fought in 1918, with a front thirteen miles long, extending south from high ground near the town of Chateau Salins, through the Moncourt Woods, and a hill northwest, towards Bezange La Petite.

On the 21st of October the division had made a withdrawal along this front, "to straighten up the front".

Opposing the 26th Division was the German 11th SS Panzer Division, which had been rebuilt by the addition of some 12,000 reserve troops, thirty big guns, and many tanks.

The entire area was flooded, due to the cracking of the Dieuze dam, by the Air Corps, releasing

thousands of gallons of water into the Seille River, also flooding the enemy defenses.

The first large scale attack was to begin on November 8, 1944! And the enemy expected an advance towards Dieuze, but the 26th Division headed, instead, towards Moyenvic and Vic-sur-Seille.

The attack went off, with the following non-divisional units in the van: the 761st Tank Battalion, the 602nd and 691st Tank Destroyer Battalions, and with the Fourth Armored Division on the alert, ready to exploit any breakthrough.

The two platoons of Able Company, with their supporting forces moved out from their positions at Bezange La Grande, and Lieut. Barbour's platoon moved from a point just north of Arracourt. Captain McHenry's Charlie Company made its initial move from the vicinity of Bezange La Petite and Hill 253, on the morning of November 8, 1944.

Able Company made the first contact with the enemy, and the two platoons under Captain Williams supported the 104th in the attack on Vic-sur-Seille, so named for the river which ran through it.

Forging out in an area which was heavily mined these platoons were successful in gaining their objective, although losing three tanks, all recoverable, to mines. It was here that the first man in the battalion to give his life was killed. Private Clifford C. Adams, of Waco, Texas, a member of the Medical Detachment, was hit by an exploding shell, and died that same day from the wounds suffered. Beside him when he was hit, while rendering aid to an injured comrade, was Corporal Floyd Humphrey, who said: "I was lucky".

A bit further to the right the other platoon of Able Company, under Lieut. Barbour, supported the 101st Regiment in taking the town of Moyenvic, which fell after a hard battle. The score was "two up, and two down."

Charlie Company, with twelve tanks firing, supported the 328th in taking Bezange La Petite and Hill 253, both of which fell after furious fighting. Many deeds of valor marked the encounters on this first day, and both infantrymen and tankers displayed heroism of a high degree.

It was with Company "A" that Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers, of Tecumseh, Oklahoma, ran into a road block obstructing passage of the tanks, and calmly dismounted under heavy fire, and attached

a cable to the block and pushed it aside, and caromed on through. He got the Silver Star for that act, for it opened up the way for the successful capture of the town ahead. Captain *Garland N. Adamson*, the Battalion Surgeon, coolly performed an operation on a wounded tanker, while 88 shells fell all around him, and seconds after the wounded soldier had been loaded into an ambulance and the vehicle moved off another 88 shell exploded exactly on the same spot which they had just left.

Company "C" lost three tanks in taking Bezange La Petite, and Hill 253. Five enlisted men of the Company were killed in action, and two enlisted men were wounded.

The five men killed were the members of the crew of Staff Sergeant *Harvey Woodard*, of Howard, Georgia, who had just a few hours before, been photographed by the U. S. Signal Corps photographers. In addition to Sergeant *Woodard*, others killed were: Technician Fourth Grade *Claude Mann*, of Chicago, Illinois, Corporal *Carlton Chapman*, of Pembroke, Virginia, Private *L. C. Byrd*, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Private *Nathaniel E. Simmons*, of Beaufort, South Carolina. The wounded were: Corporal *James L. Edwards*, of Bluefield, West Virginia, and Staff Sergeant *Samuel F. Saunders*, of Elizabeth, Pennsylvania.

Second Lieutenant *Jay E. Johnson*, of New York City, who led the first platoon from Company "C" into battle, was seriously wounded. He was the second officer casualty, and was almost blinded by a shell-burst over his eyes.

Early on that first morning Provisional Task Force A had jumped off, intending to penetrate the enemy lines to Rodalbe. Lieutenant Colonel *Paul L. Bates*, commander of the 761st, was seriously wounded on the day before, and was hospitalized, returning to duty in February of the following year. And the task force met with stiff resistance, and did not penetrate the enemy lines, for the Jerries had dug in force.

The enemy had been met, and the 761st paused that night to briefly nurse its wounds, and take stock of the events of the day, which had been their first taste of battle. Three towns and one hill had

been taken, and General *Paul* was pleased. The task force had failed to execute its part of the mission on that first day, but the experience gained was to prove invaluable on the morrow, when more bitter fighting was in store. The first battle was over. The tankers were oriented. They knew now what the enemy's much-talked-of 88s were like, for they had heard them coming over, to crash into orange colored flame, around the M-4s. The initial fear had been felt, and the feeling had settled in their minds that they could take it.

It had been "three up, and three down", and the wedge which had moved out twelve kilometers wide, was narrowed as the force on the left turned right, and the one on the right turned left, and they began to close on the enemy. The initial fear was gone, and the men had assumed the feeling of seasoned vets.

* * *

There was something weird about the death of Harvey Woodard and his crew. Not a single man inside his tank had been hit by a shell fragment, or touched by a machine gun bullet, and every man in the crew was sitting in his place of work, when the tank was opened! And every man was dead!

And the tank had not been hit! There wasn't a mark on it!

But Woodard, and his whole crew sat inside that big battle-wagon, with eyes staring, pupils dilated, but no fear showing on their faces, just a faint look of surprise! What was it?

But every man in the crew was dead! The tank was buttoned up, and all was in order. But what had gotten Woodard and his crew? That was the question. Nobody knew. Nobody could explain, and there was no answer.

We finally wrote it off the books as "concussion" from a burst of HE (high explosive) landing just over the turret top, which set the waves to whirling inside the tank, and knocked out Woodard and his men.

But, to this day, we still can't swear what killed Harvey Woodard and his crew! But we know that Ripsaw didn't HIT them, or their tank!

Chapter VI

The Battle Of Morville

On the 9th of November the attack continued with heavy fighting going on in the vicinity of Vic-sur-Seille and Moyenvic, three kilometers east of Vic-sur-Seille. On that same day, the 761st received a new commander, Lieutenant Colonel *Hollis E. Hunt*, of Yuma, Arizona, who, with Major *John F. George*, of Richmond, Virginia, came from the 17th Armored Group. The major became the S-3 for the battalion.

When the task force CO, Colonel *Kopcsak* was wounded that day, Colonel *Hunt* took over the command of Provisional Task Force A, and the attack went on.

At this time the Intelligence Section had identified the opposing enemy force as the 13th SS Panzer Division. Incidentally this first meeting of this German panzer unit was to be followed by other battles between it and the 761st. The 11 SS Panzer Division was also identified by the 26th Division Intelligence as being present in the fray.

Unfazed by the vaunted reputation of these so-called "superfighters" the tankers of the 761st rolled into battle on the morning of November 9, imbued with a new feeling of confidence, now that the preliminary fears had been soothed by the consciousness that although they had been shot at, and some of them hit, they were still there and still fighting, and that such a confidence was all they needed.

And over on the left side of the line was Company "A", whose two platoons pushed through the wooded area of the Forest of Bezange La Grande, and speared northwest to a point where they could fork in due east towards Chateau-Salins.

On the right, and some seven kilometers away, was the other body with Captain *McHenry's* tanks

"SUCH BRAVERY I HAVE NEVER BEFORE SEEN"
— That's the way a captured German officer put it, after that memorable 9th of November, 1944, when the soil of France was dyed a deeper red with the blood of these daring colored Americans, and — "Jerry" kicked hell out of Company "C"! It was a living nightmare of bloody hell — at Morville les Vic. The town was taken, but it was only after a bitter battle, replete with heroism from America's first Negro tankers, bidding for their place in the sun —

forging from the vicinity of Bezange La Petite, and also swinging northwest, heading back towards Moyenvic. Lieut. *Barbour's* platoon was slashing through the middle, and the entire action was forming a pincers movement, which would converge into one solid column, when all the converging forces met. According to the situation charts this would take place just east of Chateau-Salins, near Ham Pont, which is located on the rail route out of Chateau-Salins.

And so the plan of battle called for penetration into those areas. On paper it was easy enough, but once the General Shermans began their forward movement, "Ripsaw" (as the lads called the German 88s) also began the movement of everything he had in the storeroom, in the general direction of the on-coming tanks of the 761st, and he threw everything except the kitchen stove into the fight, as the tanks neared the town of Morville-les-Vic. And to add to his effectiveness, he had an Artillery Officer Candidate School located at Marsal, which was four kilometers east of Morville, and from which the lobbing of 88 shells could be done with as much ease as putting the baby to bed. And that was what the enemy did, with his eager OCS students working overtime trying to make records for themselves, and gain glory in the eyes of their superiors. To top off the difficult situation, the elements also began to aid the enemy, and the snow began to fall in ever-increasing quantities, covering the ground with a white mantle, against which the black outline of the tanks stood out like the wart on the proverbial Irishman's nose. And, the same snow threw a protective cover over the well-camouflaged bazooka positions which the Germans had had time to construct while the Third Army waited in front of Metz from the previous September. It was a tough nut to crack.



Heroes of the Battle of Morville

Left to right: Sergeant (then Corporal): Jack T. Whitby, of Detroit, Mich., Private John McNeil, Rockingham, North Carolina, and Tech 4th Nathaniel Ross, Jr., of Vicksburg, Miss. They did such a wonderful job at Morville, that a captured German officer said: "Such bravery I have never before, but once, seen, and that was on the Russian front!" They stayed under their burning tank for three hours, and wiped out enemy machine gun emplacements and AT gun posts, and bazooka teams in the heart of the town.



They proceeded to the attack with the infantrymen mounted on the tanks, at 0900 hours on November 9. At Moyenvic the Task Force A moved through the infantry and proceeded northward. The light tank company moved up from the vicinity of Vic-sur-Seille, and taking up positions south of Salival, fired on that town. Engaging the enemy at Salival was an auxiliary movement for the relief of any possible pressure which might have been thrown against the Task Force A at Morville. Company "D" set the town of Salival afire, with its shelling, and the infantry then entered the town.

Meanwhile, far out on the left flank, Company "A" had completed its mission in the attack of Chateau-Salins, with the 104th Regiment, and the town had been captured after four hours of fighting, and the city was occupied. It was the first major town east of Nancy to be encompassed by the 26th Division, and it was later used by the XII Corps for its headquarters for the remainder of the offensive in that area. Company "A" then headed east, advancing on the left side of Morville.

Heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire met the 761st as it moved up to Morville, and the tanks drew into position and shelled the town heavily, and then, with the infantry, attempted to get into the town. Company "B" was given the mission of getting into the town, but road blocks and bazooka fire, — of which there were plenty, — held up the advance.

During the approach upon the town, enemy infantry troops were flushed, and running across the open fields they were firing anti-aircraft guns, in flat trajectory fire at the advancing tanks. Captain *McHenry*, in command of Charlie Company, ordered the tankers to withhold their fire, and then called for artillery fire, which was put on the fleeing enemy.

The situation showed that Company "A" was advancing from the left side of Morville, Company "B" was in the center, and Company "C" was on the northwest side of Morville, advancing towards the high ground overlooking the scene. Company "D" was doing the screening from the direction of Salival. And the German Artillery OCS at Marsal was throwing the whole works at the battalion! And Morville was attacked.

Company "B" finally succeeded in getting some tanks into the town, after the road blocks had been

overcome, but they were being assailed by anti-tank and machine gun fire coming from upper-story windows of houses in the town, and from cellars. The doughboys were moving in to try to eliminate these salients, but were being killed in goodly numbers by the furious fire of the enemy.

Two-thirds through the town, Sergeant *Roy King*, of River Rouge, Michigan, commanding the second Company "B" tank to get past the barricades, pulled into position near a street intersection to lay fire on a building housing several dangerous gun posts, but his tank was hit by bazooka fire and set afire. Upon coming out of his tank through the turret hatch, *Sergeant King* was machine-gunned, and killed. Corporal *Herbert E. Porter*, of Asheville, North Carolina, had already been severely wounded by the hit on the tank. The situation was desperate, for several times the Jerries had kicked the tankers back, from the center of the town, but once having maneuvered into position to lay fire on the enemy post, it was necessary to complete the fire mission, before the infantry could move forward, for there were nearly fifteen dead and wounded infantrymen laying in the street in the area. The other members of the crew came out. Private First Class *Nathaniel Ross, Jr.*, of Vicksburg, Miss., came out through the turret hatch along with *Sergeant King*, but he dismounted from the left. The fire was coming from the right, which was the side from which *King* dismounted, and was hit. *Ross* was also wounded. Technician Fifth Grade *James T. Whitby*, of Detroit, Michigan, and Private *John McNeil*, of Rockingham, North Carolina, both came out through the escape hatch, bringing their "grease guns" with them. *McNeil* used his sub-machine gun in eliminating German foot-troops trying to reach an anti-tank gun, and placed fire on the window of the upstairs machine gun nest, slowing down the fire that was coming from the window. During this lull Technician Fifth Grade *Whitby* re-entered the disabled tank, and manned the 30 calibre machine gun, entering through the bottom escape hatch. With this gun *Whitby* knocked out several enemy machine gun nests, and a bazooka team which was in the upstairs window, and this deed permitted the waiting infantrymen to enter and clear the town, for the remaining Company "B" tanks passed through, once that obstacle had been cleared. Seven tanks got through. Sgt. *King's* tank was hit twice more. *McNeil* manned a

30 calibre from underneath the tank. Whitby tried to fire the 76 three times. But the breech had been hit, and he manned the 33 calibre co-action machine gun. They opened the way for the tanks and the capture of the town. But they had lain underneath that tank for three long painful hours!

Meanwhile, Company "D", commanded by Captain (then First Lieutenant) *Richard W. English*, of New Orleans, Louisiana, had assisted the infantry in gaining a foothold in the Bois De La Geline, to the northeast, where they took the high ground, and then broke up a German counter-attack on this flank. The battle was furious, with the enemy contesting every inch of ground. Private First Class *Obie J. Smith*, of Leevale, West Virginia, a tank gunner in Company "D", personally knocked out twenty Germans with his machine gun. Second Lieutenant *Warren G. H. Crecy* (then a Sergeant), performed the elimination of an enemy anti-tank gun, with a 30 calibre machine gun. Staff Sergeant *Jack Gilbert*, of Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, in the same company, a tank commander, dismounted, with his crew, and recaptured his tank, after it had been hit and taken by the Germans. In his crew were: Pfc. *Judge Favors*, of Plant City, Florida, the bow gunner, Pfc. *Albert D. Fulwood*, of Huntington, West Virginia, and the driver, Sgt. *James C. Harris*, of Detroit, Michigan.

Operating with Lieut. *Crecy* (then Sergeant) in his tank were: Sergeant *Roy L. Robinson*, of Spartanburg, South Carolina, the driver, and Pfc. *Raymond G. Johnson*, of Evanston, Illinois, the gunner. They were rescued by the Sergeant *Crecy* under fire, after the tank had been disabled. Captain (then First Lieut.) *English* performed direct reconnaissance for his company, on foot, armed with a tommy gun.

Meanwhile, Captain *McHenry's* Company "C", on its flank, was having troubles of its own. The Public Relations Officer of the 26th Division reported to Army Correspondent *Anderson* from ETOUSA Headquarters, that there had been a "hasty briefing" and details of a devilish anti-tank ditch which had been constructed by the Germans, had not been given the fullest attention, there at Morville, and it was this same anti-tank trap ditch, which gave Company "C" its Golgotha, at Morville.

Sweeping down from the high ground on the northwest side the tanks of Company "C" encoun-

tered this ditch, extending from the woods at the edge of the high ground, down to a road leading through the area, in open country.

From 25 to 50 yards behind this ditch the Germans had built in the concrete pill-boxes, cleverly camouflaged and concealed, and further aided by the snow cover which the elements had provided, they contained anti-tank guns, and bazooka teams, and when the tanks moved into range these guns and bazookas opened a devastating fire, which took a heavy toll of men and tanks, which were also hitting minefields laid in the front of the ditch.

In the melee the tanks of Company "C" were immobilized, and halted, and there they were exposed to the fire of the enemy cannons and bazookas. Seven tanks were knocked out, and only the heroic work of the men of the company kept the loss of life at a low figure, with nine enlisted men and one officer being killed.

It was here that First Sergeant *Samuel C. Turley*, of the Bronx, New York City, lost his life, along with Second Lieutenant *Kenneth W. Coleman*, of Washington, D. C., as they were directing the reorganization of the tankers, after the Germans had shifted their fire from the flanks to the center, where the C Company tanks stood immobilized in front of the ditch. *Turley* and Lieut. *Coleman* were bringing out the machine guns of the tank in which they had been fighting, in order to use them in putting fire on enemy guns directed at their men, while at the same time giving instructions to the tankers as to how to proceed to safety which lay away from the enemy weapons.

Private *Dennis A. Osby*, of Springfield, Illinois, a light machine gunner in a Company "C" tank, went back to his burning tank, and found tank gunner *Autry Fletcher*, of Prattville, Arkansas, still in the tank, unable to escape with his feet entangled in a 50 calibre ammunition belt. The other members of the crew had dismounted through the escape hatch, before *Osby* missed the last member of the crew. Private *Osby* assisted *Fletcher* in releasing his feet, and then helped free him from the still burning tank, carrying him to safety, but later both were hit and wounded by HE fire.

Second Lieutenant (then Staff Sergeant) *Frank C. Cochrane*, of Beacon, New York, assisted in evacuating Corporal *Earnest Chatmon*, of Winsboro, Louisiana, and saved the life of the tank

commander, Technician Fifth Grade *George Collier*, of Tampa, Florida, after their tank had been hit.

Corporal *Dwight Simpson*, of Rock Island, Illinois, rescued Technician Fourth Grade *Horatio Scott*, from his burning tank, after it had been hit.

Private First Class *William Kiser, Jr.*, of Hartford, Conn., was the last man of Company "C" to crawl hundreds of yards to safety, through the cold muddy waters of that ditch, watching comrades falling on all sides, as German mortar fire began to "walk" the ditch. *Kiser* buried his grease gun in the mud, as he found it to be no longer useful, since to lift one's head above the top of that ditch meant instant death.

The entire action became a nightmare, because Company "B" had also been immobilized by the strong enemy defenses at the edge of the woods, and the Germans were then enabled to deflect their fire from Company "B" towards Company "C". This made the exposed position of Company "C" more hazardous, but the tankers overcame the difficulty by removing the heavy machine guns from their disabled tanks, and then crawling under the vehicles, poured a devastating fire into the enemy positions. They accounted for many Germans in that manner, and won the highest praise from captured enemy officers.

The 105 Assault Gun Platoon, commanded by Captain (then First Lieutenant) *Charles A. Gates*, of Kansas City, then went into action, along with the 81 mm Mortar Platoon, and they poured round after round into the enemy positions. The Assault Gun Platoon received reports of an enemy column in a woods, from two air liaison planes, and the platoon fired an indirect mission on the column. The air liaison later reported that the column was trapped and destroyed. It contained an estimated 25 to 30 motor vehicles, and about 200 Germans, in the vicinity of Ham Pont. Evidence pointed to their being a relief party en route to aid their beleaguered mates at Morville, and in the Chateau-Salins area. This was on the second day of the Battle of Morville.

During the action at Morville, the Fourth Armored Division was hovering in the rear area, waiting for a chance to exploit any gains made by the 26th Division with the 761st spearhead, and dash further into the German defenses.

On the second day, after furious battling, following the re-grouping of the battalion tanks, the

town of Morville was taken, the area was cleared, and the action moved on towards the junction point of Ham Pont, where the units of the 761st would converge and form a single spearhead for the thrust through the densely wooded area of the Forest De Koecking, which stretched some twenty miles ahead, with enemy positions scattered at strategical points in the entire sector.

Casualties for the action at Morville-les-Vic were: One officer and nine enlisted men killed, and twenty enlisted men wounded in action.

The dead were: Second Lieutenant *Kenneth W. Coleman*, of Washington, D. C., First Sergeant *Samuel C. Turley*, the Bronx, New York City, Sergeant *Roy King*, River Rouge, Michigan, Sergeant *James Harrison*, Brooklyn, New York, Technician Fourth Grade *Horatio Scott*, Lynn, Mass., who was killed later, after having been saved by Corporal *Simpson*, Privates: *Emile I. Armstrong*, Cincinnati, Ohio, *Robert W. Briscoe*, Baltimore, Maryland, *Alexander S. Anderson*, Washington, Pennsylvania, *Theodore R. Cooper*, Kershaw, South Carolina, and *Willie L. Lofton*, Corsicana, Texas.

It was found that four of the seven knocked-out tanks were recoverable, and they later went back into use.

* * *

The mystery surrounding the death of the entire crew of Staff Sergeant *Woodard*, in which every man in the crew was found dead inside the tank, was finally attributed to the terrific concussion of a heavy caliber high explosive shell fired from an enemy gun. The death of First Sergeant *Turley* saddened the members of his company, for he had been given the reputation of being "the best first sergeant in the 761st." On the occasion of his death he had been serving as a substitute member of a tank crew, to which he did not belong.

* * *

It's pretty tough to be in a place where you don't want to be, and still be unable to leave the damned place, even though you wanna get out worse than anything in the whole world. That's the way it was crawling up that hellish anti-tank ditch at Morville, in the muddy water, and the mud itself. It was cold, it was raining and alternately snowing, and that water was so damned cold, but you just had to stay down in it, and slowly feel yourself

freezing to death, as it were. For if you thought it was okay to just get up and walk away, that was foolish. Even to run was just as foolish, cause Ripsaw had MGs spotted all over the place, and he was using the hell out of them. That's no lie!

Fragmentation shells were exploding everywhere, so that wicked little pieces would fly about, and cut into your flesh, searing, burning, tearing into your very innards. We all knew that. It was hell that day at Morville.

* * *

But the picture of *Samuel Turley* will always be in the minds of all the Charlie Company veterans who learned "War" that day in that ditch. Sam was the "best first sergeant" in the 761st! He really was all that. You see, he didn't really have any business up there in the first place. But one of the drivers had a case of the "jitters" (oh yes, you could have had the same thing), and *Samuel J.* had told him to stay back "I'll take it up", and he did.

When the tanks got stopped there, and Jerry was knocking them out, one by one, down the line, *Turley* proved that he was *more* than the best first sergeant! He got out, with lanky *Kenneth Coleman*, of Washington, one of our Second Looeys, and they were getting us organized so we could live to fight again another day — if we got out of there! That was the big idea. There was no fool notion about heroism to save the day, and all that story-book stuff — We knew the tanks were dead ducks. That was a sure thing, and there was no use trying to deny it. So common sense said let's get the hell out of here, so we can come back in

more tanks, and give these Jerries a fit. So *Turley* said let's clear out.

Turley and Lieut. *Coleman* were covering for us. We couldn't even put our guns up over the top of the ditch to fire, for Ripsaw had us covered. but like a figure out of the pages of history, like the legendary knights in armor, the bold daring heroes, *Turley* was doing one of the most wonderful things ever, when he was killed.

Standing behind the ditch, straight up, with a machine gun, and with an ammo belt around his neck, *Turley* was spraying the enemy with machine gun shots, as fast as they could come out of the muzzle of the red-hot barrel. He stood there, Titanic-like, brave and great, covering for *his* men, and then he fell, cut through the middle by German machine gun bullets that ripped through his body, as he still stood there, firing that MG to the last! Not with a tripod, not mounted, but in his hands! That's how *Turley* went down, and as his body crumpled to the earth his finger still gripped that trigger. We made it!

And then — an 88 HE shell hit the spot where *Turley* was, and the last we saw was pieces of the machine gun and *Turley* — flying in very direction, as the explosion tore the earth, and all around it, to shreds. But, we made it!

And so, Morville passed into history, and the 761st Tank Battalion again oiled its guns, re-loaded the tanks with ammunition, gassed up, and headed back into battle, with many more miles ahead to be covered, and with weather conditions becoming more and more unfavorable.



Chapter VII

Pushing On!

Balancing the ledger for the Morville action it was found that the Mortar Platoon had moved forward, from Moyenvic, to within 600 yards of Morville, from the southwest, and had been asked to fire some rounds. It was able to do this, after Company "D" tanks had gone forward and eliminated an enemy gun which was zeroed in on the position desired to operate from, and the mortars threw in several rounds at Morville, setting one building afire, and undergoing a shelling themselves, when their vehicles were halted near a main supply route junction point. It was the first action for this unit.

It had also seen a beautiful demonstration of comradeship when Roy King was shot, for there, several white infantrymen tried unsuccessfully to remove King's body from the fire area, and a number of them were killed. And Colonel Hunt, of the 761st, expressed his satisfaction over the fine teamwork between the tankers and the white troopers of the 26th Division.

* * *

And from Morville the Battalion moved on up to Ham Pont, where the junction with the other elements of the battalion was effected, and the battalion as a whole pushed forward towards Obreck.

Resistance was still stiff, though the enemy was withdrawing. He was not yielding an inch without a fight, and it was in this stretch that Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers, of Tecumseh, Oklahoma, and Company "A", got in his most effective work, becoming especially adept at killing Germans with the 50 calibre machine gun. He personally accounted for more than two hundred enemy dead, between Ham Pont and Guebling.

It was rough during those days, what with the rain, the cold driving snow, and the ferocity with which the enemy's SS Panzer troops bitterly contested every inch of ground, on terrain thickly sowed with mines and booby-traps, and dotted with cleverly concealed and camouflaged AT guns, and bazooka positions! And that MUD! — Chateau-Salins, Morville, Ham Pont, Obreck, Chateau Voue, Guebling, Wuisse, it always was the same, "attack and counter-attack" "attack and counter-attack"! But the 761st would not be denied. The 26th Division had an objective, and the 761st was expected to lead the "Yankee" Division to that objective! And so, it was "Forward"! — And Ruben Rivers "got" his. —

In the area in between those towns lay Obreck, Dedeline and Chateau Voue. They were taken after bitter enemy resistance had been overcome, and the operations moved on to Wuisse.

Company "A" got in some fire missions at Wuisse, and then was subjected to an enemy counter-attack, which was repulsed by two platoons from the company, destroying two enemy tanks.

Later on, on the night of November 11, one platoon of Company "A", attached to the 104th Regiment, staged a counter-attack on its own initiative, and captured Wuisse, and defended it during the night of the 11th. The platoon was commanded by First Lieutenant Joseph O. Kahoe, Jr., of Washington, D. C.

From there the units moved to Lidrequin, and thence through the dense Forest De-Bride-et-de-Koecking, and supported the 3rd Battalion of the 328th Regiment in its advance to the northeast end of the Bois de Kerpriche.

The objective of the 26th Division was the town of Benestroff, an important town, vital to rail, road, and communications service for the enemy forces in the entire area, back of Metz, which was slowly being enclosed by the encirclement movements of the three Third Army Divisions of the XX Corps, which were gradually closing in on it from all sides. The neck of the pincer was gradually shutting up, and the work of the 26th Division, with its air support from the fighter-bombers of the Ninth Air Force, was proving of inestimable value in the elimination of any succor or relief for the hard-pressed defenders of Metz.

Three days were spent in maintenance work on vehicles and on November 18 the battalion, as a

whole, resumed operations. Weather conditions were steadily growing worse, and the reports from the air reconnaissance units advised that the roads behind the enemy lines were clogged with vehicles and infantry, obviously intended to be used for the relief of the troops being forced back by the relentless drive of the 26th Division.

The Fourth Armored Division was still hovering in the area, poised to strike swiftly, should the enemy show any inclination to make a full retreat. But it wasn't like that, for Jerry was electing to stand and fight it out with the forces which were facing him along the front of the line, and that meant the muddy tanks of the 761st, with their grimy, tired, unshaven tankers.

The stand-by trains established by the battalion service unit were maintaining radio and liaison contact with the combat echelons, and kept them well supplied.

Evacuation teams, composed of four medics each, supported the infantry regiments, and took care of the aid for the wounded. Every day the members of the battalion were becoming more and more war-wise, and battle-conscious. Each new engagement brought a broader store of knowledge of battle tactics, and tricks which once were used by Jerry to good advantage began to back-fire in his face, as the 761st got itself better and better adjusted to what it took to win battles, in addition to normal skill with weapons.

Thus, more battle-wise than ever, the 761st drove on the town of Guebling, and attacked it. Here, as in many other battles involving the tanks of Able Company, it was the same old story: "*Rivers led the way!*" It had become a by-word, for the dashing fighter from the Great West had become a near-legend as his feats of bravery and daring were circulated more and more throughout the battalion, and wherever it went. It had gotten to be the custom that whenever his company attacked, Sergeant *Rivers'* tank was always the first tank into the town!

The tale was told that Lieutenant *Bob Hammond, Jr.*, his platoon Commander, once radio-ed a command to Sergeant *Rivers*: "Don't go into that town Sergeant, it's too hot in there". Quick as a flash the answer came back over the radio, in a respectful voice: "I'm sorry, Sir, but I'm already through that town!" That was characteristic of *Ruben Rivers*, and

everybody swore that he was going to get the first battlefield commission in the battalion.

But he "got his" at Guebling on November 19. Many minefields had been laid by the enemy, and the tankers continued to encounter them all along the way. Entering Guebling in the lead of his company, on the evening of the 18th, Sergeant *Rivers'* own tank hit a mine, and was knocked out. At 5 P. M., he climbed up into the tank driven by Tech 4th *Jonathan B. Hall*, of Live Oak, Florida, and took command, continuing the fight. In that tank with him were: *Hall*, Pfc. *Frank Jowers*, of Hartford, Conn., the bow-gunner, Pfc. *Ivory V. Hilliard*, of Houston, Texas, the gunner, and Private *Everet Robinson*, of Newark, New Jersey, the cannoneer.

It was between 8 and 9 the next morning, when the tank finally was able to force its way forward, and despite heavy shelling approached the town. It got hit. From the comparatively close range of 200 yards, the Germans threw two high explosive shots that scored. The first shot hit near the front of the tank, and penetrated, striking two of the men beside *Rivers*. *Robinson* the cannoneer was wounded and *Hilliard*, the gunner, was killed, by the ricocheting fragments confined inside the steel walls of the tank, and *Rivers* was also hit. The second shot scored into the tank. The first one had blown *Rivers'* brains out against the back of the tank, and the second went into his head emerging from the rear. And the intrepid leader, the fearless, daring fighter who had slain more than 300 of the enemy, was no more. *Hilliard's* body was discovered two days later.

Technician Fifth Grade *Roderick Ewing*, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was also killed that day.

And the platoon commander, Second Lieutenant *Robert C. Hammond, Jr.*, of Cleveland, Ohio, also went down, dying a heroic death, as he was bringing out the 50 calibre machine gun, to cover the escape of crewmen from the other disabled tanks. He was shot down firing at the enemy.

Without hesitation, when Lieut. *Hammond* went down, young Staff Sergeant *Theodore A. Weston*, (now a Second Lieutenant), of Washington, D. C., took command of the platoon, and accomplished the mission of taking the town, by direct assault. The tankers were thoroughly aroused and embittered by the loss of their fighting comrades, and their fury was unstoppable.

Staff Sergeant (then Corporal) *Otis Johnson*, of Chicago, Illinois, in the original crew of Sergeant *Rivers*, knocked out two enemy tanks, at a range of 1600 yards, with just two rounds, firing one round each at each of the enemy tanks, which belonged to the 13th SS Panzer Division.

In that crew were: Tech 4th Grade, *Ivery Fox*, of Spencer, North Carolina, and Private First Class *Louis Gains*, of Picayune, Miss., with *Rivers* and *Johnson*, and Private *Homer Neely*, of Laurens, South Carolina. They were the crew which had wreaked the most damage upon the enemy with *Rivers*, on those wild escapades.

The embitterment over the loss of comrades, who had become staunch and sworn friends from the training days back in the U. S., was reflected in the desire for revenge shown by the crew-mates of the dead.

It was such a feeling that caused *Johnson* and *Fox* to later receive the Bronze Star Medal for bravery in action. It was such a feeling that caused the heroic actions of Sergeant (later Second Lieutenant) *Warren G. H. Crecy*, of Corpus Christi, Texas, who ran wild with his machine gun in killing Germans. He had lost his good friend, Tech 4th *Horatio Scott*, of Lynn, Mass., on the second day of battle. *Scott* had visited *Crecy's* home in Texas, and when he was wounded, and went to the hospital, he sent word back to *Crecy* that he was "okay, and I'll be back soon." He came back, but he was dead! And in all his combat days that memory lingered with *Crecy*, and he was the most fearless man in the battalion on the field of battle.

* * *

To look at *Warren G. H. Crecy* (The "G. H." stands for *Gamaliel Harding*), you'd never think that here was a "killer", who had slain more men than any man in the 761st. He extracted a toll of lives from the enemy that would have formed the composition of three or four companies, with his machine guns alone. And yet, he is such a quiet, easy-going, meek looking fellow, that you'd think that the fuzz which a youngster tries to cultivate for a mustache would never grow on his baby-skinned chin. And that he'd never use a word stronger than "damn"! But here was a youth, who went so primitively savage on the battlefield that his only thought was to "kill, kill, and kill", and he

poured his rain of death pellets into German bodies with so much reckless abandon and joy that he was the nemesis of all the foes of the 761st. And other men craved to ride with *Crecy*, and share the reckless thrill of killing the hated enemy that had killed their comrades. And he is now living on borrowed time. By all human equations *Warren G. H. Crecy* should have been dead long ago, and should have had the Congressional Medal of Honor, at least!

His savagery came because *Horatio Scott* got killed, and *Horatio Scott* was *Crecy's* sworn buddy and friend and comrade. An a that feeling came overseas with him. And when *Scott* sent word back to *Crecy* from the hospital: "I'm okay, and I'll be back soon", and then never came back, but went to a grave far from home, *Crecy* turned into a reckless killer, with only revenge in his mind, and every German was his target. And he shot them by the hundreds. He said after Task Force Rhine had halted: "I killed so many until I just got tired of shooting them." He said it with no effort at bravado or show-off. It was just a simple statement of fact, uttered in a matter-of-fact manner, by "the baddest man in the 761st."

Scott had visited *Crecy* in the latter's home in Texas, and had met *Crecy's* wife, and had seen the coming signs of a son whom *Crecy* never had seen, and they were close friends.

It's either for revenge, or to kill to keep from being killed, that makes men do great things on the field of battle. That was what made *Warren G. H. Crecy* the killingest killer in the 761st Tank Battalion *Revenge!* For others it was the same, or "If I don't kill them, they will kill me". And so, it was *Jerry* who had to get it, for it was coming to him, from these men of the 761st Tank Battalion!

* * *

It was this sort of orientation which the men of the 761st Tank Battalion received during those first days of combat, and it hardened them, seasoned them, and taught them that they were the equals of any soldier on the battlefield, and they feared nothing. That all this was good was shown by the sterling commendations received in the middle of December 1944 from Major General *Manton S. Eddy*, Commanding General of the XII Corps, and Major General *Willard S. Paul*, Commanding General of the 26th "Yankee" Infantry Division, for whom they were slugging it out with the enemy,

and facing "some of Germany's finest troops", according to General Eddy.

Dividends on the late Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair's investment were in the process of being paid off! And the 761st continued to roll forward! And they captured the Saint Suzanne Farms, after having taken Rodalbe, the original objective of Provisional Task Force A.

From the Saint Suzanne Farms they battled on, taking Marimont, Kerpriche, Guenestroff, Guebestroff, and shelling Vergaville, ever pushing the enemy back, back, and back. And on the night of November 20, the infantry moved into the town of Kerpriche, and the attack on Dieuze and Benestroff, the latter the 26th Division objective for this phase of the offensive, was prepared for.

The elements prepared for the attack on Dieuze, and the co-ordination of plans was completed. The Fourth Armored Division was still in the area, hovering on the flanks of the 26th Division, looking for an opening, but all the heavy work was being done by the tanks of the 761st Tank Battalion, which were asking no quarter and giving none! And then came the attack on Dieuze.



*The New Bat.
Supply Officer*

First Lieutenant Joseph O. Kahoe, Jr., Washington, D. C., who commanded the first platoon of 761st tanks to ever cross the German border, on December 14, 1944, in Able Company, and who made a brilliant counter-attack on his own initiative and captured Wuisse, France, on November 15, 1944. He was later in Baker Company, and then in September 1945 became the Battalion S-4, replacing Captain Philip W. Latimer. One good man stepped into another good man's shoes! Was originally from Alexandria, Virginia (a suburb of Washington).



Chapter VIII

Crashing Over

It was the 761st's Assault Gun Platoon which turned in the biggest part of the work in the battle for Dieuze, which, by the way, was a tough spot, and was not taken until after the Nazis had withdrawn, for when the infantry entered the town the first time, they were forced out by the frenzied German attack.

But the Assault Gun Platoon fired on the town on November 20, and it did such an excellent firing job that Major General *Paul*, commanding the division said that he had never seen a better demonstration of firing by weapons of that type before, and the combined attacks of the doughboys and tankers forced the Germans to withdraw, and the town was entered, and held. And then, Combat Command A, of the Fourth Armored Division came through, as previously planned. The passage had originally been set for November 19, but the town was not firmly in our possession on that date, as a German counter-attack had forced the infantry to withdraw. But it was re-occupied on the 20th, for keeps.

Encountering more minefields the 761st continued to move forward, with elements of the 26th Division, and passed through the minefields and road blocks, to Benestroff, the Division objective.

Following the taking of Dieuze, the units set up in front of Benestroff, after having traversed more than twenty miles of the Forest De-Bride, et-De-Koecking, and prepared to assault the division objective on schedule.

The assault took place, and the first American troops to enter the town chosen by the higher-ups as the first Division objective was a platoon of light tanks from Company "D", commanded by First Lieutenant *Lawrence R. Bagwell*, of Palestine, Texas,

The Fourth Armored Division was reported to have "taken" the town of Dieuze, according to YANK magazine, but they failed to say that all the heavy work was done by the 761st Tank Battalion which battered the town into submission, or that the Assault Gun Platoon did the most beautiful piece of firing it ever performed there at Dieuze, and that after they had gotten the town, the 761st Tank Battalion followed its instructions to let Combat Command A, of the 4th Armored come through—after the 761st had done the job!—But, that's what happened at Dieuze. And Jerry kicked hell out of us again at Honskirch! — Yep, it was no walkaway! —

which had been working with the 26th Reconnaissance Troop. This platoon set up road blocks, and performed guard service. Incidentally, one section of this platoon was commanded by Sergeant *George Riley*, of Detroit Michigan, a well-known professional boxer in civilian life.

One of the first signs of the enemy collapse at Benestroff, after a terrific shelling along the railroad, was the appearance of a France woman with a white flag, on the edge of the town, and shortly after that the Germans gave up the fight.

But there was no stopping for the drive was on, and it was the desire of General *Patton* to crash into the Reich at as many points as could be penetrated, and the 26th continued to move forward.

Bassing, Bidestroff, Inswiller, Torcheville, Nebing, Neufvillage, and the important road junction town of Albestroff fell to the onslaughts of the tank-infantry teams, which were now moving as smoothly co-ordinated units.

The stout attack against the approaches to Honskirch, and its surrounding vicinity, had really jumped off from Torcheville, at 0730 hours, with five Charlie tanks, and four Assault Guns, being attached to the 328th Regiment. The terrain was still muddy from the waters of the dam at Dieuze, which had been cracked by the dive-bombers of the Tactical Air Force, and had flooded many square miles of country.

Two and a half hours after attacking Munster, that town was entered, and then began the grueling fight to hold the ground gained, and make further penetrations. Three casualties were sustained in entering Munster.

But, after that, for fifty-one long hours the enemy attacked and counter-attacked, and the tankers, and

First Into First "Yankee" Division Objective

First Lieutenant Lawrence R. Bagwell, of Palestine, Texas, who led the first American troops into Benestroff, which was the first Division objective of the initial phase of the 26th Infantry Division's "big offensive" in the Saar Basin, when the 761st jumped off on November 8, 1944. His platoon of light tanks from Company "D" was the first U. S. unit to enter the town.



He Carried a Section Into the First 26th Div. Objective

Sergeant George Riley, Detroit, Michigan; tank commander in Dog Company, and former ranking middleweight boxer, who was in command of one section of First Lieut. Bagwell's platoon of Dog tanks, which were the first American troops to enter Benestroff, France, in November 1944. The town was the first Division objective of the 26th Division's initial "big offensive" when the 761st jumped off on November 8, 1944.



their infantry support, repulsed three bold counter-attacks thrown by the enemy armor and infantry. All the while the enemy was throwing in a constant artillery barrage, into this communication center, a natural gateway to Honskirch, which the Division Intelligence reported "was teeming with enemy armor".

The 81 mm Mortar Platoon went to work at 0200 hours on November 25th, in a driving rain, setting up their weapons and firing continuously during the rest of the night, and morning. They were unable to operate from their half-tracks, due to the mines, and so set up on foot in the mud, and fired their missions.

The going was getting rougher and rougher, and Jerry was putting everything he had into the fight, all his weapons and men, but the 761st moved out, and moved on towards Honskirch.

Here the battalion encountered a replica of the action at Morville, and for some reason entered into a position which got Company "C" caught between a German artillery cross-fire, which knocked several tanks, and killed a number of men.

The Mortar Platoon began a barrage on Honskirch, at 0700 on the morning of November 25, and fired at half-hour intervals, from all the mortars. The town was set afire, and then the mortars threw in ten to fifteen rounds at 15 minute intervals, and in turn received a heavy shelling from the Germans in a barrage which lasted about ten minutes, but seemed like 90 minutes to the mortarmen. When the shelling ceased five mortarmen had been hit, and were evacuated with some infantrymen of the 26th, to first aid and safety. In the afternoon the mortars were moved about 700 yards on the left flank, and then the battles continued.

The wounded mortarmen were: Staff Sergeant *Howard Hambrick*, of Chicago, Ills.; Sergeant *George T. Pennington*, Little Lake, Arkansas; Privates: *Leroy Whitley*, Nebraska; *William E. Anderson*, Branchville, South Carolina, and *James L. Beander*, of Jamaica, New York.

Meanwhile Captain *Charles A. Gates* had relieved the commander of Company "C", and was directing the activities of that company. Platoons under First Lieutenant *Thomas E. Bruce*, of Fort Scott, Kansas, were in action, in the direct line of the German cross-fire, and were receiving a terrific pounding.

The Assault Guns came to the rescue, and drop-

ping white phosphorous on the action, the elements were enabled to withdraw, after the losses of tanks and men, and the attack fizzled. The infantry elements withdrew back to Munster. It was the first setback of any consequence since November at Morville.

Altswiller, Pisdorf, and then Sarre-Union, the first major town encountered since Chateau-Salins, were attacked, and on December 2, Sarre-Union fell, after a hard battle.

The capture of Sarre-Union was a costly battle for the infantry, for the German *11th SS Panzer Division*, and elements of the *13th SS Panzer Division*, were putting in strong counter-attacks, which finally resulted in the infantry withdrawing on December 3rd, after having lost many men.

The 26th Division Journal reports that at 1100 hours on the 3rd the enemy armor counter-attacked in force, and gained strong positions in the town.

Then at 1310 hours that afternoon the tanks of the 761st were sent to engage the enemy, in the wooded area on the eastern edge of the town, and within two hours, after bitter fighting, the enemy armor was compelled to withdraw again, and the Division elements re-entered the town for keeps. The Jerries were never able to dent the defensive position of the 26th after that, and the battle moved on to the town of Keskastel, and nearer the Maginot Line, and the German border.

Our own casualties from the stiff armored battle at Sarre Union were five men wounded. They were: Sergeant *James Stewart*, 558 Avondale Avenue, Toledo, Ohio; Sergeant *Joseph A. Bates*, Baltimore, Md.; Corporal *Richard E. Budd*, 3819 Georgia Avenue, NW., Washington, D. C.; Pfc. *Floyd W. Washington*, Carrollton, Georgia, and Pfc. *Prince J. Jordan*, Route 4, Box 155, Timmons ville, South Carolina. Sergeants *Stewart* and *Bates* later received Bronze Star Medals.

During this time Company "C", which had been doing the hardest work and suffering the heaviest losses, was reduced to a total strength of 58 enlisted men, and the entire battalion was sorely in need of replacements, but the problem which bothered Colonel *Hunt*, the commander, was "where will trained replacements be secured?"

Early in December, Company "B" struck the Maginot Line defenses at Achen and Etting, where air support from the P-47s assisted them to reduce the pill-boxes and plow through. Company "A" hit

through at the same time, in another spot. Near Oermingen, Company "C" had slugged its way through the Maginot Line, and all the companies were poised neared the German border.

They were on a line due east of Sarreguemines, the largest Saar town between Saarbrücken and Strasbourg, and on December 9th the Maginot Line had been pierced, and the tanks were assembled at Woelfling, where there were reports that the battalion was waiting for the 12th Armored Division to make a drive through.

But, as usual, the 761st continued to carry the weight, and it fell to Companies "A" and "C" to push over the German border, through some of the most heavily mined territory ever encountered by the battalion.

Company "A" fanned out on the right, taking a road which passed through the Bellevue Farm village, and Company "C" took the road to the left, and the two units moved forward, with the enemy contesting every move. Air support continued to aid the tankers, and there was little the infantry could do, due to the large number of mines and booby-traps infesting the area. The attacking force crossed the major highway leading from Sarreguemines to Bitche, and continued to push forward.

The Blies River was crossed, with the engineers doing a good job under fire, and the attackers swept on. Company "A" firing on Bellevue Farms smashed that point so completely that not a single house was left standing intact.

And on December 11, the 87th Infantry Division infantrymen relieved the tired fighters of the 26th Division, but for the 761st there was no relief, and on the 14th of December the 761st had three companies to crash over the German border. Company "C" went over, pushing as far as Reinheim, and halting. Company "A" came over about the same time, and Lieut. Kahoe's platoon got over first, going to Peppenheim. Company "B" followed the route of Company "A", in crossing the border, and on that day, a SHAEF Communique said, in part: "*Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's 3rd Army infantry and armor slammed into German territory at a new point after crossing the Blies River above Sarreguemines*". That was the 761st, with the 87th Division!

Sergeant James W. Nelson, of Detroit, Michigan, commanded the first tank of Company "A" to cross the German border, on December 14. His was probably the first 761st tank to cross the border. In

Company "C" the first tank over the border was that one commanded by Second Lieutenant (then Staff Sergeant) Moses E. Dade, of Washington, D. C.

Members of these first tank crews to roll into the Reich were: With Lieut. Dade (then Staff Sergeant): Technician Fourth Grade Roosevelt Whitaker, Philadelphia, Penn., Technician Fifth Grade William J. Donaldson, Cincinnati, Ohio, Private First Class Nathaniel Dyson, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Private Twyman E. Bentley, Miami, Florida.

With Sergeant Nelson: Technician Fifth Grade William Y. Young, of Hempstead, New York, Corporal Robert L. Kitchen, Plant City, Florida, Private First Class Willie J. McCall, Birmingham, Alabama, and Private Joseph W. Singleton, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

* * *

For many of the members of the 761st the town of Honskirch will hold burning memories which will live for years. The town itself was a junction point for highways going in all direction, and was located northeast of Albestroff. Two small streams crossed the path from which the 761st was approaching it after leaving Munster, and beyond Honskirch were several points with high elevation, from which the enemy held a commanding view and clear observation of all the approach routes to the town. On the left side of the road from Munster lay still more high ground, with heavy woods, from which the enemy also held advantage posts, and in these places he had planted strong forces, with abundant armor and artillery and mortars. In fact the tanks had to pass through the right edge of the Bois de Givrycourt, to get up to Honskirch. The natural defensive strength of the area, made stronger by Vittersbourg, Givrycourt and Altwiller, which were around it, made it a difficult obstacle. But the 761st attacked Honskirch, and it was hellish there.

It was Lieut. Bruce's platoon which went forward in Company "C", leading the attack. After Private James Welborn, of Jonesville, North Carolina, driver for Second Lieutenant (then Staff Sergeant) Frank C. Cochrane's tank, had been killed, following a shrapnel hit on the vehicle, Welborn's body fell forward over the levers, and in some manner, caused the tank to back up until it stopped near the edge of the woods off the road. Private Frank Greenwood, of Chicago, Illinois, the gunner, had both legs

blown off and he was evacuated from the tank by *Cochrane*, who pulled his intact body to a ditch half filled with water, where they sought shelter. *Greenwood's* head was kept from being submerged by being rested on the heel of *Cochrane's* left foot, and the enemy observers spotted them, and began "walking" mortar shells up the ditch, until they had come within 25 yards of where the men lay. *Cochrane* had already said his "good-byes" to the folks back home, said "The Lord's Prayer", and "The 23rd Psalm", and made that one-second kaleidoscopic review of his whole life, and was waiting for the end, when out of the sky there came the trailing tails of white phosphorous shells being fired from the 105 howitzer of Sergeant *Robert A. Johnson's* assault gun tank, aiming at the enemy mortar positions. This fire lifted the enemy attention from the men in the ditch, and they were able to crawl to safety, with *Cochrane* carrying the wounded *Greenwood*. But it was like a story-book affair, for Sergeant *Johnson* did not know that the injured men were in the ditch. He was firing white phosphorous shells simply because he didn't have any other kind! But the smoke from those shells covered the scene with a white cloud which permitted the endangered tankers to crawl up the ditch to safety. It was a lucky accident! And hundreds of infantrymen also got out of that "hot spot" under *Johnson's* smoke!

Back in the assault gun tank when Sergeant *Johnson* had ordered Gunner *Elwood Hall*, of Philadelphia, Pa., to fire, *Hall* had replied: "We've fired all our ammo, except white phosphorous, Sergeant *Johnson*!" And Sergeant *Johnson* unhesitatingly answered: "Fire that!", and Loader Private First Class *Jacob R. Myles*, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, whistled softly as he shoved the white phosphorous shells into the breech. And none of it would have happened to save *Cochrane* and his men had not Major *Russell C. Geist, Jr.*, then Battalion Operations Officer, come through the area, and finding Sgt. *Johnson's* assault gun there, showed the crew a new route over which they could travel to rejoin their comrades of the platoon, from whom they had become separated, and the sergeant had gone in, firing as he went!

It was here also that Corporal *Buddie V. Branch*, of Dayton, Ohio, became a one-man rescue squad under intense enemy shelling, as he dismounted from his "B" Company tank, and coolly inspected six disabled tanks, and aided in the evacuation of

seven litter cases of wounded, carrying each of them nearly three hundred yards to safety, while Jerry peppered away with mortar, small arms, and machine gun fire, with 88s interspersing, during that hellish cross-fire attack.

And here "Cool Stud", the rooster-mascot of Sergeant *Daniel Cardell's* tank crew of Company "C", was summarily reduced from Technician Fourth Grade, for his conduct under fire, when the battle-loving chicken left his tank for the confines of a foxhole, over on the right flank!

Here, too, was killed Technician Fifth Grade *Lane Dunn*, of Scottsville, Kentucky, driver of the assault gun tank in which Captain *Charles A. Gates* was serving as a crew member that day as loader in the lead tank. Capt. *Gates*, too, was wounded.

Corporal *Ardis E. Graham*, of Raeford, North Carolina, and Private *Coleman Simmons, Jr.*, of Detroit, Michigan, both of Company "C", were also killed that day. *Graham* had just a while back, at another town, shot up a haystack which concealed a Jerry gun position, from his tank.

* * *

It was rough work there at Honskirch, and Jerry kicked us there, but the 761st roared back, and continued to advance, until it crashed over the borders of the Reich. It was the first time in history that Negro tankers had ever been on German soil!

And during the period Major *John F. George*, had become the Battalion Commander, relieving Colonel *Hunt*, who returned to the 17th Armored Group, on November 29.

The going had not been easy, for the tankers of Baker Company had turned in a fire mission in the vicinity of Weiswiller and Woelfling, directed at a woods, in which were concealed an estimated 30 enemy tanks. It was Lieutenant *Harold B. Gary's* platoon, and they attacked the woods, firing from a range of 3,000 yards. Lieutenant *Gary* knocked out three tanks and one half-track! Staff Sergeant *Jack Mitchell*, of Camden, South Carolina got one tank: Captain (then First Lieut.) *Samuel Brown*, of Charleston, South Carolina, knocked out a half-track, and two other tanks were kayed with no one being able to fix the responsibility for the shots that knocked them out, in the platoon.

Breaking through the Maginot had not been an easy task, either, for the shells from the tanks' 76

mm cannon, and the 155 howitzers also, hit on the pill-boxes, and bounced off like rubber balls. It took the Air Corps and the combat engineers to demolish them, after the concussion from the shells had temporarily dazed their occupants.

But the point was, that the Maginot had been broken! And the men had pushed their vehicles right on through and over the borders of the Reich.

And late in 1945 the roped off, and taped off areas in that sector still bear the red triangle sign reading "Mines", as mute testimony that it was not a foot-soldier's war through there, where the most heavily mined and booby-trapped part of the line was, but a war for the armor, on both sides!

. . .

The 87th Infantry Division relieved the 26th "Yankee" Division in the line on December 11, 1944. The 761st Tank Battalion crashed over the German border on December 14th, but there was no relief for the 761st. For they got orders to dash to the Ardennes into "The Battle of The Bulge" against Von Rundstedt's sweeping drive, and so they road-marched from Germany and France, to Libramont, Belgium, between December 24, and 30, eating their Christmas dinner at Wuisse, France, which Lieut. Kahoe's self-staged counter-attack had taken. They streamed northwards with other Patton armor to the relief of Lieutenant General Courtney S. Hodge's hard-pressed First U. S. Army, around and above Bastogne, and on the last day of 1944 they were again in battle with the enemy. More history was to be made — but, before they left, here's the recognition their work had received from the Commanding Generals:

HEADQUARTERS XII CORPS
Office of The Commanding General
APO 312, U. S. Army

AG 330.13 (G-1)

SUBJECT: Commendation

9 December 1944

TO: Commanding Officer, 761st Tank Battalion, APO 403, U.S. Army.

THRU: Commanding General 26th Infantry Division, APO 26, U.S. Army.

1. I consider the 761st Tank Battalion to have entered combat with such conspicuous courage and success as to warrant special commendation.

2. The speed with which they adapted themselves to the front line under most adverse weather conditions, the gallantry which with they faced some of Germany's finest troops, and the confident spirit with which they emerged from their recent engagements in the vicinity of Dieuze, Morville les Vic, and Guebling entitle them surely to consider themselves the veteran 761st.

(s) M.S. EDDY

(t) M.S. EDDY

Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding

AG 20122

1st Ind.

WSP/CAH/Jrw

HEADQUARTERS, 26TH INFANTRY DIVISION APO 26, U. S. Army

14 December 1944

TO: Commanding Officer, 761st Tank Battalion, APO 403, U.S. Army.

It is with extreme gratification that the Corps Commander's commendation is forwarded to you. Your battalion has supported this division with great bravery under the most adverse weather and terrain conditions. You have my sincere wish that success may continue to follow your endeavors.

(s) W.S. PAUL

(t) W.S. PAUL

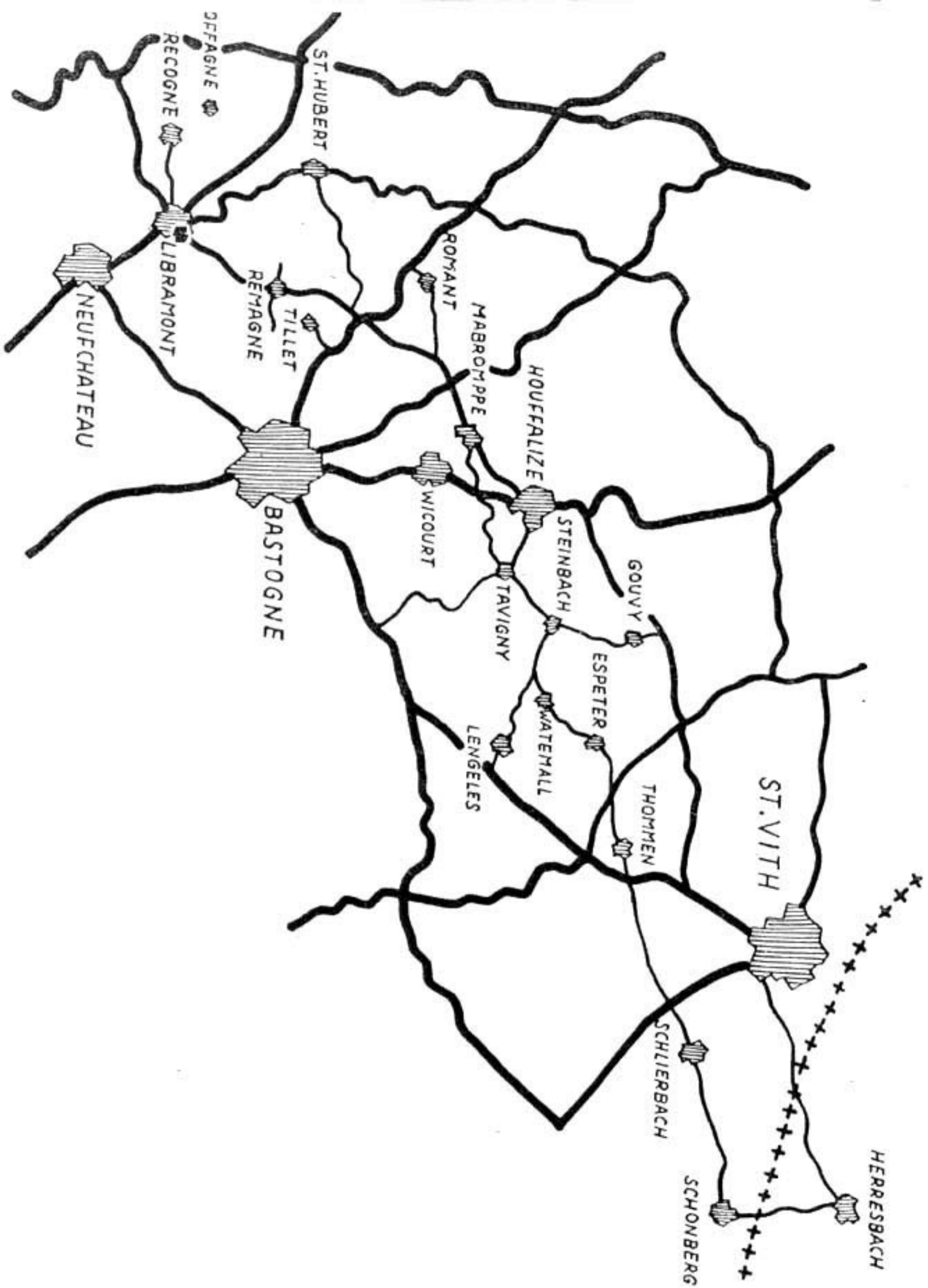
Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding.

. . .

The late Lieut-Gen. McNair's contentions were being well proven by these Americans who were fighting as Americans, and a part of the greatest Army in the world, here on soil hallowed by the feet of their fathers more than twenty-six years before. They had moved to the field of battle over roads travelled by their fathers in World War I, and they were the living examples of the fact that their Motto "COME OUT FIGHTING" was real!

PHASE TWO

INTO THE BULGE



Chapter X

Into The Bulge

After having moved approximately 65 miles during the preceding period, through heavily fortified enemy positions, through the Maginot Line, and into Germany between (Saarbrücken and Strasbourg), the 761st pulled out for Belgium with the Third Army, and arrived at Offagne, under weather condition far more adverse than any ever encountered in the Saar Basin. The snow was still falling, and the earth was covered to a depth of two to four feet, with ice all over the place. The whole picture was laid amid mountainous cliffs, and hilly points, where the enemy possessed the usual advantage of having excellent observation and strong fortifications, with plenty of armor and infantry to back him up. And here, again, was encountered the 13th SS Panzer Division, or what was left of it, after the beating administered by the 761st in the Saar.

The very first battle action took place on the first day of arrival, December 31st, and the New Year was celebrated by the capture of two towns in one day, with the battalion working with the 345th Infantry Regiment of the 87th Division. Rondu, Belgium was the first town taken, and then the tankers moved on and seized Nimbermont. It was an auspicious beginning for the year of 1945, which turned the clock as the last shot was fired at the retreating enemy forces leaving Nimbermont, and the 761st moved in!

Moving northeast from Offagne, the combat elements hit at St. Hubert not far from Marche, the strongest defense point on the German tip of their thrust. The action was taking place north and northeast of Bastogne then beleaguered and besieged by heavy German forces. The idea was to put as much pressure as possible on the tip projecting beyond

It was colder than blazes up there in Luxembourg and Belgium, and Sergeant Robert A. Johnson was killed in an accident in his assault gun tank on those icy slippery roads to "The Bulge", but "the veteran 761st" went on, with the newly-arrived and yet-green, 87th Infantry Division, which had yet to engage in a hard fight. And against great odds they pushed the Rundstedt hordes back — into the Reich! Approximately 60 miles they pushed them! St. Hubert, Tillet, Gouvy, Hautbillian, Watermall, Thommen, St. Vith, all those places heard the belching of the 761st cannon. And when it was over, Jerry was back on his heels, and again the 761st had crashed over into the Reich! —

the Bastogne line, and prevent the enemy from moving any additional forces to the aid of their troops which had encircled that town, and also to push them back as far as possible.

Another thrust headed towards Tillet southwest of St. Hubert, and between Able, Baker, Charlie and Dog companies, heavy damage was inflicted upon the enemy at Bonnerue, Recogne, Remagne and Jenneville, Belgium. All this was before reaching Tillet.

Baker Company, with First Lieutenant Harold B. Gary, of Abilene, Kansas, leading the attack, killed a hundred and fifty enemy infantry at Bonnerue. At Remagne Charlie Company knocked out three machine gun nests, and killed 14 enemy gunners. Dog Company knocked out 8 machine gun nests, killing 17 gunners and capturing seventy prisoners. These were preliminary actions, with the heavy fighting yet to come.

Gerimont, Bois-de-Lambay Fays, and Pironpie were attacked and taken, and the enemy was gradually falling back. It was bitter fighting, and the weather conditions were working tremendous hardships on the attackers. It became necessary to shift the plans of operation, and utilize the light tanks of Dog Company for service as supply units, when it was found that the trucks of the Service Company were unable to negotiate the icy hills and trails, which were no longer roads, but broken paths, made by the tank tracks across open fields, and through woods, where often the enemy had concealed artillery posts.

Rondu and Nimbermont were not more than fifteen miles due west from Bastogne itself, and the thrust beyond those towns placed the attackers north and northeast of Bastogne. The fight followed

the course of a small stream towards Pironpie, where the Ourthe River ran between that town and Bonnerue, and then the battle headed along the trails leading towards Tillet, two and a-half miles from the fine Marche—Bastogne highway. Here the Germans stiffened their resistance, and fought like mad, throwing all their armor and infantry into the fight.

It was here that the 761st again met the 13th SS Panzer Division, once before faced in the Saar Basin in November. And, the battle raged. General George S. Patton was making a desperate bid to slash back the German thrust north of Bastogne, and keep any help from reaching the attackers of the American troops surrounded there, and faced with annihilation, and the 761st was determined to do its part in the drive that Patton was staging.

The battle at Tillet raged for several days. And, in all fairness, the Germans staged one of the most brilliant defenses of the war at that point, taking everything that the 761st had to offer, and coming back for more, and throwing everything that they too had at the grim tankers, who were silently and desperately battling against unfavorable weather and terrain conditions, as well as the strength of the enemy.

The infantry had it tough here, for they were new to combat, and had yet to become the seasoned warriors that the 761st had showed itself to be, and the going was hard for the foot-sloggers.

The battle for Tillet began on January 5th, by which time the tankers had ploughed through heavy opposition from Offagne to come 39 kilometers, approximately 25 miles, in six days of fighting.

They Crawled 5000 Yards Through the Snow



When their tank had been hit by an AP shell from the 13th SS Panzer Division, in the Ardennes in January 1945, at Tillet, Belgium, these three 761st tankers crawled 5,000 yards on their bellies, through the snow, back to safety, in sub-zero temperatures. They made it, after hours of tortuous crawling and alternate running!

Left to right, they are: Sergeant William H. McBurney, of New York City; Sergeant Theodore Windsor, of Cleveland, Ohio, and Corporal (then PFC) Leonard Smith, of New York City. All are winners of the Bronze Star Medal and from Charlie Company.

. . .



Chapter X

Tillet

The simple caption of this Chapter "Tillet" tells its own story to the men of the 761st, for not a single man who went through the battle there will ever forget the memories of those rugged days, when the enemy withstood the most vicious armored attacks the 761st could fling at him, and infantrymen of the 87th Division died by the score, in desperate efforts to penetrate, and take the town, which they did not do, until the enemy wearied of the persistent and constant attacking of the 761st and finally withdrew.

Tillet was the beginning of the end, and no fancy words are needed to put the proper recollections of that battle into the minds of the men of the 761st Tank Battalion. They will never forget Tillet!

On January 5th, with Able Company firing, the attack began, and Staff Sergeant (now Second Lieutenant) *Theodore A. Weston* took his platoon and laid down a base of fire at enemy positions, causing them to withdraw, after having stopped advancing infantrymen of the 87th Division cold in their tracks, and killing a large number of them.

But the advance was short-lived, for the enemy braced, and held, and the fight raged on.

Dog Company, under Captain *Dick English*, was doing the supply work for the forward elements, since the condition of the terrain, and the weather had made it impossible for the trucks to bring up the ammunition and supplies needed to continue the battle. Dog Company would send up its tanks

Sergeant James W. Nelson, of Detroit, Michigan, commander of the first Able Company tank to roll onto German soil, back in December 1944, and probably the first tank ever manned by Negroes to ever roll into the Reich, had been killed on January 4th. Private Thomas S. Bragg, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, also of Able Company, and a popular member of the 761st orchestra, (before combat), had also died that day. On the day before, January 3rd, Bob Johnson had died, en route to the battle he so well carried out, and on January 5th Tech 5th Jessie J. Bond, of Gates, North Carolina, and Headquarters Company, also cashed in his chips. The 761st was winning, but it was paying for its victories with lives that could never be replaced. That was the price of war, and it made the men fight more viciously. That was a two-way proposition, for it was fighting for revenge, and it was also "COME OUT FIGHTING" or be killed! It was stark, it was grim, it was real! —

loaded with ammunition and other supplies, and the returning tanks would bring back the wounded infantrymen, and tankers.

Charlie Company got into the thick of the fight about the 9th of January, and proceeded to engage the enemy, although the company was short of men, and had few replacements. The total strength of operational combat personnel was 58 men.

With Able and Charlie companies in the fight, Captain *Gates* was the directing figure, but the actual combat operations fell to the hands and minds of several enlisted men, who were all staff sergeants, and platoon leaders. These men proved their ability to perform the duties of officers right there at Tillet, and before the end of the War in Europe three of them had received battlefield commissions.

The men who took over the direction of the fight were: Staff Sergeants: *Henry H. Conway*, of Chicago, Illinois, and *Johnnie Stevens*, of Atlanta, Georgia, both from Able Company, and *Frank C. Cochran*, of Beacon, New York, *Moses E. Dade*, of Washington, D. C., of Charlie Company, along with *William Kitt*, of Milstead, Alabama, from Baker Company. *Kitt* is now a First Lieutenant, and *Cochran* and *Dade* are Second Lieutenants. *Weston* of Able Company is also a Second Lieutenant. These men were very capably aided in their directing by Sergeant *Theodore Windsor*, of Cleveland, Ohio, from Charlie Company, one of the most intrepid

leaders of Charlie Company, who was transferred into the company.

Backing up the action of the fighters Able Company accounted for one 88 anti-tank gun, and a self-propelled 75, and Dog Company took a break from its supply chores to divert enemy attention from Tillet, in an action at Gerimont, where they destroyed an enemy mortar, blew up an ammunition dump, killing 50 Germans, and capturing ten.

At the same time, on the outskirts of Tillet, and fighting victoriously to get into the town, the platoons of *Dade*, *Cochrane*, and *Windsor*, accounted for eight machine gun nests, one Mark IV tank, an ammunition dump, and three anti-tank guns, killing 106 Germans, but still being unable to enter the town, had to sit, and fight on, making little headway.

It was in this neighborhood that Staff Sgt. *Conway* was caught on a hill, by 16 German tanks, and had to fight there alone, holding the enemy at bay, for more than an hour, with his lone tank, despite having been hit by the enemy guns. The rear hatch was blown off his tank. But the enemy did not pass, and other 761st tanks came to his assistance.

Staff Sgt. *Cochrane's* tank was hit three times, but he continued to front his platoon. The turret top was shot off *Dade's* tank, caroming almost fifty feet into the air after the high explosive hit it, but *Dade* continued to fire his weapons. It was a knock-down and drag-out battle with both sides pouring in everything they had, and asking and giving no quarter.

Sergeant *Windsor*, of Charlie Company, had a tank shot out from under him, and his driver Tech 5th *Willie J. Devore*, was killed. But *Windsor* got into another tank. Later, in this tank, along with Sergeant *William H. McBurney*, of New York City, and Private *Leonard J. Smith*, also of New York City, they hit a mine, and were struck by AT fire at the same time, and had to dismount from the tank. *Windsor*, *McBurney* and *Smith* crawled 5,000 yards from the snow-covered height where they were hit, through woods, valleys, and ditches, while exposed to the mortar, artillery and small arms fire the enemy seeking safety in rear areas unmolested by enemy fire. After hours of wriggling on their bellies through the freezing ice and snow, and alternately running for it, they reached a safe area. The fight continued at the front, in subzero weather.

After the 9th the enemy was no longer able to continue his fierce resistance, and withdrew in the direction of Fosset and Roumont, with the tankers pressing on his heels, and speeding his retreat every time he offered to stand and fight. The 761st chased him out of those two towns, and that meant that the Marche—Bastogne Road was closed. That was one of the best highways in Belgium, and had been a vital supply artery for the German operations in the entire area. The 87th Division blocked it off, from the rear, and the forward move continued.

* * *

But those five days around Tillet had written their stamp on every frozen tanker, who huddled inside the steel battlewagons, half frozen, chilled and numb, yet firing and firing and firing. When *Frank Cochrane's* tank got hit the third time that day, he radio-ed back: "They've hit me three times, but I'm still giving 'em hell!" It had boiled down to the story of "Kill, or be killed!" And so, for five bitter, cold, strenuous days the 761st slugged it out there at Tillet, against the crack 13th SS *Panzer* Division, and in the end it was the 13th SS *Panzer* Division which withdrew before the relentless persistency of these "veterans" of the 761st, who would not be denied the inevitable conquest which they sought, as they did they share in breaking the back of Von Rundstedt's breakthrough.

Tillet will always be remembered, as much for the cold, bitter weather, as for the furious fighting which saw neither side yield an inch without fighting for it, and staying in there to fight until the finish. The 761st won in the end.

Here during the thick of the fighting, Technical Sergeant *William T. Love*, of Cleveland, Ohio, and Tech 4th Grade *Lewis Smith*, of Middletown, Ohio, put in a recovery job in Service Company, which was brilliantly executed.

The 17th Airborne infantrymen in the vicinity were planning to withdraw to other positions in the rear, and the combat elements had left a tank in a draw near the town near the infantry outpost. The two men went in, with two tanks, with Captain *William L. O'Dea*, of Newark, New Jersey, and First Lieutenant *William H. Griffin*, of Marshallville, Georgia, to recover the disabled vehicle.

After getting down to the tank, Sergeant *Love* found the transmission in the disabled tank was

defective. There was one round of 76 mm ammo, AP, under the gear shift lever. Moving the shell out *Love* started the motor and drove the tank out under its power, while the enemy threw in a few shells. Out of sight of the enemy guns, coming uphill towards the maintenance area, the vehicle again came under enemy fire. Meanwhile the sergeant had waved the officers and Tech 4th *Smith* back, saying that he could get the tank out alone.

He was heavily shelled, and was driving with all the hatches of the Sherman open, for they had become frozen open after the crew had dismounted, leaving them open. He was unable to close them. The tank had been abandoned two or three days.

Sergeant *Love* watched four P-47's go over the enemy gun-sites, and then went down after the

tank, getting it out successfully, bringing it through an icy area, where the ground was frozen fast, and on making one turn the Sherman skidded fifty yards before coming to a normal position, and finally reaching the maintenance area. The tank was wanted because the enemy was expected to return to the area, and it was desired that as little American equipment as possible be allowed to fall into enemy hands.

. . .

And *Tillet* passed into history, and became another town that was only a shambles, after the battle had passed, and smoking shells had ceased to blast their reverberations through the hills, crags, peaks, valleys, and mountains around the area. It was just another "dead" town, where a hard battle had been fought.



Chapter XI

*With The 17th
Airborne Division*

Following the succesful engagement at Tillet, and the chase of the enemy to Fosset and Roumont, and out again, the 761st Tank Battalion began operations with the crack 17th Airborne Division, operating in an area to the north of Bastogne, heading towards Houffalize, a key point on the road from Liege to Bastogne, and moving along the road to St. Vith, near the German border and the Siegfried Line.

The tankers fought their way up to Wicourt, a town located four kilometers south of Houffalize, near Bastogne, approximately seven miles from Bastogne, and at that point the road from Liege to Bastogne was cut, and the fighting carried on to Tavigny, five kilometers across that highway. And another German lifeline was non-existent.

On January 24th Charlie Company entered a firefight at Stienbach, which is in Luxembourg, and made that the third country in which the 761st had fought. Here, one machine gun nest, one anti-tank gun, and 35 Jerries were liquidated. They were elements of a rear guard set up for delaying action.

Dog Company, performing screening action here, accounted for twenty Germans killed, and a number captured, before moving on towards Watermall, with the 17th Airborne paratroopers, who had been dropped into the breach, to close up any existing gaps between the American forces, and to further press the enemy back to his own territory.

Gouvy and Hautbillian fell to the combined assaults of the 761st and the paratroopers, after vici-

It was pretty rough in those days, for it was the month of January, and Belgium is bad enough in October. The fog hung low over the roads, and you could hardly see your hand before you face. The Jerries were withdrawing, but they were not running like they did back in France when the Third Army broke through into the clear after St. Lo. The enemy was determined that somebody was going to pay for that ground being bought so dearly there in "The Bulge". And somebody paid, but it was the enemy. For the relentless driving of the 761st kept rocking him back and back, and back, and Charlie Company got into Germany again, and closed the last route of the enemy in the St. Vith area . . . fighting with the vicious hard-hitting paratroopers of the 17th Airborne Division, who thought a heluva lot of those colored tankers, after they had worked with them for a while . . . and a Major General helped Jack Gilbert fix a tank, in the snow.

ous fighting, for it had become apparent to the enemy that he was fighting a losing battle, but instead of going into a full-fledged retreat, he chose to withdraw battling all the way, evincing a dogged determination to delay his opposition as long as possible to permit the safe withdrawal of all his better equipment and material.

The tankers then pressed forward to Watermall, where more bitter opposition was offered, and the enemy resistance was strong. Rains were now falling, and it had become necessary for the supply tanks to often move forward across open land, covered with snow, underneath which was nothing but swampy ground, and the tracks frequently bogged down in it. Eight operational combat tanks were lost to the battalion at one time, as a result of this terrain condition, and all recovery vehicles were pressed into service to eliminate the difficulties caused by these happenings. Even tanks were used to pull the stuck tanks out of the miry mud and mush.

Approximately six miles from Gouvy was the town of Espeles, just inside Luxembourg, and there the 761st, fighting with the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 17th Airborne, as it did at Watermall, forced the enemy back again, and took the town. The chief support here came from the 105 Assault Gun Platoon, which fired on a large patch of woods, which concealed heavy enemy forces and armor, and caused a large number of the enemy to surrender here.

Lengeler, Koppingerberg and Thommen fell, and when Thommen fell, the road from St. Vith to Bastogne was cut, and it was the third major supply route of the Germans, which the 761st had cut off from further use by the now-dazed enemy, who was no longer able to make the same fierce slashing attacks which had been thrown at the tankers as at Tillet. The game was almost ended in "The Battle of the Bulge".

Next came Kreigberg, Gruflange, Durier, and Oudlier, with stiff resistance still continuing, as the enemy saw his hopes of victory dwindling. And then the combat echelons moved into the St. Vith area.

These elements moved into this area with the 346th Infantry Regiment, with the mission of contacting and relieving elements of the Seventh Armored Division, and the XVIII Airborne Corps. The orders for this mission were received at 0800 hours on the morning of January 28, and by 1500 hours the same day the contact was established under heavy fire, for at St. Vith the Germans put all they had into one frenzied, mad, desperate last-stand!

And the 761st Tank Battalion relieved elements of the Seventh Armored Division and the XVIII Airborne Corps, as ordered!

Then, with another infantry regiment further plans were made. These plans called for a move to the east from St. Vith, to head towards the Siegfried Line, which was then not far away, with the 2nd Battalion of the 345th Infantry Regiment, and the move was ordered to begin on January 29th, 1945. The theme was in keeping with the policy of keeping the enemy on the run, now that he was falling back.

The move, as ordered, was begun on January 29, with Baker Company and elements of the 2nd Battalion of the 345th, aiding in the occupation of Schlierbach, but due to road blocks they could not actually enter the town.

A swift change in tactics followed, and the attack was shifted to a point northwards. During the night orders came to unload all trucks, and form a combat team, composed of the 3rd Battalion of the 346th Regiment, one tank destroyer platoon, and one tank platoon.

This combat team was to move through the 82nd Airborne Division sector, to a point on the north flank of that Division, and strike at the enemy, attacking him to the south. Indicative of the fact

that the 761st was now in high gear, is the fact that this was accomplished in just two hours!

The next day Baker Company, in support of the 2nd Battalion of the 345th Regiment, attacked the town of Huem, knocked out a number of machine gun emplacements, making it possible for the infantry to move into the town, and mop up.

The other companies operated with the 346th Infantry Regiment at Herresbach and Schonberg, on January 31st. And at Herresbach, on that day, Charlie Company had another fire-fight, and accounted for twelve enemy bazookas, one pill-box, one Mark IV tank, a mortar position, and killed 80 Germans.

On the following day Charlie Company, still with the 345th, moved out and engaged an enemy column moving east (in the direction of Germany), near Emmerscheid, knocking out four machine guns, one 75 mm assault gun, and killed 175 German infantrymen. *And it then was over the German border!*

And once again the tanks of the 761st had rolled over into the Reich, for the second time since they entered combat!

. . .

On February 2nd, the Battalion was placed under Major General *Harry L. Twaddle's* 95th Infantry Division, captors of Metz, with the 5th and 90th Divisions in November, and the 761st prepared to move to Holland, on February 3, 1945, having executed the second successful phase of its combat campaigns.

. . .

It was during this period of "The Bulge" that Staff Sergeant *Jack Gilbert*, of Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, was engaged in the repair of a track on his M-5 light tank, in the snow of the Ardennes, just about dusk, and needing help, looked around and saw the figure of an American soldier standing near. *Gilbert* was hauling supplies to the forward echelons then. Looking up, he spoke to the American, and said: "Here, give me a hand with this thing, will you?" Without hesitation the American moved over, and bent down to help the sergeant, calling to two other Americans in the shadows nearby to also come and give a hand. *Gilbert* got the shock of his life when he took a closer look, and saw two glittering silver stars on the shoulders of his willing assistant. It was a Major

General, and the two other Americans were colonels, wearing the eagle of their rank. But they helped him, without demurring, and when the job was done, *Gilbert* rose, thanked his helpers, who smiled, and then he climbed into his tank, and roared off into the night with his precious cargo for the comrades who were waiting for it up front.

The spirit of comradeship between the men of the 761st and the men of the 17th Airborne was a beautiful thing, and they willingly risked death for each other on many occasions. And the Commanding officer of the 17th Airborne is reported to have remarked, later, that he would prefer to have five tanks from the 761st than to have any larger comparable number from any other armored unit.

That was the sort of impression the work of the 761st made on the men who helped to break the back of the "Bulge", and bring victory in what was later referred to as the "losing the war for Germany".

. . .

As the result of these operations during the Ardennes Campaign the battalion had cut the enemy's St. Vith-Trier Road at a point five and one-half kilometers southeast of St. Vith, cut the St. Vith-Bastogne line at points on the Houffalize-Bastogne Road, at Wicourt, and had slashed the St. Vith-Bastogne Road at Thommen. It had crossed the Aachen-Cologne-Ettelbruck-Luxembourg Railway at a point five kilometers south of St. Vith, and thus prevented the enemy from exerting any further pressure on the beleaguered Bastogne area, from that direction.

Much of the fighting had been against tanks and other German armored units, with many self-propelled guns being brought into play. The 81 mm mortar platoon and the assault gun platoon had both had heavy work. The light tanks had been used to break trails through the ice and snow of the hilly country, and served as supply vehicles,

and assisted in evacuating casualties. The units had inflicted much more damage than was actually reported, and the combat elements had crossed the German border in the Schonberg area.

. . .

Many changes had been made in the Battalion set-up. Major *John F. George*, of Richmond, Virginia, former Executive Officer, had become the Battalion Commander, back in France, on November 29, 1944, relieving Colonel *Hunt*, who returned to the 17th Armored Group, after having been wounded, and awarded the Silver Star for his work with the 761st.

Major *George* remained in command, and brought the 761st through the Ardennes Campaign, after having led it into Germany down in the Saar Basin. First Lieutenant *Maxwell Huffman*, had become the commander of Able Company, replacing Yale-man, Captain *David J. Williams, II*, of Pittsburgh, who had to be hospitalized in the Ardennes, due to trench foot.

Staff Sergeant *Richard L. Sparks*, of Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, and Headquarters Company, had served as leader of the Assault Gun Platoon, since Captain *Gates* left that platoon, and until the arrival of First Lieutenant *James R. Burgess, Jr.*, of Chicago, Illinois, formerly a field artillery officer, who took command of the platoon upon his arrival.

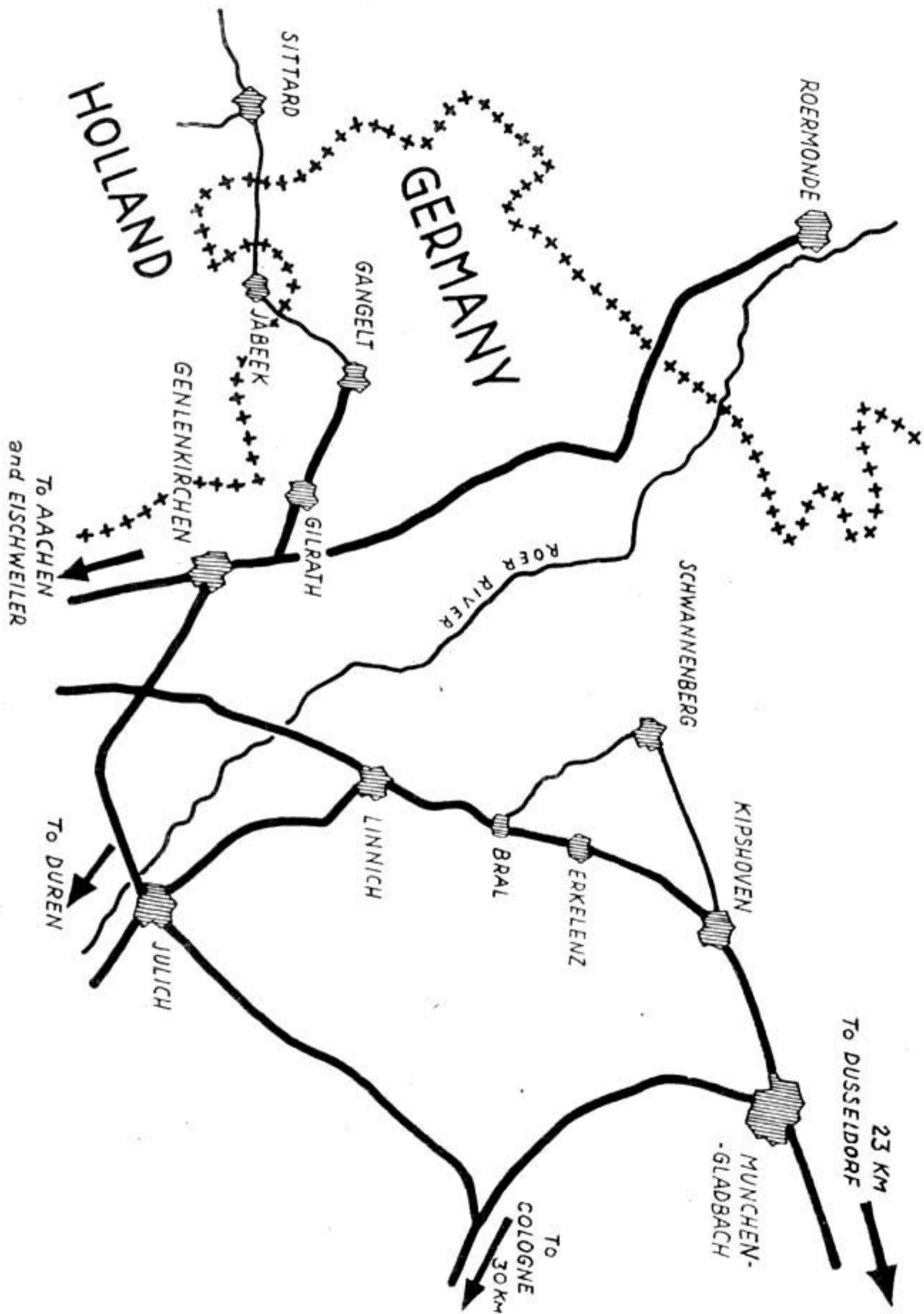
Two battlefield commissions had come to the 761st. They were given to Staff Sergeants: *Frank C. Cochrane*, of Beacon, New York, in Charlie Company, and *William Kitt*, of Milstead, Alabama, in Baker Company. Both became Second Lieutenants on January 20, 1945.

And the battalion had pushed the enemy back approximately 60 miles in the Ardennes Campaign, and kept the enemy from pushing further forward in the direction of Dinant, Namur, and Liege, Belgium, and on February 3rd the 761st moved out for Holland.



PHASE THREE

HOLLAND



Chapter XII

Holland!

The 761st moved out on February 3rd, and proceeded approximately 140 miles to Hermee, Belgium, and then set up its CP at Jabeek, Holland, west of Sittard, close to the German border, in the land of dykes and windmills.

It was assigned for duty with the 95th Division, of the XVI Corps, but after a few days was re-assigned to Major General Ira M. Wyche's 79th Infantry Division of the Ninth Army, and made its first combat missions with the 79th.

The first mission was to aid the 314th Regiment of the 79th in the capture of End, Holland. Baker Company operated on that assignment, capturing the town on February 23rd.

Meanwhile the 761st had received more than two-hundred new men, as replacements, these replacements coming from all types of army organizations, from the Service and Ground Forces, and it was necessary to give them tank training to fit them for the roles which they were to play in the work of the 761st, and so a tank training course was set up, and the training program was executed in Holland. Most of the new men received two weeks training, and then were given minor parts in some of the combat missions, in order to acclimate them to battle.

Some of them had taken part in the fights in "The Battle of the Bulge", seeing front line action for the first time in their Army careers. They performed well, and were destined to have a greater part in the major operations which were to follow in other countries.

Holland once was a place where all was quiet, peaceful, beautiful, and life moved along in tranquility. The nearest any of us had come to Holland was the "Tulip Festival" at Holland, Michigan, U.S.A. But, Jerry came, and he tore up that quiet old peaceful country, and the sight of the shattered long bridge at Maastricht, the looks on the faces of those Dutch kids, hungry and starving, and the click of the hardheeled German boots, brought war to Holland. Part of the program for ridding that country of the Nazis was the fighting of Major General William H. Simpson's Ninth U. S. Army, and so the 761st Tank Battalion was given a part in the play, and there to Holland came the big tanks of 'these veterans', to help purge the land of the Nazis. They did it! And — again crashed over into the Reich! They were unstoppable, these brown tankers of the 761st. —

They were men like Staff Sergeant Walter T. Sadler, of Washington, D. C., who became a gunner in Baker Company, and Sergeant O. D. Collins, of Teague, Texas, a former military policeman, who became commander of one of the assault gun tanks. Sadler had been a cook in a replacement battalion, prior to joining the 761st.

The performance of these replacements in the Bulge, and in their work in Holland, was the answer to the anxiety of Colonel Hunt back in France the previous November about the matter of replacements for his trained men, who were lost. The training program was supervised by Major George, the Battalion Commander, who split time from his duties at the front, to help plan the program, and see that it was carried out. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on February 16, 1945.

Just before Baker Company went out on the mission with the 314th, the former commander of the Battalion returned to duty, on February 17. Colonel Bates, wounded in France on November 8, 1944, came back from his long stay in the hospital in Great Britain, and resumed command of the battalion which he had brought overseas, relieving Major George.

Staff Sergeant Moses Edward Dade, of Washington, D. C., who commanded the first Company C tank to enter Germany, on December 14, 1944, became a Second Lieutenant on February 10, 1945, raising the total of battlefield commissions to three.

After Colonel Bates returned to the command, the units of the battalions moved from Jabeek, up to Milich, near the Roermond-Julich Railway, and

This smiling young man is Staff Sergeant Richard L. Sparks, from the little town of Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, who for eleven weeks was the sole commander of the crack 105 mm Howitzer Assault Gun Platoon of the 761st.

Sergeant Sparks took command, when Captain (then First Lieutenant) Charles A. "Pop" Gates, was wounded at Honskirch, France, in November 1944, and later took over Charlie Company, relieving Captain McHenry, who was injured firing in a tank. From the date of his assumption of the command Sergeant Sparks was the ramrod of the Assault Guns, and brought them through the "Battle of The Bulge". He was relieved upon the arrival of First Lieutenant James R. Burgess, Jr., late in February 1945, while in Holland. Sparks was a fighting commander, and did an officer's job in a most capable manner, under difficult conditions.



The Guiding Hand of the Assault Guns



First Lieutenant James R. Burgess, Jr., of Chicago, Illinois, a former field artillery officer, who came to the 761st in February 1945 in Holland, and took over the Assault Gun Platoon, and then became the commander of Charlie Company in July. One of the most intrepid and coolest of all the officers of the battalion. It was he who dived, fully-clothed, into a river in Austria, to hook a cable onto a tank underwater so that it could be pulled out. The men in his command tank in the Assault Gun Platoon swear by his cool, calm, deliberate command system and orders, and his quiet re-assuring personality. A gentleman and a real officer. Was also the "on-the-ball" Battalion Special Service Officer.



there cut that railway, and moved on to Erkelenz. And from Erkelenz the 761st entered Germany for the third time, going over the border to Schwannenberg, entering the Reich for the third time, on March 3, at a point between Gangelt and Gilrath. Here the 761st mopped up resistance pockets and captured Germans retreating from the Second Armored Division. The fighting was not fierce like that which had characterized the previous operations of the 761st, but it was no walkaway.

On March 7, 1945, the battalion formed into three task forces, along with the 79th Reconnaissance Group, and moved forward to Kipshoven. Kipshoven is located a distance of eleven kilometers (about seven miles) from Munchen-Gladbach, which was the home of the Reich Propaganda Minister, Goebbels, on the major road to Munchen-Gladbach. Munchen-Gladbach is the first major prize captured by Major General William H. Simpson's Ninth Army inside Germany—This operation helped to relieve any pressure which might have been exerted against the Ninth's operations at Julich or Geilenkirchen, and the advance carried the battalion 55 miles inside Germany.

The three task forces performed diversionary attacks along the Roer River, with the 79th Division.

On March 8 the Battalion moved out of Germany and Holland, under orders to proceed to Saverne,

France. The original orders had assigned the 761st back to the Third Army, but en route new orders were received which assigned it to the 103rd Infantry Division, of Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch's Seventh Army. The "Cactus" Division was then commanded by Major General Anthony C. McAuliffe, of Washington, D. C. who had been the Deputy Commander of the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, when he gave that famous "Nuts" answer to the German surrender ultimatum, during the Von Rundstedt breakthrough.

. . .

The third phase of the 761st's five major battle campaigns had been completed, and it had successfully carried out its missions in all respects. For the third time the units had crossed the German border, and in their operations with the 79th Division had performed supporting service for the "big drive" of the Ninth Army, which was never halted, once it had started. The battalion had kept the enemy relief from penetrating through areas where the Ninth was doing its heavy work, and had again contributed some of that fine performance which is given by these "separate" tank battalions.

And, so, down into France they rolled, for the next phase of their brilliant combat career, all the way to Saverne, in Alsace.





Charlie Company Spearheads

One of the Charlie Company tanks depicted knocking out a Siegfried pill-box at Nieder Schlettenbach, as Germans scurry out to surrender to the supporting infantrymen. This photo was made from a drawing by Bill Barker of the 103rd division.



PHASE FOUR

CRACKING THE SIEGFRIED

Chapter XIII

Forward

And so, down through Luxembourg and France rolled the big Shermans and the Mosquito Fleet (the light tanks), and came to a halt at Saverne, in Alsace-Lorraine, and prepared to operate with the 103rd Infantry Division.

The first operations involved the tanks of Charlie Company, with platoons commanded by First Lieutenant *Thomas E. Bruce*, and Second Lieutenants *Frank C. Cochrane* and *Moses E. Dade*, going out to punch a path up to the scene of the master operation. This was "Task Force Cactus", and it jumped off from Gundershaffen.

The mission of this task force was to penetrate the Siegfried Line, moving to Climbach, and prepare to attack towards Bobenthal in the Hardt Mountains.

Enemy, opposition was stiff, and Task Force Cactus failed to accomplish its mission, after moving towards Froeshwiller, and on March 17th it was dissolved after three days of life. But in the meantime, other gains had been registered.

On March 14th three regiments of the 103rd jumped off in a drive, from Obermodern, four kilometers northeast of Buxwiller, just south of the Moder River. Company "C" tanks were with these forces.

On March 15th, after fifteen minutes of preliminary artillery shelling, throwing white phosphorous shells, and smoking the town of Zutzendorf, one mile north of the main Sarreguemines-Hagenau Road, the attackers set out from the Line

The First U. S. Army wasn't the only American Army that got pushed back in December 1944, nor was the 92nd Infantry Division the only division that lost ground it once had taken, for down there in France we had to go back and re-take ground which had already been taken before, — and lost — by the Americans, for the Jerries had pushed the Seventh Army around some, too, back in December 1944. So, we went to get it back — with interest. But it sure was tough, for our mission this time was:

"TO BREAK THROUGH THE SIEGFRIED LINE AND GO TO THE RHINE!"

And that Siegfried sure was tough, but we made it, even though we hadn't had any rest or relief, since November 8, 1944, and had fought continuously in five countries in five months. Hell! That's the kind of stuff the 761st was made out of, the kind that can "take it" — and dish it out!

of Departure there at Zutzendorf, at 0645 hours in the morning.

Just outside of Zutzendorf, on the north side of town, a bridge was out, and this delayed the advance until the engineers could bridge the gap. The tankers fought on until twelve noon before taking Nieffern, the next town.

This was not easily accomplished, for this area was found to be very heavily mined, and the infantrymen lost many casualties to the Teller mines planted by the enemy. In fact, the infantry entered the town of Nieffern without the tanks, for they had suffered heavily, losing to the minefields.

Cochrane's platoon went in with five tanks, and lost three of the five to mines, with the other two later dropping out also. Many infantrymen were also killed by mines.

From March 15th to the 20th the tankers fought their way through Niederbronn Des Bains, to Lembach, and on to Bobenthal, in the Hardt range, where the battalion assembled for its biggest operation of the year.

The situation chart showed Lieutenant *Cochrane* on the right going north; Lieutenant *Bruce's* platoon was on *Cochrane's* left, going northeast from Mulhausen up to Zinswiller, through Woerth, and Climbach, to a road junction three kilometers from Bobenthal.

Lieutenant *Dade*, with his platoon, was on *Bruce's* left flank, moving northeast from Rothbach, on the edge of the Forest of Niederbronn.



The Bridge at Nieffern

Innocently inconspicuous and tiny, this spot was a hot one on the March into Nieffern, for here the enemy had mines aplenty, and Frank Cochrane's Platoon can vouch for that! The enemy blew this one. Here 103rd Division engineers repair it, after the fighting had moved on. The road behind it looks very peaceful now. But many 88s dropped on that quiet-looking road before Nieffern fell.



*It Was "Hot"
at Nieffern*

Although Lt. Cochrane's platoon lost three of its five tanks to mines, and later lost two more, it did some rough shooting before it quit! Here is how Nieffern looked after the action, as infantrymen clear the town of snipers.

The 761st was nearing the Siegfried Line! The action was approaching the Hardt Mountains, which ranged on a line fifteen to twenty miles wide, running northeast by southwest, with strong Siegfried defenses inside, and around them.

On the right flank of the 103rd Division was the 36th "Texas" Infantry Division, which was penetrating the open country heading northeast from Hagenau towards Bergzabern. The 761st was about fifteen kilometers from Hagenau, which was even then being hotly fought for by the Texas Division.

Meanwhile, the 14th Armored Division had been sitting in front of the Siegfried Line in this sector, probing for an opening, and hitting the Siegfried now and then, but failing to get through. They had probed at it in the midst of the mountain defense belt in the area between Bobenthal-Nieder Schlettenbach-Reisdorf and Klingenmunster. They had even gotten as far as Bobenthal previously, but had been kicked back. The 103rd had also tried the Siegfried, but it just wouldn't crack! It was one of the most rugged parts of the entire long chain of Siegfried defenses.

But the time was at hand when General Patch's forces would have to move their line forward. Beyond the Siegfried lay the plains of the Rhine, and beyond the Rhine lay Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Ulm, Augsburg, Munich, Nuremburg, and other choice prizes. And it was near D-Day in that area.

Some of the area traversed was ground which had once before been in American hands, but when the breakthrough came in the Ardennes, the Germans had co-ordinated another wide scale attack along the Seventh Army front, in December 1944, and had pushed the Seventh Army back for quite a few miles, and that ground was lost. So, it was being re-taken, and then the mission was to go on out and crack that Siegfried Line, for the entire U. S. front was moving forward, from Holland to the

borders of Switzerland, and the Seventh had to move in also. And so a big drive was planned.

In that big drive the 761st had its part, and it was not one of the minor roles, but definitely a major one, for the 761st was to crack that Siegfried Line itself! It was to do what the 14th Armored had failed to do, and that would pave the way for the moving of the Seventh Army front in that area, to keep pace with the movements in the rest of the line.

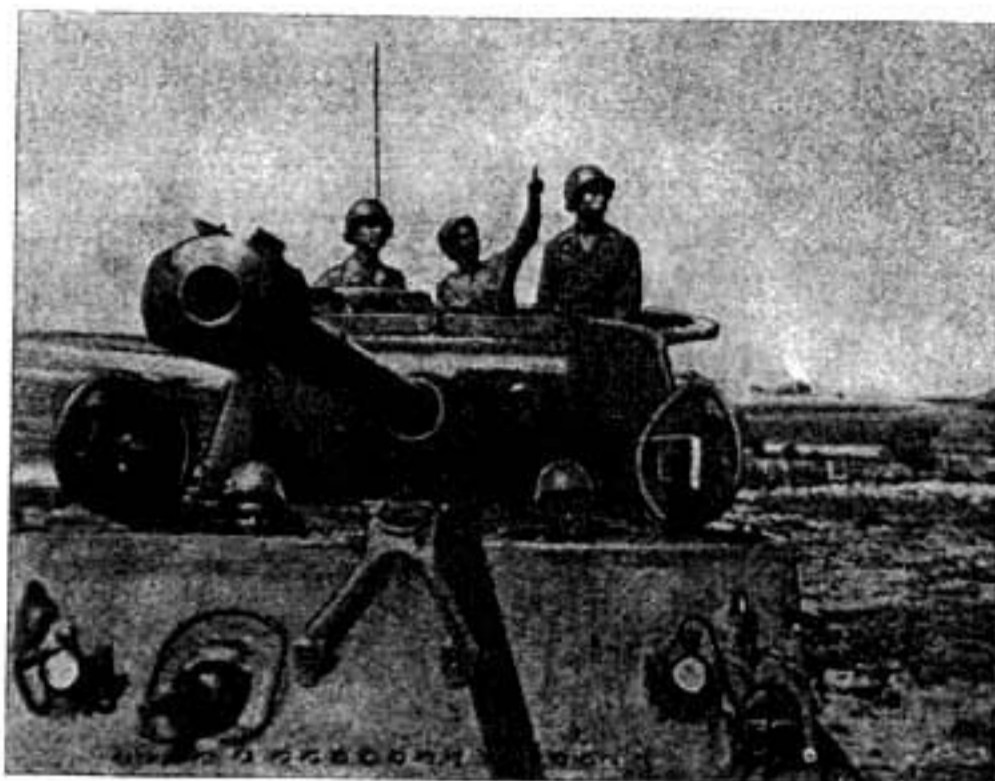
On March 21st "*Task Force Rhine*" was organized, and placed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bates, Commander of the 761st Tank Battalion. This task force consisted of: the 761st Tank Battalion, the 2nd Battalion of the 103rd's 409th Regiment, a detachment of combat engineers, and a reconnaissance platoon from the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

The mission of *Task Force Rhine* was: "To break through the Siegfried Line and move on to the Rhine River!!" Simple wasn't it? On paper.

On the left flank of the 103rd Division was the 42nd "Rainbow" Division, heading for the Siegfried Line. On the right flank of the 103rd was the 36th "Texas" Division heading for the Siegfried Line. Somewhere in the area on that left flank was the Tenth Armored Division, ready to exploit any opportunities through the Siegfried Line, and also preparing the way for the "Rainbow" Division. Behind the 103rd and *Task Force Rhine* was the 14th Armored Division waiting for these colored tankers to knock a hole in the Siegfried. What the Tenth Armored Division was doing for the 42nd Division, the 761st Tank Battalion, a *separate* battalion, was to do for the 103rd "Cactus" Division.

And, in front of the 761st stood the Siegfried Line and the Hardt Mountains — two heavily fortified and formidable obstacles! Beyond them lay the path to the Rhine! And it was D-Day!





Spearhead Tank

Here is the tank and the crew of the intrepid tank commander Sergeant Ervin Latimore, which spearheaded TASK FORCE RHINE through the Siegfried Line on March 22nd and 23rd, from Reisdorf to Klingenmunster, Germany, with the 103rd Infantry Division, of the Seventh Army.

This was the lead tank in task force, and it blazed its way over hazardous obstacles, through overhanging mountain cliffs, down through the heavily fortified German defenses of the Siegfried and the Hardt Mountains, overrunning the enemy gun positions, and starting that devastating attack upon the enemy motor and horse-drawn column depicted elsewhere in this chapter.

Way out in front of everybody, these brave men deserve the finest tribute that can be paid them, for their outstanding accomplishment. They spearheaded the task force from start to finish.

Shown in the tank are: (In the turret) Left to right: Staff Sergeant (then Sergeant) Ervin Latimore, Winston-Salem, N. C., tank commander; Private First Class Lincoln Deberry, of Lester, West Virginia; gunner; and Norman Harris, loader.

Beneath them in the open hatches, are, left: Private John H. Harris, of Philadelphia, Penna., assistant driver and bow-gunner, and (right) the driver.



Chapter XIV

Task Force Rhine (Part 1)

On March 21st operations began, with Captain Gate's Charlie Company moving out in front to soften up the approaches to the Siegfried, and pave the way for the movement of the main body of the task force. The scene was laid in mountainous settings, with concrete pill-boxes dotting the landscape, flanked by machine gun emplacements in the wooded hills, anti-tank gun sites, mortar positions, and plenty of enemy infantry, with steep overhanging cliffs on all sides, here in the towering Hardt Mountains. It was a formidable obstacle, but it had to be conquered.

The First Platoon of Charlie Company, commanded by First Lieutenant Thomas E. Bruce, of Fort Scott, Kansas, along with the 1st Battalion of the 409th Regiment of the 103rd, moved out to batter away at the town of Reisdorf, deep in the Hardt Mountains, and a natural Siegfried bastion, surrounded on all sides by commanding hills, in which the enemy had put his strongest weapons of offense.

The infantrymen were moving in through the high ground, and were combing the hills downward to the winding road at the foot of the steep mountains. Pill-boxes and camouflaged artillery posts were

Task Force Rhine was like one of those story book thrillers. Roaring through the black night, along precipices that towered out over abrupt mountain drops of one to two thousand feet, with all guns belching death at the hidden enemy, and braving the hail of fire that came from the formidable Siegfried Line pill-boxes, it fought its way through the whole Siegfried in three days, with those brave colored veterans leading the way. And the support which was due to have been provided by the Tenth Armored Division, and the 36th "Texas" Division did not come, so these varriours had to do it all by themselves. They rode so hellishly hard and fast that they went out of the range of their own artillery! But when the morning of March 23rd, 1945 came, the Journal reported at 0435 hours: "The town of Klingenstein was reached and secured!" And Klingenstein was on the other side of the Siegfried Line, and beyond the Hardt Mountains, and it was the gateway to the plains of the Rhine! Death and destruction lay behind Task Force Rhine, scattered all over its path. And when other American troops came through later, they asked this question: "WHAT ARMORED DIVISION WENT THROUGH HERE?" The answer: "The 761st Tank Battalion!" — That was "Task Force Rhine!" —

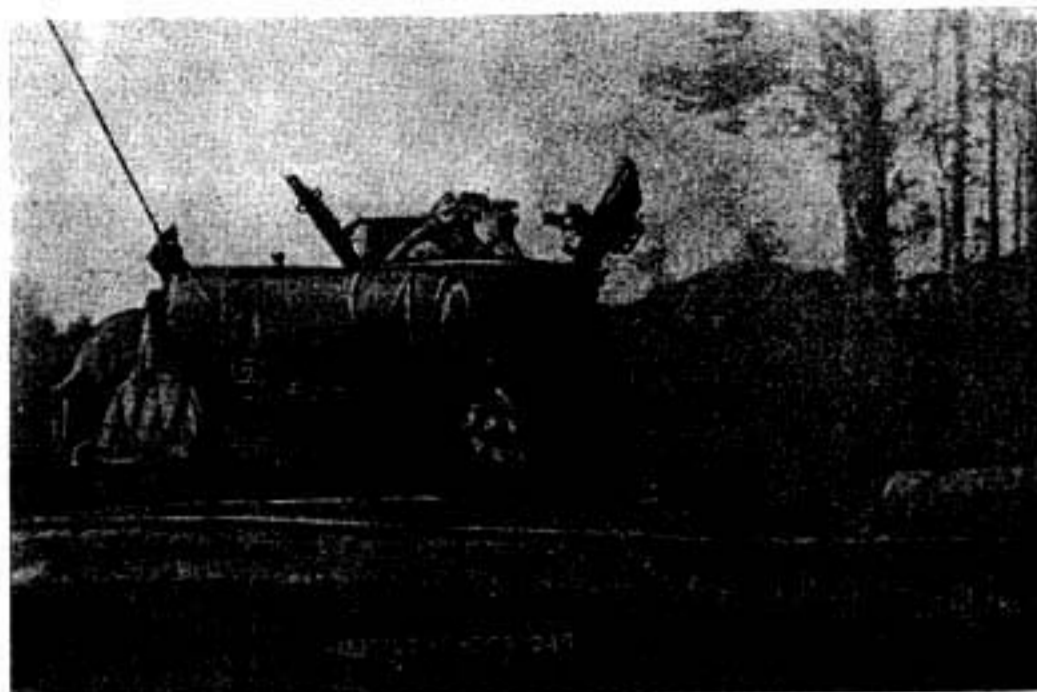
emplaced in the mountain sides on both sides of the narrow road and in the woods.

Lieutenant Bruce's platoon hammered away at these fortifications for a whole day, and finally reduced them to a weakened condition. And when the score was counted, it was found that between the tanks and the infantry of the 1st Battalion, they had knocked out: seven pill-boxes, one anti-tank gun, and killed fourteen Germans, capturing ninety more, and losing one tank.

And as fast as the tankers would reduce the pill-boxes, the combat engineers would crawl in with their charges of Composition C, and demolish the position by blowing it up.

Meanwhile, to the north, and about two miles away from Lieut. Bruce's platoon, Second Lieutenant Moses E. Dade, with his platoon, had struck out for the Siegfried town of Nieder Schlettenbach.

Dade's platoon reached the formidable Siegfried bastion town on the 20th of March, and immediately attacked around 0700 hours, and fought until a half hour after midday, getting some infantrymen into the town, and then being forced to halt due to blown bridges.



Come out Fighting!

On that hill by those trees, with smoke rising in twin spirals, is a Siegfried pill-box at Nieder Schlettenbach, which has just been knocked out by the 761st tank shown in this remarkable action shot by George Sanders of the 103rd "Cactus" Infantry Division, who was behind the tank!

The tank is that one of Charlie Company, commanded by Second Lieutenant (then Sergeant) Warren G. H. Crecy, of Corpus Christi, Texas (See: Chapter VI. (The Battle of Morville), "the baddest man in the 761st").

And here is the most vivid demonstration of the amazing fearlessness of this great fighting man:

BETWEEN THE OPENED HATCHES OF THE COMMANDERS TURRET, CAN BE SEEN TWO HANDS GRIPPING THE TRIGGER RELEASE OF THE 50-CALIBRE MACHINE GUN! THOSE HANDS ARE CRECY'S HANDS!

And he is pouring a rain of death into German troops scurrying from the pill-box he has just knocked out, and supporting enemy infantry in communications trenches on that hill. The gunner who fired the cannon that scored on this pill-box was First Sergeant William R. Burroughs, of Cleveland, Ohio, who gave up his first sergeant's job, to ride with Crecy! Few tank commanders go into battle with the hatches open, especially when assaulting so formidable an obstacle as the Siegfried Line! This photo was made during Charlie Company's mighty assault on the Siegfried Line between Nieder Schlettenbach and Erlenbach, and took place on March 21st, when Charlie was opening up the approaches for TASK FORCE RHINE!

Crecy's head can barely be seen just beneath his gloved hands. This tank was erroneously captioned a "614th TD" by the 103rd Division.

(Photo reproduced by McCarter and Carrington, 761st)



About four that afternoon First Lieutenant *Harold Kingsley's* platoon from Able Company, came in and relieved the Charlie tankers, who had fought continuously for six days. Lieut. *Kingsley* attacked the fortifications there at Nieder Schlettenbach, and fought until the following morning. His tankers accounted for ten pill-boxes neutralized, one self-propelled gun knocked out, twenty machine gun emplacements liquidated, and ten Germans killed. During this action, First Lieutenant *Maxwell Huffman*, then commanding Able Company, was seriously wounded by an enemy sniper, and died five days later. He was the only white officer to die during the battalion's combat period.

Following up the advantage given by this work of Able Company, Lieut. *Dade's* platoon renewed its assault on the 21st. The platoon was pretty well shot up, as was Lieut. *Frank Cochrane's* platoon, which had suffered such heavy tank losses at Nief-fern. But *Dade* attacked, and later on, the few tanks in his platoon were supplemented by what was left of *Cochrane's* platoon, and the combined platoon was placed under the command of *Cochrane*, and the assault continued.

Along the road from Nieder Schlettenbach to the next town, Erlenbach, there were some of the densest Siegfried fortifications in the entire chain, and there were as many as thirteen pill-boxes in the distance of two city-blocks (American blocks). Staggered pill-boxes, with interlocking communications corridors, AT guns, and machine gun emplacements, were encountered. The platoon was working with the 411th Regiment of the 103rd Division.

On the left flank was the 42nd "Rainbow" Division. On the right was the 36th Division. Behind the 103rd impatiently waited the 14th Armored Division, and somewhere in the area the Tenth Armored Division was roaming around.

Using tactics which rushed two tanks in at high speed, while the remaining tanks provided a protective fire cover, and then another pair in the same manner, Lieut. *Cochrane's* platoon fought its way into Nieder Schlettenbach after six hours of bitter fighting, blasting through pill-boxes built into the overhanging cliffs, which towered as high as 1700 feet above the road.

Under heavy fire the engineers of the 411th threw a bridge across the Lauter River, and the platoon

moved over, and continued the battle towards Erlenbach, on the 22nd.

The 411th slugged on at Erlenbach, with *Cochrane's* tankers pouring in a devastating fire, fighting during the night of the 22nd and on into the 23rd. On the night of the 22nd captured German prisoners told Lieut. *Cochrane* that they had been ordered to hold their Siegfried defenses until dusk, and then make a withdrawal to the Rhine. Evidently the enemy High Command had realized the weight of the foes opposing them and had decided to give up and make their at the Rhine, since their forces had been pushed back along the entire American, British, and French fronts.

Cochrane's tank gunners wreaked havoc on the fortifications, buildings and installations in the town of Erlenbach, another Siegfried bastion, and when the score was tallied there, it was found that they had accounted for tremendous damages.

Meanwhile, *Task Force Rhine*, proper, moved to the attack at 1600 hours on March 22nd, from the assembly point at Bobenthal. Moving amidst hills eleven hundred feet high, the task force crossed the Lauter River, going right, down towards the Forest de Wissembourg, three miles from the city of the same name, and to a road junction three kilometers away. Here a left turn was made and *Task Force Rhine* headed for Reisdorf, approximately five kilometers distant. It was moving along a secondary road which averaged 32 feet in width, and the tanks moved along in single file, dispersed.

Lieutenant *Bruce's* tanks and the 1st Battalion of the 409th pulled to the side and waited, as the task force, headed by Baker Company, and followed by Able Company, moved through.

The lead platoon in *Task Force Rhine* was commanded by First Lieutenant *Harold B. Gary*, of Abilene, Kansas, one of the hardest working officers in the battalion, and who had spent more days in the line than any other officer.

The first tank in *Task Force Rhine* was commanded by Sergeant *Ervin Latimore*, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and his cool, daring courage, as he stood out on the point of the column, out in front, alone, aroused the greatest admiration of all those who took part in the entire operation. His work on this task force also brought him a Silver Star Medal, as that of Lieutenant *Gary*, for him a Bronze Star Medal.



Tankers Frying Eggs With Infantrymen After Knocking Out the Reisdorf Defenses of the Siegfried

Shown with a group of doughboys of the 1st Battalion of the 409th Regiment, after having knocked out seven pill-boxes, and broken the Siegfried defenses at Reisdorf, for the passage of TASK FORCE RHINE, are several members of Lt. Bruce's First Platoon of Charlie Company.

In the photo are: Gaynor Thomas, Jr., Philadelphia, Pa.; Henry O. Bregettsy, Woodville, Miss.; and Edgar Hammock, Philadelphia, Pa. (Standing). Kneeling is Pfc. Ceaser J. Walters, Jacksonville, Fla., and sitting is John A. Easton, of Willow Grove, Penna. On EASTON's right is First Lieut. Thomas E. Bruce, Fort Scott, Kansas (wearing knitted cap). The action took place on March 22, 1945.



The infantrymen of the 2nd Battalion of the 409th Regiment were riding on the tanks of the two companies as they rolled through to slug it out at Reisdorf.

The embattled Germans could expect no help from the north, for there the *Dade-Cochrane* platoon of Charlie Company, with the 411th Regiment, had engaged and beaten them, and the engineers had reduced their concrete pill-boxes, with their high explosive "Composition C".

The results along that Nieder Schlettenbach-Erlenbach Road showed: Two anti-tank guns captured, 16 pill-boxes knocked out, eight machine gun nests liquidated, 150 Germans killed, and 400 captured, at Nieder Schlettenbach. And at Erlenbach: 8 pill-boxes had been knocked out, 9 machine gun nests put out of action, 115 Germans killed, and the devastating fire thrown here by the 761st caused the surrender of 1050 Germans. All this damage was done by this single Charlie Company platoon alone. And the platoon was made up of the consolidated tanks left operational from the 2nd and 3rd platoons of Charlie Company, after the rough fighting through the minefields near Nieffern up to Bobenthal.

The work of these Charlie crews at Reisdorf and between Nieder Schlettenbach and Erlenbach was of great importance to the ultimate success of the mighty spearing of *Task Force Rhine*, so well had the foundation been laid for the surge of armored strength which followed up these preliminary thrusts.

When platoon sergeant *Theodore W. Windsor's* tank got caught in a tank trap, he called for cover fire from Sergeants *Warren Crecy*, *Isiah Parks*, Charlotte, N. C., and *Daniel Cardell*, of New York City, and dismounted his crew with caution. After crawling 500 yards or more they began to encounter enemy machine gun, mortar and sniper fire.

Turning in a new direction they advanced further, and coming around a blind corner, ran upon a pill-box, which they had previously neutralized. Suddenly there was a loud explosion as a charge went off, and they realized that it was the combat engineers of the 410th, who had arrived to make the pill-box further useless by demolition on it. *Windsor* had then had three tanks knocked out from under him.

Taking part in the action at Reisdorf were the tanks and crews of: First Lieut. *Bruce*; Sergeants: *John A. Holmes*, of Chicago, Illinois; *Albert Z. Young*, of Bogalusa, Louisiana; *Elmo Johnson* (later First Sergeant of Charlie), of Topeka, Kansas; and Corporal *Dwight Simpson*, of Rock Island, Illinois.

On the road between Nieder Schlettenbach and Erlenbach, in the consolidated *Dade-Cochrane* platoons of Charlie Company, were the following tank commanders and their crews:

Second Lieut. (then Staff Sergeant) *Moses E. Dade*, Washington, D. C., commanding; Tech 4th *Roosevelt Whittaker*, Philadelphia, Pa.; *Twyman E. Bentley*, Miami, Fla.; Corp. *Nathaniel Dyson*, of Baton Rouge, La.; and Corp. *Shirley Gwynn*, of Washington, D. C.

Sergeant *Theodore W. Windsor*, commanding, Cleveland, Ohio; Sergeant (then Corporal) *William H. McBurney*, New York City; Corporal *John W. Stafford*, Weatherford, Texas; Corporal *Mozee Thompson, Jr.*, Palestine, Texas; and Pvt. *Robert P. Thrasher*, of Atlanta, Ga.

Second Lieut. (then Sergeant) *Warren G. H. Crecy*, Corpus Christi, Texas, commanding, First Sgt. *William R. Burroughs*, Cleveland, Ohio; Pvt. *Ned Moore*, Pamplico, South Carolina; Pvt. *Deabner Lacey*, Tyler, Texas; and Corporal *William Walker*, of Cleveland, Ohio.

Tech 4th *Isiah Parks*, commanding, Charlotte, North Carolina; Corporal (then Pvt.) *Christopher P. Navarre*, of Houston, Texas; Tech 4th *Jessie J. Glover*, Cincinnati, Ohio; Pvt. *William Washington*, Charleston, South Carolina; and Tech 5th *Robert L. Wade*, of Southern Pines, North Carolina.

Sergeant *Daniel Cardell*, commanding, New York City; Pvt. *Luther Goff*, Hartford, Conn.; Corp. (then Pfc.) *Leonard Smith*, Jamaica, New York; Tech 4th *Linson Ball*, Chicago, Illinois; and Tech 5th *Horace J. Clark*, of Winchester, Kentucky.

Second Lieutenant *Frank C. Cochrane*, of Beacon, New York, was the Platoon Commander of the final action, along this heavily fortified road.

* * *

And so, on through Reisdorf surged *Task Force Rhine*, with the tankers embarked on their most colorful combat venture. At close quarters tankers hurled hand grenades into courtyards and houses, flushing out the Germans within. Others of the

enemy took to the hills, and woods, as the task force moved on into the night which was then falling. Later that night these same enemy troops emerged after the main body of *Task Force Rhine* had passed, and attempted to ambush the task force's supply trains. The supply trains escaped the ambush and withdrew, and then were re-organized and fought their way back over the same ground, and continued on the path of the main body.

The supply train shanghai-ed two tardy tanks, General Shermans, to form the spearhead of the second fighting body, and then fired its way through the enemy forces, killing many.

Sergeant *Latimore* was still out on the point of *Task Force Rhine*, in Lieutenant *Gary's* platoon, and the fighting was pretty furious at this point, but *Task Force Rhine* forged on, with the infantrymen mounted on the tanks, and also flanking them in the woods.

Beyond Reisdorf, once it had been cleared, the task force split into two sections. One section went northeast towards Birkenhardt, and the other went due east towards the town of Bollenborn. The task force was now deep in the heart of the great Siegfried mountain belt, far into the very heart of the Hardt Mountains. There was no turning back now, no matter what happened. It had to be "Forward!" And heroes were being made by the minute. Gunners were running rampant with their weapons, as night came on!

* * *

The escape of the supply train was due in the main to the alertness of two enlisted men of Service Company, Corporal *James L. Mills*, of Ocala, Florida, and Staff Sergeant *Willie Black*, of Clear-

view, Okla., the Transportation Sergeant in the company.

Mills was driving the half-track leading the supply train, and when the enemy opened fire, the commander, Captain (then First Lieutenant) *Taylor*, dismounted to survey the situation. Technical Sergeant *Leonard J. Keyes*, of Port Jervis, New York, was also in the track, and was armed only with a 45 calibre pistol. *Keyes* was the 761st Operations Sergeant. Captain *O'Dea*, the Motor Officer, was also up in the front.

When the enemy attack began, *Keyes* followed Captain *Taylor* from the half-track, and the other personnel in it also, leaving only *Mills*, who met the situation without qualm, and though he had only two boxes of 50 calibre ammunition in the track, he immediately returned the fire of the enemy off to the right in the woods, and then threw a fire screen before the track a hundred yards ahead, preventing a group of Jerry infantrymen from advancing closer to the vehicle. Captain *O'Dea* was under the cover of this fire, looking for vantage points, and then Sergeant *Black* entered the picture, and walked the entire line of heavily loaded trucks and light tanks, having each one of them turned in the opposite direction, and then moved off to comparative safety in the rear, as *Mills* kept up his fire, standing alone in his track, the only protection then between the supply train and the desperate Germans! Firing short bursts to conserve his low ammunition supply, the Floridian managed to keep the enemy gunners and snipers occupied long enough for the train to make its way back to the rear, without casualties. It later developed that the supply train had advanced beyond the point where it had been expected to halt for the night.



Chapter XV

Task Force Rhine (Part 2)

The Birkenhardt column was met by heavy enemy artillery concentrations, and furious anti-tank gun fire, and was momentarily halted. The enemy had plenty of weapons in this area, many of them mobile. And so, Colonel *Bates* called for an artillery concentration on Birkenhardt from the Corps artillery, re-inforced by Division artillery as well, and got it. And nine battalions of artillery hurled their steel into Birkenhardt, and the town went up in dust. And before the dust and smoke had settled *Task Force Rhine* had moved in, and captured all the still-living dazed defenders, and moved through the town.

The Assault Gun platoon had taken several anti-tank guns, under fire, and forced the crews of others to desert them, and the Birkenhardt column moved on to its objective.

The Bollenborn column was met by heavy fire also, from enemy artillery mortars, and AT guns and was forced to withdraw. Everybody was throwing everything they had into the furious fighting at this point, and night was coming on. The Germans were putting up their stiffest resistance here in the heart of their mountain defenses, well realizing the fate awaiting them should they fail to hold their ground.

Two hours after the task force had moved through Reisdorf, the 103rd ordered it to continue north and east and to contact the Tenth Armored Division in Silz, a few kilometers east from the junction of the

The roar of the motors of the big Shermans, the ear-splitting sound of the huge cannon firing, and the crashing rattle of heavy machine guns going off, must have been terrifying to the people along the route of *Task Force Rhine*, as it came slashing through the dark night! And when it got too dark to see, (and there are no headlights shining on a tank in battle) these tankers fired a whole town, and made light for themselves! And continued on their way. — *Task Force Rhine* cannot be the story of any individual soldier, for it was the embodiment of teamwork at its best, as these colored tankers, and their infantrymen, blazed away at the enemy often hidden by the concealment of the night, but they kept blazing away, and before the sun rose the next morning *Task Force Rhine* had done its work, and the Siegfried had been cracked! And then, the 14th Armored Division, a whole division!, rolled through the hole the 761st had made. And they had faced troops from among 14 different German divisions on that epic march! —

Birkenhardt-Lauterburg Road, along which *Task Force Rhine* was moving.

The 14th Armored Division was still waiting to the rear of *Task Force Rhine*, and if these Negro tankers and their support succeeded, then the Seventh Army would throw its fullest weight, armor and otherwise, into the break, for the surge through to the plains of the Rhine and the juicy prizes which lay on the other side. Air support was "on call" from the P-38s and P-47s of the Tactical Air Force, which waited for any signal to flash into the picture.

In just 35 minutes after the orders came, the move was on, against heavy opposition, with small arms fire and *nebelwerfers* ensconced in the hills, and road blocks to hold up the advance of the tanks. But *Task Force Rhine* forged ahead over road craters, and overcame the road blocks by using the tanks as "tank-dozer" to push the road blocks aside, or reduced them with high explosive fire.

Upon approaching Silz a hail of mortar and artillery fire met the task force, and from this Colonel *Bates* deduced that the Tenth Armored Division was not in that town.

Colonel *Bates* met the alternative squarely, and called his signals quickly and without hesitation, and *Task Force Rhine* slugged its way on through Silz, with furious fighting all the way, and then continued due east towards Munchweiler. Deep in the midst

No longer "Supermen"

A few of the German prisoners captured by TASK FORCE RHINE look forlorn as they wait to be taken to prison cages in the rear.

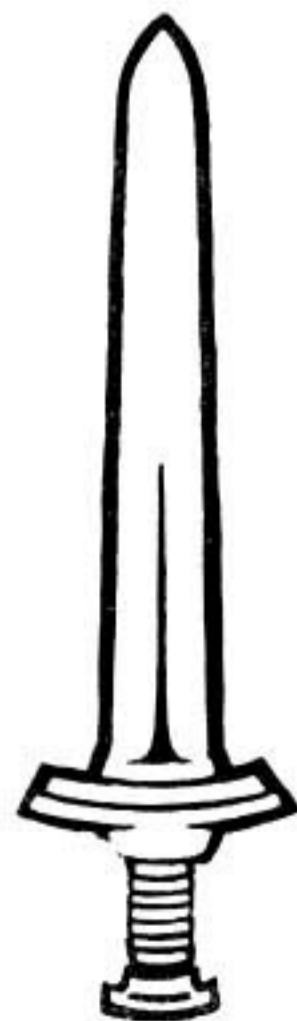


In the Wake of "Task Force Rhine"

The morning after TASK FORCE RHINE had blasted its way from Silz to Klingenstein, the sun rose on this scene of horses grazing in the green verdant fields along the road between those two towns, with the wreckage of the vehicles and anti-tank guns and armor, which they had been vainly trying to pull away from the devastating fire of the 761st tankers littering the road.

Dead bodies lie off to the right, as a peaceful sun beams on what, a few hours before, was scene of carnage and death, with the mighty surge of the 761st Tank Battalion spearheading the Cactus Division through the Hardt Mountains and out to the lowland beyond, after having smashed the Siegfried Line in a mighty surge.

(Photo by George Sanders, 103rd Division, and reproduced by McCarter and Carrington, 761st Tank Battalion.)



of the Siegfried Line there was not turning back now, no matter what the odds might be, or what might happen. It was "Forward!", and the goal was almost in sight. It was now dark, and the path ahead was unlighted, except by the flashes from the cannons, and the flares coming from the bright fires started in the towns behind the task force.

Firing into a little settlement east of Silz, a house housing an enemy ammunition dump was hit by shell fire, and the dump was exploded, setting the entire settlement afire, and the town of Silz as well. Shells were exploding in every direction, and ammunition was going up on all sides, partially blocking traffic, and hazarding the movement of the tank column, as the inferno raged. The Journal later stated that the fire provided "excellent illumination" for the work of *Task Force Rhine*.

Fifteen minutes after midnight the night of the 22nd Munchweiler was reached, and there the column faced more anti-tank guns. Spraying these guns with fire from the machine guns on the tanks, their crews were driven off, and the enemy began a retreat. It was the beginning of the end.

Rear elements of a retreating motorized and horse-drawn column were encountered on the road from Silz to Klingenstein, and here carnage followed, as the tank gunners and cannoners ran riot with their weapons.

The column was fired on with devastating effect, and many Germans were killed, and the road was blocked with vehicles and dead horses for a distance of almost five miles. The column was annihilated, and for miles the road was so littered with debris, dead horses, shattered AT and self-propelled guns, artillery pieces, dead Germans and wrecked motor vehicles, it became necessary for Colonel Bates to order his tank-dozer forward to clear a way for his tanks to proceed. Following the successful completion of its task this tank-dozer was hit by an AT gun at Klingenstein, and knocked out. But it had done its work, and *Task Force Rhine* proceeded in high gear!

The sizeable town of Klingenstein was the next objective of *Task Force Rhine*, and at that point permanent installations were encountered.

These installations were subjected to a terrific fire by all the guns of the task force, and one platoon from Baker Company, supported by infantrymen of the 409th, tried to punch its way into the town, but

the enemy resistance stiffened, and the attacking tanks and infantry were forced to withdraw.

Then that same platoon, and another platoon from Baker Company, took up firing positions near the edge of the town, with two supplementing assault guns assisting, and fired all weapons into the town. Klingenstein was set afire, and it was entered then with only occasional mortar and sniper fire.

And the S-3 Journal recorded: "0400 hours, Klingenstein reached; 0435 hours, Town entered and secured". It was March 23rd, exactly twelve hours and thirty-five minutes after the main body of *Task Force Rhine* had jumped off!

Meanwhile, many Germans had surrendered, and these prisoners constituted a grave problem, as for carrying them, for it had then become known that the enemy had closed in on the rear of the column, in an effort to ambush the supply trains. These enemy had taken to the hills and woods, when the main body of the task force went through the mountains. However, they were loaded on gas trucks and in every other available place, and carried to the prison cages in the rear, while *Task Force Rhine* was slugging its way down out of the mountains, into Klingenstein. As late as noon on the 23rd there were Germans still coming out of the mountains to surrender to the 761st, even as it sat in place in Klingenstein and regrouped its forces.

The mission had been accomplished! And the path to the plains of the Rhine lay clear, and the Seventh Army could, and did, surge through to the Rhine itself, and the prizes which lay beyond!

The entire action had consumed just under seventy-two hours, and on that day, March 23d, the 14th Armored Division rolled through the hole made by *Task Force Rhine*, passed through the task force at Klingenstein, and rolled on through to the Rhine. The prizes were Karlsruhe, and Stuttgart, and it had been *Task Force Rhine* which carried the ball through the Siegfried! And that was the 761st Tank Battalion out there in front!

And for *Task Force Rhine*, the score stood: seven Siegfried towns taken, three of them destroyed; a large quantity of enemy weapons and vehicles captured; 31 pill-boxes had been knocked out; 49 machine gun nests had been pulverized; 29 anti-

tank guns had been destroyed, with 20 other anti-tank guns captured! 450 enemy vehicles had been destroyed; eleven ammunition trucks had been blown up; four self-propelled enemy guns kayoed; twelve 37 mm anti-tank guns kayoed; nine nebelwerfers liquidated; one 170 mm artillery piece put out of action; 200 horses killed or captured; one ammunition dump blown up; 833 Germans had been killed, a hundred wounded and 3,260 captured!

And a later check at rear-area prison cages showed that there were prisoners from among 14 different German divisions in the haul, indicating the size of the German forces which had opposed *Task Force Rhine*.

Heroes had been made by the minute, and Silver and Bronze Star Medals came out for the bronze tankers, with several battlefield commissions as well.

The 761st then pushed on as far as the town of Insheim, which was captured, or rather, surrendered to two members of the battalion, thirty minutes before the arrival of the Deputy Division Commander of the 103rd, Brigadier General *Pierce*. The two who received the surrender were: First Lieutenant *Charles A. Guess*, of Topeka, Kansas, and Private First Class *Albert Neal*, of Baltimore, Maryland.

The Battalion CP was set up at Insheim, and there, on March 28, it was ordered to join the 71st Infantry Division, then in Major General *Manton S. Eddy's* XII Corps, for the thrust across Germany, from the Rhine. On March 30th, the 761st moved out to join the 71st Division.

The fourth phase of its five major battle campaigns had been successfully completed, and the battalion had suffered fewer losses in men and equipment than in any other phase, while at the same time wreaking more damage on the enemy than on any other operation.

* * *

AFTERMATH

When all the clamor had subsided, and the many German prisoners, and liberated slaves of French, Russian, Polish, and Czech nationalities, had gone to the rear, and the tired troopers regained their strength, the following message was received from Major General *Anthony C. McAuliffe*, Commanding General of the 103rd Division:

"TO: The Officers and Men of the 103rd Infantry Division and Attached Units.

The first stage of our operation has been brilliantly completed. You broke through the famous *Siegfried* defenses and then boldly exploited your success. You have taken more than 4,700 prisoners. You have fought gallantly and intelligently, and you have led all the way. I congratulate you."

And the Daily News Summary from Division Headquarters said this:

"Credit for the sensational breakthrough which scattered the *Siegfried's* formidable mountain belt and enabled armored forces to pour through to the *Rhine* can be given to elements of the 2nd Battalion of the 409th Infantry and the 761st Tank Battalion.

"Those units formed a task force which overcame almost insuperable obstacles in shaking loose through the *Siegfried's* mountain barriers and then made a courageous dash deep into the plain, capturing town after town. The tankers softened up the resistance in the towns with 'reconnaissance by fire' and the infantrymen cleared out the towns and shattered German attempts to organize for a stand in the surrounding hills. This task force also accounted for the tremendous damage done to German motor and horse-drawn columns between *Silz* and *Klingenmunster*, in which hundreds of vehicles were destroyed."

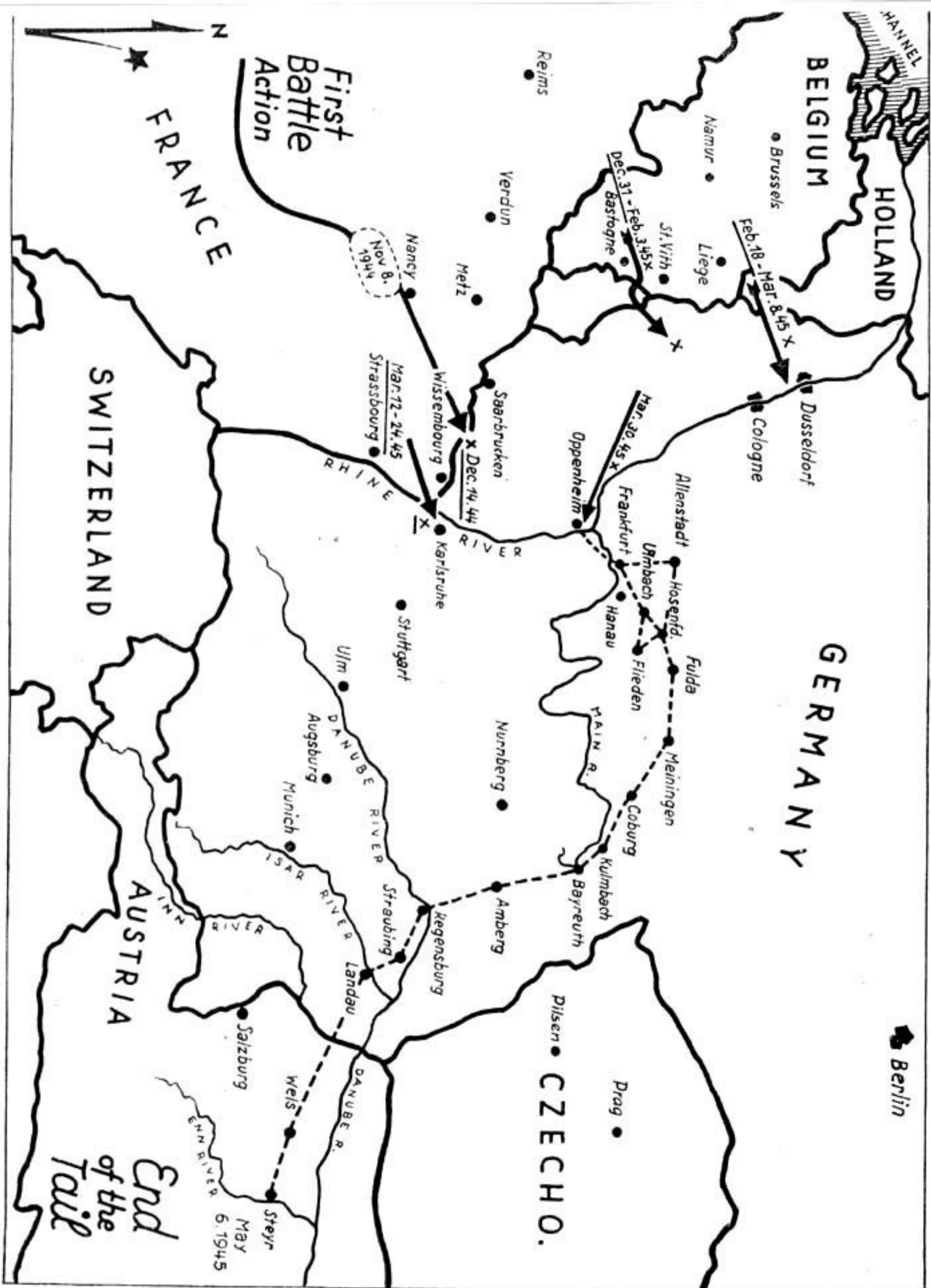
Task Force Rhine had come through in high gear, like a fast-stepping halfback breaking through a broken-field run for the goal, and it had carried the ball, all the way!

Three more battlefield commissions had been awarded. They went to: Staff Sergeant *Moses E. Dade*, of Washington, D. C., on February 10th; First Sergeant *Horace Alphonso Jones*, of Detroit, Michigan, and in Service Company; and Staff Sergeant *Theodore A. Weston*, of Washington, D. C., both on March 23rd, while *Task Force Rhine* was rolling, and *Weston* was in high gear with his tank! They brought the total to five battlefield commissions.

The 761st was ready for the next phase of its combat action, one which was to take them streaming across the heart of the Third Reich to a history-making junction with the Russians in then-faraway Austria.

PHASE FIVE

"YOU WILL WAIT THERE
FOR THE RUSSIANS!"



Chapter XVI

Capturing The „SS“

Task Force Rhine had accomplished the desired purpose of the High Command, but it had not been the easiest task in the world, for there had been a recurrence of errors in information, which could have proved as fatal as the failure to properly reconnoiter that anti-tank ditch at Morville, France in November 1944. For instance, all advance information given *Task Force Rhine* about the location of friendly units was in error, for the Tenth Armored Division was *not* in Silz; the 36th Division had *not* then taken Bergzabern and was *not* advancing towards Klingenstein; and friendly infantry which was to be motorized and follow the task force immediately did *not* arrive until well into the following day, instead of during the night, as had been advised. In addition to this, artillery fire from the 36th Division artillery was landing near Klingenstein, and *Task Force Rhine*, and this had to be taken off. And, finally, the task force operated out of range of its own artillery, but youngsters like *Ervin Latimore* performed their mission by making "reconnaissance by fire", and the force moved ahead successfully, never deviating from its assigned route, in spite of enemy pressure and unmarked crossing roads. It was a superb accomplishment!

*

Now with the last phase of their major combat campaigns ahead of them, the 761st moved out of Insheim, and made a road march to join the 71st Infantry Division. This was effected after covering 132 miles, and the 761st joined the 71st at Langen-

Well, at last we had Jerry on the run everywhere, and it was just a matter of running him to earth, and destroying him, and getting this damned war over, because there were some of us who wanted to get our clothes off — all of them, and get a good hot bath! And, too, this made the fifth time we had gone over into Germany, and the big idea was to make it be the last time, and let's get this damned thing over with! And, besides, this time we crossed the Rhine! Man, we really "jumped" after that. P. S. Some of the guys were sore 'cause they didn't have time to spark the frauleins... but then, we had to capture that Sixth SS Mountain Division, Nord, for they were threatening Corps Headquarters, and that meant General Eddy — and you know we got our first battles under his Corps, so we just couldn't stand for that. So, off we went — over the Rhine!

selbold, Germany, crossing the Rhine River at Oppenheim on March 30, and reaching the 71st on April 1st.

No time was lost in getting into action, for on the first day Baker Company attacked a German position where eight artillery guns were emplaced along the road in the vicinity of Rodalbach, and along which a convoy was also moving.

Lieut. Gary's platoon killed 300 enemy infantrymen, wounded 200 others, and captured 500 more. Here Captain Long hit a truck in the convoy, and another tank got another truck. The eight artillery pieces were overrun by the infantry of the 14th Regiment.

Captain Baker's Able Company was working with the 5th Infantry Regiment; Captain Long's Baker Company was with the 14th Regiment, and Captain Gate's Charlie Company was with the 66th Infantry Regiment. Captain English's Dog Company was screening in co-ordination with the 71st Reconnaissance Troop, and the Assault Gun Platoon was split into two sections.

First Lieutenant James R. Burgess, Jr., of Chicago, with one section, was covering the forward movement of the 608th Field Artillery Battalion. The other section, under the command of Staff Sergeant Richard L. Sparks, of Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, went into a fire fight in a heavily wooded area between Spielberg, Streitburg and Leisenwald.

In this area the 71st Division encountered the crack German 6th SS Mountain Division, Nord. The

area of the forests of Leisenwald, Waldenburg, and Budinger, became a bloody battle ground, as the conflict began on Easter Monday. Encompassing the area were the following towns: Allenstadt on the west; Buches to the northwest; Elm on the north, and Streitburg and Spielberg on the east.

The 6th SS Mountain Division, Nord, was trying to force its way out of a pocket, and had attempted to fight through to the XII Corps, settling down on the Corps' communications lines, twenty miles behind the Corps CP. Moving up to protect the flanks of the Corps, the 71st had to fight its own way through, and the battle ensued. The first contact had been made by the 14th Regiment, with Lieut. Gary's Baker Company tanks, and the first damages had been inflicted upon the enemy.

And then the fight began in earnest, as the SS troops elected to stand their ground, and hold their positions, as the 71st countered trying to envelope them.

Able Company tanks, with the 5th Regiment, were split up, with the Third Platoon, under Lieutenant *Billy Kitt*, going to the left of Waldenburg, and the First and Second Platoons, under Lieutenants *Harold Kingsley* and *Teddy Weston*, respectively, moving on the right of Waldenburg through the forest.

Baker Company tanks were fighting from Rodalback with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 14th Regiment. Charlie Company was operating with the 2nd Battalion of the 66th Regiment, to the south and east of the SS troop to establish a block, and capture escaping SSers.

Sergeant *Sparks* had two assault guns, under Sergeant *Louis M. Daniels*, of Detroit, Michigan, and Sergeant *Elwood C. Hall*, of Phila, Pa., and with his section he reported in to the wiry colonel commanding the 66th, at 0500 hours "to escort a convoy", and was told by the colonel: "Convoy? We're going out to fight!"

Without blinking, Sergeant *Sparks* replied: "Okay, Sir, let's go then!", and headed for Leisenwald, where small arms fire was poured on the assault guns, and re-inforced pill-boxes were encountered.

Sparks' section, with *Daniels* and *Hall's* tanks, neutralized the opposition, though the 3rd Battalion fighting into Leisenwald had to fight a bitter house-to-house battle until ten o'clock that night before the town and a thousand SS troops were taken.

On Easter Monday, Able Company had helped the 5th Regiment to take Buches and Budingen, and speared towards the middle of the enemy lines, in order to force clear a main supply route through the Waldenburg and Budinger Forests. Lieutenants *Kingsley*, *Kitt*, and *Weston* eventually coordinated their operations with those of Lieutenant *Gary* and his Baker tanks with the 14th Regiment.

Baker Company tanks went out with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 14th, moving north to cut the Nieder Mockstadt—Ober Mockstadt Road. Two tanks were put with the 2nd Battalion and the objective was taken with light opposition. The 3rd Battalion objective was taken with no opposition. One assault gun accompanied Baker tanks on that mission.

Later in the same night, Baker tanks, and two assault guns with them, operated east of that point, with the 3rd Battalion, seizing high ground in the area. Simultaneously the 2nd Battalion moved to Bleichenbach, with opposition between Bergzheim to Hill 362, which was captured, costing the enemy some casualties and the capture of twelve enemy artillery pieces.

As a result of the co-ordinated moves of the forward elements of the tanks, with artillery support, and the infantry moving in, the encirclement of the 6th SS Mountain Division, Nord, was completed by April 3rd, and the entire enemy division was either destroyed or captured. And the triple-threat to the Corps Headquarters, the cutting of the communication and supply lines, had been eliminated.

The remaining assault guns under Lieutenant *Burgess* remained in protection of the 608th Field Artillery Battalion.

During the early part of the initial Baker Company engagement, Staff Sergeant *Alexander Bell* had shot down an enemy airplane at Langenselbold, the plane crashing to earth in the division artillery area.

The assault guns at Leisenwald slew 30 Germans in knocking out a building, burning the structure to the ground, on Easter Monday. Here they captured 50 more, and then fired another mission on an enemy convoy, destroying 20 wagons. When the convoy was attacked the first two lead vehicles were hit and set afire. This halted the forward movement of the rest of the column, and the assault guns poured a devastating fire into the column, wrecking it.

Performing screening and reconnaissance with the I & R Platoon of the 71st Division, Second Lieutenant (then Tech 4th) *Leonard J. Holland's* Platoon of Dog Company tanks, six of them, captured an enemy radio station at Salz, on the morning of April 4th, and then moved northeast of Salz, to Lake Rotenbach the same day, and swiftly captured two fully-stocked enemy armored supply dumps, striking before the enemy could recover from the effects of a running fire-fight with an estimated 200 enemy infantrymen in a woods, shortly after 1300 hours.

In addition to *Holland's* tank, there were the tanks and crews of: Staff Sergeant *John N. Winbush*, of Cincinnati, Ohio; Sergeant *Fred W. Crabtree*, of Bowling Green, Kentucky; Sergeant *James C. Harris*, Detroit, Michigan; Sergeant *Crawford O. Pegram*, Natchitoches, La., and Sergeant *Preston McNeil*, of New York City.

By this time the liquidation of the 6th SS Mountain Division, Nord, was complete, and enemy elements were in retreat in great confusion, leading the pursuing tankers and infantry to the capture of many hundreds as the action moved east towards Fulda, with the medium companies and the assault



Able Company tank crew extinguishes a fire, resulting from a hit by enemy fire "somewhere in Germany".

guns executing fire missions from the vicinity of Magdlos and Flieden, towards Fulda.

Lieutenant *Gary's* Baker Company platoon entered a chase after a German general, but missed him, and continued on clearing the woods to Fulda, knocking out ten machine gun nests, taking 500 prisoners during the action.

The Third Army thrust across the Reich was in full swing!





Able Company tankers re-fuel and load food in historic Coburg, ancient capitol of Saxony, in April.



Chapter XVII

Across The Reich

Resistance from the disorganized German troops was coming from small units of Volksgrenadiers, with here and there a larger body of the enemy's finer troops pausing to make a stand in their mad flight before the onrushing armor the Third Army, and the tanks of the 761st continued to take their toll of enemy soldiers and equipment, as Germans surrendered by the thousands.

The fighting was now less furious, and, for the rest of the march, the enemy could offer no exceptional resistance, such as that which had been given back in France and along the Siegfried Line. The task was much easier now.

But here and there fanatic SS troopers were encountered, who preferred death to surrender, and it was during this period, after the 761st had left Fulda, and cut over to Meningen, that Sergeant *Jonathan B. Hall*, had to stand and watch a German SS trooper pull a razor and slash his own throat from ear to ear, in front of *Hall's* tank, rather than surrender to these colored tankers. He slowly bled to death writhing on the ground, as *Hall* and his crewmen watched the life ebb from his body.

The Battalion stayed in Fulda two days, before moving over to Meningen, scene of the capture of

There was a heluva lot of difference in the drive across the Reich and the previous battles we had had with the Jerries, for he was in retreat now, and it was some chase to catch up with him, while he was running, for he just wouldn't stand and fight. Now and then we would hit a tough spot, but there were no more battles like Morville, Honskirch, Tillet, or the Nieffern fights, or the road between Nieder Schlettenbach and Erlenbach. This was the life! And the lads "liberated" a cognac factory, some camera factories, had good beds to sleep in, until some guy would rouse them out just after sleep had descended, saying: "we gotta fire mission". It wasn't cold, the sun shone, the Reich was a land of beauty, and the frauleins were mighty pretty. Yessir! This was the life! And we rolled across Hitler's Third Reich like the Sunser Limited crossing the plains of Texas, or "The Twentieth Century Limited" sweeping through Highland Falls! — And Ernest Hill got a brand new tank for some Ten-in-Ones, near Bayreuth, so the lads could keep on going ... Task Force Weidenmark, unheard-of and unsung, went way out on the farthest Allied projection towards Czechoslovakia, with 761st Assault Guns leading the way ... And the Shermans rode the autobahn!

the Nazi's fabulous gold cache, where billions of dollars worth of gold were seized in a cave there, and turned over to Army officials.

Hildberghausen, Herbertsdorf, Eishausen and Oberlauter, fell in the three days following April 7th, when the 761st moved out of Fulda, and then the tanks reached Coburg, ancient capital of Saxony, and seat of government of Attila, The Hun, some 50 miles from the Czechoslovakian border.

And, here came the huge Shermans of Colonel *Bates' 761st*, with guns blazing away, as they roared into the city, and met stiff resistance from enemy troops who seemed determined that this traditional and historic spot, be preserved for the Reich. But the attack went on, and on April 12th, Coburg fell, and 71st Division infantrymen entered and took the city, after the guns of the tanks had blasted out the foe. It was a major prize, and here the weary tankmen paused for a few hours to rest, in the shadow of a monument in the city square, depicting a Negro friar, a Dominican father, who had been sainted hundreds of years before. Dinner was eaten in the square, and the tankers were refreshed by the invigorating spirits from a factory which had been making the stuff which goes in "the cup that cheers". Fresh eggs, chickens, and wine, added to

the comfort, along with the opportunity to get into a good soft bed, for the first time in many days.

Coburg was a good "breather", and camera enthusiasts ran riot, when a camera factory was liberated, with its equipment. But there was little time for further celebrations, for the objectives still lay many miles ahead, and now that the enemy was on the run, Major General Willard G. Wyman, of Washington, D. C., commanding the 71st, was determined that the fleeing Germans would be pursued and run to earth, and orders were received for further movements in the direction of Bayreuth, important key city on the Berlin—Leipzig—Nurnberg—Munich Autobahn, and the tankers piled into their vehicles and moved off.

In the next two days, the tankers fought their way across the Main River, towards Kulmbach, which lay on the route to Bayreuth, with the companies still dispersed with the infantry regiments to which they were assigned.

At Coburg Able Company had knocked out four machine gun nests and one panzerfaust. Between Meningen and to Bayreuth, Baker Company had accounted for one armored car, fifteen machine gun nests, killing more than a hundred Germans, and capturing two hundred others. Charlie Company had knocked out 19 enemy vehicles; killed 125 enemy, captured 350, along with two complete battalions captured, and Dog Company had been performing guard duty for the 71st Division CP. Two officers and one enlisted man from the Fourth Armored Division, had been liberated from their German captors by Charlie Company.

Kulmbach was attacked on April 14th, and fell after a stiff battle, which was the beginning of stronger enemy resistance from that point to Bayreuth. Operating in conjunction with the 761st and the 71st Infantry Division, at this time, was the Eleventh Armored Division, which was also in the fight for Bayreuth, along with another infantry division, when the town was attacked for two days following the capture of Kulmbach.

Sweeping down on a front extending from the Weissen River on the left, to the Roter Main River on the right, the assaulting troops reached Bayreuth, and here a major battle ensued.

Chief 761st unit engaged in the battle here was Captain Long's Baker Company, with tank platoons

under Lieutenant Gary, which were supporting the attack with the 14th "Right of the Line" Infantry Regiment of the 71st Division.

Hurling steel into the town, after a surrender ultimatum had been spurned by the Germans, the assault lasted two days, and then Bayreuth was no longer able to withstand the force of the attacking elements, and on April 16th, the commander of the city's enemy troops surrendered to the Commanding Officer of the 14th Regiment of the 71st Infantry Division, which was the official captor of the city, although the 11th Armored and the 65th Infantry Division had also attacked on the flanks.

The capture of Bayreuth gave the Third Army another springboard for attacks to the east and south, and the Patton armor was quick to take advantage of this.

After having alternately passed and been passed by tanks from the Eleventh Armored, that division swung eastwards, and continued onwards on a prong towards Czechoslovakia, then about 26 miles away.

Lieutenant Gary's tanks had encountered enemy armor in the fight at Bayreuth and there destroyed one tank, killing 75 Germans and taking 200 prisoners. Here, also, the Germans themselves destroyed four of their huge tanks, rather than permit them to be captured intact by the Shermans of Baker Company. And the advance continued on in the direction of Amberg, about 35 miles south.

Here at Bayreuth it was found that the swift march of the 761st had worn heavily on the tracks and treads of the big tanks, and there was some concern as to the possibilities of the tanks holding up under the strain of the sustained drive deeper into and through enemy territory.

It was here that Master Sergeant Ernest D. Hill, of Chicago, Illinois, made a deal with an ordnance unit, and bartered for a Sherman which was just about dead-lined from some other armored unit, and telling the ordnance men, "Don't junk that tank; I can fix it", Hill got the vehicle to rolling, and put it into service for the 761st, at a time when it was sorely needed. And the drive went on.

On April 16 First Lieutenant James R. Burgess, Jr., of Chicago, Assault Gun Platoon Commander, went out with a task force which made the deepest eastern penetration, at that time, and in that area,

of any Allied forces going east, when he took "Task Force Weidenmark" east towards Czechoslovakia, going for many miles, to within a few miles of ancient Bohemia and Moravia, into which the Russians were also making a deep penetration, as their drive westwards continued in the face of frenzied, but lessening German resistance. It was an ominous period for the Third Reich.

On the north the 26th "Yankee" Division, former co-workers of the 761st, from the Saar; were pushing towards Czechoslovakia, and further extending the Third Army front on that side. The 11th Armored was making a drive of its own, and gaining ground.

On the unheralded and unsung "Task Force Weidenmark" were: a company of infantry, the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion, five light tanks from Dog Company of the 761st, under Staff Sergeant *Jack Gilbert*, and two assault guns, one commanded by Sergeant *Joseph A. Bates*, of 702 Bruner Street, Baltimore, Maryland, who came from the venture-some ride, to receive a battlefield commission as a second lieutenant on the next day, and the other was commanded by Sergeant *Frank C. Alexander*, of Philadelphia, Penna. Lieutenant *Burgess* had a crew in a half-track.

With *Bates* were: Corporal *Buddie V. Branch*, Dayton, Ohio; Private *Robert Knox*; Tech 5th *James C. Cole*, of Baltimore, and Private *Charles White*, of Baker Company. In Sergeant *Alexander's* assault gun crew were: Corporal *Randolph Hemmings*, The Bronx, New York; Tech 5th *Mathew Lee*; Private *Jimmie L. Young*, and Private *Paul Peterson*. With Lieutenant *Burgess* were: Private *Raymond Houston*; Pfc. *Jacob Myles*, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Private *Peter Anderson*, St. Louis, Mo., and Tech 4th *Leon M. Sears*, of Birmingham, Alabama.

"Task Force Weidenmark" moved out, and on its entire drive into miles of enemy-held territory, it never fired a shot! But it took town after town, as the white flags popped into the windows of the towns and villages as if by magic, when the armored vehicles rolled into them. From the heights from which Bayreuth could be seen, could be seen dense clouds of smoke, and the light of burning towns as more of Naziland was laid waste. Only the machine gunners fired a few sporadic rounds at enemy snipers, as "Task Force Weidenmark", a menacing and grim force, moved on, with motors

roaring, and guns loaded and in readiness for action, as Lieutenant *Burgess* led his task force deep towards the Czech border. The tanks and their support rolled steadily for four hours before they halted, for a return trip, after security guards had been posted to hold the captured territory.

No sirens heralded the return of the intrepid little force, and no brass bands met it, but when it had returned to its base of operations, then, and only then, did the men learn that they had been the most eastern of all Allied forces when they reached their stopping point, near the Czech border on that unsung drive. But they had taken the land, and that was the idea.

Grim pathos had been encountered on "Task Force Weidenmark", and more definite evidences of the breakdown of the Nazi resistance, for the task force met hundreds of weary, bedraggled, starved and skinny Russian prisoners, freed from German prison camps, trudging their way wearily towards the advancing Americans.

Tattered clothing, barefeet, emaciated limbs, all marked the appearance of these former soldiers and workers of the Soviet, who saw their salvation in the coming of the "*Amerikaneetskis*", whom they were hardly able to greet, because their bodies were so frail, thin, tired, and worn. Hunger marked their countenances, with cheek-bones showing through the skin, with some of them so weak they could hardly walk, and being supported from falling by the arms of comrades who were equally as weak as they. It was a pathetic scene, but the feeling that the Germans were freeing these prisoners, was evidence that the Nazis had decided that they could no longer support their prisoners and themselves remain free of the terror of the advance of the Russians on the east, and *Patton's* men on the west. It was the beginning of the end!

And "Task Force Weidenmark", freeing prisoners, taking towns, penetrating almost to Czechoslovakia, returned to Bayreuth, and went back into service, as the 761st Tank Battalion then became the sole armored spearhead of the entire Third Army drive of the 71st Division, and headed due south, towards Austria, which was then not too far away.

Down the autobahn sped the Shermans, firing on enemy troops hidden in the woods along the great highway, and over-running airfields, made by build-

ing a concrete strip into the space between the two wide pavements of the autobahn, and from which enemy aircraft had been taking off, from strips which were then as wide as the runways at a standard heavy bomber base. Aircraft were destroyed in place along the autobahn, enemy searchlights built along the road were shot up, and the swift advance moved on towards Amberg, after Pegnitz had been reached and the Pegnitz River had been crossed.

And the division front widened from Bayreuth, as the 761st tanks moved out in front. At the airfields at Benks, on the 15th, Charlie Company caught 9 machine gun nests, killed 40 enemy and took 350 prisoners; helped capture Hermann Goering's castle at Neuhaus, with two platoons un-

der Second Lieutenants *Dade* and *Cochrane*, firing on the huge structure atop a high bluff, and then swung over to Velden, where a Mark IV tank was knocked out, with one AT gun, and six machine gun nests, and an uncounted number of prisoners taken.

At Salzach-Rosenberg, Able Company knocked out four enemy half-tracks, 6 wheeled vehicles, and three machine gun nests. Poppendorf, Weidenmark, Haag, Lindenhardt, and Hobenmirsberg, were taken, with the enemy capturing Major *Reynolds*, the Executive Officer, Captain *Long*, Baker Company CO, and Tech 5th's *Sandford* and *Fields*, at Lindenhardt. This was on April 19th, near Trockau. The 761st was rolling!



Chapter XVIII

Nearing The End!

Following the capture of Major *Reynolds* and the other three, a call went out for "volunteers" to form a task force to attempt the recapture of the prisoners, and every member of the rear echelon of the battalion, including cooks, mess personnel, administrative personnel and all, volunteered, and took up their weapons, and sallied forth into the woods near *Lindenhardt*, to flush out the enemy which had taken the tankers. Only Master Sergeant *Joseph Thomas*, of *Gadsden, Ala.*, the Battalion Sergeant-Major, was left at headquarters, and he became the "acting battalion commander", during the hunt, which was unsuccessful in finding the lost members, but did take a number of German prisoners in the woods.

Four days later Captain *Long* and Tech 5ths *Sandford* and *Fields* were released by the enemy, after the battalion had overrun the city of *Amberg*. Major *Reynolds* was still missing.

During this period operations took place at *Auerbach*, *Bernreuth*, and Baker Company tanks, under Lieutenant *Gary* killed 300 German infantrymen, wounded another hundred, and captured 75 others. These were the "stand-and-fight-it-out" troopers of the enemy.

In the vicinity of *Perkam* Charlie Company got into a firefight on April 27th, and knocked out three machine gun nests; took 140 prisoners, and freed two captured enlisted men from the 80th Infantry

Well, we were 120 miles from the Russians when we got to *Salzbach-Rosenberg*, and the gap was closing day by day, as we went on. We went through 30 miles of beauty land, in the *Salzbach, Valley*, scenic paradise, and we were getting nearer and nearer to the *Danube River*, "the blue Danube", but we didn't know whether it was really blue or not. We'd find out! Able Company got into *Coburg* first; Baker got into *Bayreuth* first, and *Regensburg*, the *Ratisbonic City* of *Napoleon* was the next major objective. It was here that *Browning's "Boy"* of the famous poem dropped dead, after his long run afoot to bring news to *Napoleon* in *Regensburg*, falling at the feet of the Emperor, after having given him the news. Well, we had "news" too, for *Regensburg* — but it was not for *Napoleon*! We were going out to get a forward CP for *Patton*, and *Regensburg* was the town where it was to be located. And after *Regensburg* we went down towards *Austria*. The time was getting shorter and shorter. (We still didn't have time for the *fräuleins*.)

Division. It then moved platoons in to the *Regensburg* area, to assist in the attack on that major city, a center for rail, motor and communications.

Schwandorf and *Burglengenfeld* had been taken, and Charlie met a firefight at *Regenstauf*, a few miles above *Regensburg*, on the *Regen River*. *Kurn* and *Pirkensee* were also taken, and after *Zeitlern* and *Eltheim* had been captured, the tanks reached the *Danube River*, before *Regensburg*.

The *Danube* was first crossed at 1445 hours on April 27th, prior to the capture of *Regensburg*, which was assaulted early that morning.

At *Regenstauf*, the enemy had elected to stand and defend his position, and Charlie Company attacked. Along with Lieutenant *Gary's* tanks from Baker Company, a platoon of light tanks from Dog Company, commanded by Second Lieutenant (then Tech 4th Grade) *Leonard J. Holland*, of *Detroit, Michigan*, and four assault guns, commanded respectively by Sergeants *Alexander*, *Ford*, *Daniels* and *Ballard*, entered the fight, and after an extended shelling of the enemy positions, the Germans finally were overcome, and the action moved on towards *Regensburg*.

Regensburg, ancient capitol of the Napoleonic wars, was a key military center for the Nazis for their southeastern region, located not far from the junction of the *Danube* and *Isar Rivers*. It was a

strategic strongpoint, with channels fanning out to other military posts in all directions, and with an autobahn going northwest towards Nurnburg.

After getting into position, under cover of night, for an early morning assault by the infantry in assault boats, especially brought here to effect the river crossings a surrender ultimatum was hurled at the Germans ensconced in the city. The ultimatum was rejected, and the guns of the 761st, along with artillery of the 71st Division, fired on the town, just before daybreak, and after a barrage, the city was taken by storm, with bitter fighting within its area.

The barrage was devastating, and a thing of majestic beauty to watch. All had been quiet, and the stars shone brightly, and there in the distance lay Regensburg. Perfectly timed, and coordinated to the last second, the barrage broke loose on the set schedule, and the town was unmercifully shelled. It was awesome, how the still quietness of the early morning was suddenly shattered by the ear-splitting noise of all calibers of heavy guns, hurling their steel into the slumbering town. It seemed as if hell had broken loose, and the enemy was unable to stand the furious shelling which he received, even though there was fanatical fighting between German and American foot-troopers within the town itself, once the infantrymen had stormed across the river.

And Regensburg fell! And later there came to the Ratisbonic city the headquarters of General George S. Patton, for the Third Army, and the fighting elements continued their drive southward towards the Austrian border.

The tankers fought through to Elthin, and then moved along the major highway leading to the strongly defended city of Straubing, which was a defensive area for a number of large German air-fields in the vicinity.

On April 28th the town of Straubing was attacked and taken, after a heavy shelling, and the battalion tanks moved through the battered city, which was later used as a battalion CP. Able Company crossed the Isar River at Landau, over a pontoon bridge, built by the engineers, heading for Austria.

Sarching fell, after stiff resistance, and then the 761st was nearer to the country of the Hapsburgs.

At Straubing Able Company tankers captured two thousand enemy prisoners on April 28th. It had crossed the Danube west of Regensburg, just before the Regensburg assault crossing.

* * *

By this time the tankers had moved almost across the whole of the Reich (see map), and had travelled more than 350 miles through the enemy's own country.

At Trockau it had relieved elements of the Eleventh Armored Division in the battle line; and at Regensburg the 761st saw the tanks of the 13th Armored Division standing by the Danube. But there was still no relief for the men of the 761st, and their tanks were rolling inexorably across the German soil, for a "destination unknown" officially, but generally believed to be a meeting with the Russians, who were reported to be moving nearer and nearer all the while, but were yet many miles away.

The strain was beginning to tell on the Shermans and the light tanks as well, for they had maintained a swift pace all the way across the Reich, and it was all that the service and maintenance men could do to keep them operational. But by patching up, and switching parts here and there, the tanks were kept rolling.

And the next goal was *Austria!*



Chapter XIX

You will wait there for the Russians

April 29 and 30th found the tankers shoving ahead towards the swiftly-flowing waters of the *Inn* River, which marked the Boundary Line between Germany and Austria.

And the troops of the Third Reich were drawing back into what had been featured by starry-eyed reporters as "Hitler's National Redoubt", where the hard-pressed German Army of the South was expected to make its desperate last-ditch stand in the mountainous fastnesses of the Tyrolean Alps, amid the protection which this great natural fortress provided.

This later turned out to be the imagination of adjective-minded writers with more words than information, as the enemy resistance slowly but surely crumbled before the relentless driving of the Allied spearhead.

In this area it was headed by the 71st Infantry Division, and since Bayreuth on April 16, the sole armored spearhead of the 71st "Red Circle" Division had been the 761st *Tank Battalion*, with tankers tired, weary, grim, but ever pressing steadily forward, as they moved towards the Austrian border and the red-starred Russians advancing from Vienna.

Down to Pfarrkirchen they rolled, fighting and capturing town after town, and village after village, as the enemy withdrew. And Able Company took the spotlight, when it became the first 761st element to reach the border!

"We didn't know that we had only eight more days of battling left, before the curtain was to be rung down on the War in Europe, and the Nazis would call it "quits". But we did know that everyday we drew nearer and nearer to Marshal Ivan S. Koniiev's First Ukrainian Army, and so we kept on slugging our way over into Austria (the sixth country in which we had fought), and deeper and deeper into that first European nation ravished by the Nazis in 1938.

And then came that order — our last order —, the most historic one in our battle career:

"You will advance to the Enns River, and you will wait there for the Russians!"

And like on all previous occasions, we did it! And then it was: "Mission completed!"

AUSTRIA

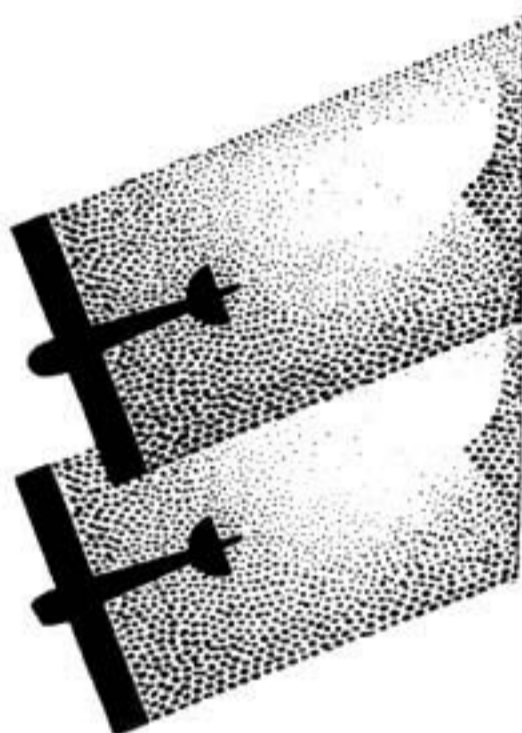
Early on the morning of May 2, 1945, the tank platoons of Captain *James T. Baker's* Able Company rolled up to the waters of the *Inn* River, at Ering, on the German side of the river. They halted there and gazed across the greenish waters of the river whose center divided Hitler's Third Reich from the Hapsburgers' land of Austria. With them were the doughboys of the Fifth Infantry Regiment of the 71st Division.

The *Inn* is a turbulent stream, varying in width from 50 to 150 yards, and nurtured by the ever-emptying streams that flow down to it, laden with the cold icy waters of the Tyrolean Alps. In the distance across the river, they could see the red-and-white Austrian national colors, hung out by faithful townspeople, peasants, and farmers, so these relentless Americans would know that here lived not the hated Germans, but a nation of people forced into servitude and war, when Hitler's goose-stepping, hand-flinging legions marched over their border in 1938, and pressed the Nazi yolk upon them, and took their men-folk off to unwanted war, under the guidance and stimulation of hand-picked "Quislings". But the war went on!

Reaching Ering there was little respite from battle, for Able Company approached the huge dam spanning the river, and there encountered enemy troops, emplaced in a house beside the approaches to the dam. These were flushed out.

Arriving at Ering around 0430 hours on May 2nd, with First Lieutenant *Harold Kingsley*, of Chicago,

On the Road to Vienna



The sign says: Linz 40 kms, Wels 10 kms. It's on the Salzburg—Vienna highway, as M-Sgt. Hill of Chicago, and crewmen, work on one of the M-4s de-commissioned here. Wels was then under assault, six miles away.



One of the hangars, and some of the planes knocked out of use by the guns of the 761st at the Nazi airfield at Wels, Austria, on May 4, 1945.



Illinois, and his First Platoon in the lead, Able Company secured the dam, and then the infantrymen of the 5th Regiment moved across into Austria over a passage which was safe for wheeled vehicles of lighter weight, but unsafe for the heavy tanks. The tanks fired a number of rounds across the river at enemy troops on the other side, before the infantry crossing was made.

First Lieutenant *James R. Burgess, Jr.*, also of Chicago, Illinois, and his Assault Gun Platoon, also arrived at the dam on the same day, and indicative of the tenor of the enemy feeling there, was the appearance of German officers, who brought up fully-armed enemy troops, and surrendered them. They were turned over to the 71st's Raiders. Lieutenant *Burgess* also took enemy prisoners from a house next door to the CP which was set up there at the river.

Five hours after Able Company arrived and secured the dam at Ering, elements of the 13th Armored Division reached the scene.

Unable to negotiate a crossing for the heavy Shermans due to the questionable condition of the bridge atop the dam, the 761st waited at Ering for two days, and then moved up the river to Egel-fing, and there on May 4th, at 0730 hours, the entire battalion moved across into Austria, and another new country for the first time, looked at brown Americans manning these terrible battlewagons of war, with eyes filled with wonderment, amazement, and unbelief.

Charlie Company moved into Austria first, with Able and Baker companies next, and the combat echelons immediately surged forward into concerted offensive action, striking swiftly on the heels of the crossing into Austria.

Striking the Salzburg—Vienna Highway, the attackers routed the enemy out of Kirchdorf and Haag, and moved up to the large city of Wels, where the enemy had considerable concentrations of forces, as well as a major airfield.

The tanks of Charlie Company fired the town, and the other letter companies joined the attack, and Wels fell on May 4th.

Moving to the eastern edge of the town the airfield, with many parked planes, Messerschmidts, Focke-Wolfs, Junkers, and other types was hit. German airmen attempting to take off from the

field were shot down in their cockpits by machine gunners from the tanks, who threw in a deadly hail of accurate fire. HE shells blew the cupola-like tops of the hangars to smithereens, and here young Second Lieutenant *Frank C. Cochrane*, of Charlie Company, coolly sighted the 50 calibre machine gun on his tank, and blasted a Junkers Transport plane out of the sky, as it sought to flee with a full load of enemy troops.

* * *

Before the crossing at Ering, Able Company had knocked out two machine gun nests guarding the approaches to the dam, and opened the way for the successful crossing.

Baker Company had struck at Braunau (birth-place of Hitler), on the Inn, and at Reid and Wels, in Austria, and had slain two hundred enemy, wounded a hundred and fifty, and taken 300 prisoners, thrusting through from the region around Dauseldorf, to head towards Wels and Reid.

An uncounted large number of prisoners had been taken at Wels by Charlie Company, in addition to the devastating shooting-up of the airfield there.

* * *

The attack then swung south, and headed in the direction of Steyr, old Austrian city, located on the Enns River, at its junction with the Steyr River, and Bad Hall and Lambach were added to the list of captured towns.

Able Company did the major portion of the attacking at Lambach, and there Captain *Baker's* tankers bagged three thousand enemy prisoners when the town surrendered after their vicious shelling. Kremsmunster also fell to the battalion guns, and the attack surged on, as the enemy was in the midst of negotiations for a full-fledged surrender.

* * *

Southeast of Lambach, on the winding highway to Steyr, Able tankers struck an enemy "hot-spot", and encountered the first stiff opposition in Austria, but it was short-lived, for when the firing had ceased, the enemy had lost: two *Mark IV* tanks, twenty machine gun emplacements, four *Panzerfausts*, with 400 killed and 300 prisoners. This action came in a wooded area, where the Germans had concentrated to block the forward advance of the tank elements.

And then came that eventful order:

"You will advance to the Enns River, and you will wait there for the Russians!"

* * *

Able Company was with the 5th Regiment; Baker Company was still with the 14th Regiment, and Charlie Company with the 66th Regiment. Dog Company was doing guard duty with the Division CP.

* * *

And on the afternoon of May 5th, Lieutenant *Teddy Weston*, of Washington, D. C., commanding the Second Platoon of Able Company, rolled into Steyr, with his tanks; coming down from the north, and went to the *Enns River*! — And then, seeing no Russians in sight, the enterprising young lieutenant rolled his platoon across the bridge and over into the territory set aside for the Russians, later returning to his position in the town of Steyr! It was the end of the trail!

The passage of *Weston's* platoon into Steyr on May 5th, was one of those incidents reported later, and did not come in time to correct previously published reports that Second Lieutenant *Frank C. Cochrane's* Charlie platoon was the *First* element to reach the appointed rendezvous with the Russians of Marshal *Ivan S. Koniev's First Ukrainian Army*. *Cochrane's* tanks arrived on May 6th, from another direction.

Meanwhile, coming from still another direction down the Steyr Flow, from the Alps bordering the area, was Lieutenant *Burgess' Assault Gun Platoon*, which came over the Steyr River at the dam at Mittereg, and there one of the big Shermans dropped off into the waters of the river.

Without hesitation, the intrepid Chicagoan, whose calm "*Line up and follow me!*" had become a by-word command in the 761st, dived into the chilling waters, fully-clothed, and hooked a steel cable from another tank onto the submerged vehicle, and it was pulled out to safety and further use. And on that same day, May 6th, Lieutenant *Burgess* and his platoon of 105 howitzers laid eyes on the Russians across the *Enns*! His was the first 761st element to actually see the Russians, and it was the end of the war, for up where Dog Company was located with the 71st Division CP, Captain *English* had furnished ten tanks from the Mosquito Fleet, to act as "honor guards", while German General *Lothar von Rondulic*, Commanding General of the *German Army Group South*, signed the surrender papers ending the hostilities for the thousands of enemy troops in Austria! And the "Cease Fire" order was given!

* * *

And the 761st Tank Battalion had completed its mission!

* * *

And most co-incidentally, not many hours later, as the tanks of the first Negro-composed armored unit to ever enter battle in the American Armies stood lined up beside a small bridge, near a former Russian PW Camp, under the Germans, who should roll by in his multiple-starred battlejeep, but the Commanding General of the mighty Third U. S. Army, who had sent them into battle in France 183 days before, General *George S. Patton, Jr.*! There was a quiet satisfied look on great warrior's face, as he went on his way.



Chapter XX

Mission completed

Well, it had been a long trail from Fort Knox, Kentucky, to Steyr, Austria, via Camp Claiborne, Camp Hood, Camp Shanks, the Atlantic Ocean, England, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, and Germany, but we had made it successfully. We had travelled around ten thousand miles, with around two-thousand miles in the 183 days of combat-service which we had seen.

During the entire combat season we had expended a total of one million, one-hundred and twenty-three thousand, eight hundred and ninety-eight rounds of ammunition. Of these, 998,000 rounds, Lieutenant Jones of Service Company, broke down into 30-calibre machine gun bullets, with 16,260 rounds of the heavier high explosive and armor piercing 75, 76 and 105 mm shells. The entire amount of ammunition fired totalled 393.137 tons, or 786,274 pounds of death, all drawn direct from the ASPs (ammunition supply points) by Service Company.

. . .

Well, it was all over now, and we capped the muzzles of the 76mm cannon (which we had been the first American armored unit to ever fire in battle from tanks in the ETO), and our 105 howitzers, and the men of Lieut. Jimmy Lightfoot's 81 mm mortar platoon, and our Recon Platoon parked their half-tracks, which had been with us in the thick of the fighting, all the way across those six European countries where we had fought, and we counted up the score. Corporal Fred L. Brown, of the Bronx, NYC., and Baker Company, had been the last man to give his life on the field of battle, falling on April 14th, while we battled towards Bayreuth, and the last man to be wounded was Sergeant Ray Roberson, of Pawhuska, Oklahoma, from the medics, who also lost the first man to die, on November 8th, 1944. The battle had been costly in lives and wounded, and also in tanks, for we lost our tanks because we were right up there in the front fighting all the time! 183 long arduous days we fought without any relief continuously, and we were goddamned tired! Didn't you know it, Mac? Well, we could rest now, for the war was over for us—at least in Europe. Then we began wondering what the history writers would say about us. Not much, we thought, for we had not seen a War Correspondent since Anderson of Etoussa HQS had left us late in November 1944. But we were really proud of our record, for we had sweated real honest-to-goodness blood to make that record! And now, our sole question was: "When do we go home, man?"

In our fifth and final phase, we had come 465 miles across Germany and into Austria in 36 days, performing yeoman service spearheading for the 71st Division, and assisting that division in compiling a record which included an average daily prisoner take of 2,813 prisoners, for a total of 106,926, between March 31st and May 6th.

It this catch was represented: one full German Army Group; two full armies; eight corps; 69 divisions; and 713 regiments and assorted units. Twenty German general officers had been captured, among them General von Rondulic. The prisoners came from Volksgrenadier divisions, several Panzer divisions, SS Mountain divisions, two German para-troop divisions, a large assortment of anti-aircraft battalions, searchlight batteries, and all varieties of artillery, tank destroyer and anti-tank units.

During the drive, the 761st had shot up airfields along the autobahns, and searchlights along these autobahns as well. Airfields had been over-run at Bayreuth, Bindlach, Munsteuer, and Ober-Traubling, just out of Regensburg, all in Germany, and at



Heroes all!

Thirteen officers of the 761st pose for the Signal Corps' photographer at Steyr, Austria, after having received Bronze Star Medals from Major General Willard G. Wyman, Commanding General of the 71st Infantry Division. Reading from left to right they are:

Front row: First Lieut. Harold Kingsley, Chicago, Ill.; Second Lieutenant Joseph A. Tates, Baltimore, Md.; First Lieut. Harold B. Gary, Abilene, Kansas; Chief Warrant Officer James E. Williams, Detroit, Michigan; Second Lieut. Frank C. Cochrane, Beacon, N. Y.; and Second Lieut. Moses E. Dade, Washington, D. C.

Back row: Lieut-Col. Paul L. Bates, Boonton, N. J.; Major Russell C. Geist, Jr., Upper Darby, Penna.; Captain Garland N. Adamson, Chicago, Illinois; Captain William L. O'Dea, Newark, New Jersey; First Lieutenant Thomas E. Bruce, Fort Scott, Kansas; Captain Leonard P. Taylor, Atlanta, Ga.; and Captain Charles A. Gates, Kansas City, Mo.



*EM also decorated
at Steyr*

Wels, in Austria. A German Headquarters airfield at Gelnhausen, east of Frankfurt am Main, had been taken, and fighting had taken place against *Luftwaffe* personnel at the Bayreuth airfield and aeronautical school, and against air force soldiers on the Salzbach-Bayreuth highway, who were protecting a German underground plane factory.

Six battlefield commissions had been awarded since the commitment to battle on October 31, 1944, and shortly after the cessation of hostilities the total rose to eight, when Sergeant Warren H. H. Crecy, of Corpus Christi, Texas, and Tech, 4th Leonard Just Holland, of Detroit, Michigan, became Second Lieutenants on May 16, and in June, 1945, respectively.

During the 183 days of combat the 761st had compiled the amazing amount of damages inflicted upon the enemy as shown in the Chart of Damages To The Enemy, printed on Page 128, and cited in the press reports carried on Page 121. The story on that accomplishment written by the author, was reproduced far and wide, and served as one of the

reasons for the initiation of a recommendation for the Distinguished Unit Citation, frequently referred to as "The Presidential Citation", which was begun by Major General E. S. Hughes, former personal aide to General Eisenhower, and later Special Assistant to the Deputy Theater Commander, Lieutenant General Ben Lear, from Paris, France, in July 1945, after the author of this book had brought the record of the 761st to the attention of General Hughes, a notorious friend of "the forgotten man" in the European Theater of Operations. As "Come out Fighting" went to press this citation was on General Eisenhower's desk for final action, in the month of October 1945, having been sent there from the Headquarters of the Third U. S. Army, with which it began and finished its military operations.

* * *

Upon the cessation of hostilities the Battalion was headed by the following Staff and Company officers:

Commanding: Lieut.-Col. Paul L. Bates, Boonton, New Jersey.

Executive: Position vacant.

Bn. Adj. (S-1): Second Lt. Clarence I. Godbold, Yonkers, New York.

S-2 Officer: Captain August W. Bremer, Port St. Joe, Florida.

S-3 Officer: Major Russell C. Geist, Jr., Upper Darby, Penna.

S-3 (Air): Captain Leonard P. Taylor, Savannah, G. A.

S-4 Officer: Captain Philip W. Latimer, Silesbee, Texas.

Bn. Surgeon: Captain Garland N. Adamson, Chicago, Illinois.

Asst. Surg.: Captain William H. Bruce, Jr., Winston-Salem, N. C.

Bn. Motor O.: Captain William L. O'Dea, Newark, New Jersey.

COMPANY COMMANDERS:

Headquarters Company: Captain Irvin McHenry, Leavenworth, Kansas.

Service Company: Captain Ivan H. Harrison, Detroit, Michigan.

Able Company: Captain James T. Baker, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Baker Company: First Lt. Samuel Brown, Charleston, S. C.

Charlie Company: Captain Charles A. Gates, Kansas City, Mo.

Dog Company: Captain Richard W. English, New Orleans, La.

COMPANY OFFICERS:

Headquarters:

First Lieutenant: James C. Lightfoot, Washington, D. C.

First Lieutenant: John P. Hairston, Toledo, Ohio.

First Lieutenant: Edward E. Cannon, Brooklyn, New York.

First Lieutenant: Charles A. Guess, Topeka, Kansas.

Second Lieutenant: Joseph A. Tates, Baltimore, Md.

Service:

First Lieutenant: *Charles H. Barbour, Jr.*, Junction City, Kansas.
 First Lieutenant: *William H. Griffin*, Marshallville, Georgia.
 Second Lieutenant: *Horace A. Jones*, Detroit, Michigan.

Able:

First Lieutenant: *Harold Kingsley*, Chicago, Illinois.
 Second Lieutenant: *William Kitt*, Milstead, Alabama.
 Second Lieutenant: *Theodore A. Weston*, Washington, D. C.

Baker:

First Lieutenant: *Harold B. Gary*, Abilene, Kansas.
 First Lieutenant: *Joseph O. Kahoe, Jr.*, Washington, D. C.
 First Lieutenant: *Elyseo J. Taylor*, Chicago, Illinois.

Charlie:

First Lieutenant: *James R. Burgess, Jr.*, Chicago, Illinois.
 First Lieutenant: *Thomas E. Bruce*, Fort Scott, Kansas.
 Second Lieutenant: *Frank C. Cochrane*, Beacon, New York.
 Second Lieutenant: *Moses E. Dade*, Washington, D. C.

Dog:

First Lieutenant: *Lawrence R. Bagwell*, Palestine, Texas.
 First Lieutenant: *Jay E. Johnson*, New York City.
 First Lieutenant: *Richard A. Williams, Jr.*, Philadelphia, Penna.

* * *

Chief Warrant Officer *James E. Williams*, Detroit, Michigan.
 Warrant Officer (JG): *Mark Henderson*, Mount Vernon, New York.

* * *

Lieutenant *Godbold* held both posts as Adjutant and Personnel Officer for the 761st, and had received his commission as a Second Lieutenant from Warrant Officer (JG), on April 17, 1945. The position of Executive Officer had been vacant since the capture of Major *Edwin W. Reynolds*, of Billings, Montana, on April 19th, in Germany.

Shortly after "V-E" Day, Lieutenant *Brown* of Baker Company was promoted to the rank of Captain. Other changes took place in May and June to alter the staff structure of the battalion. Among these changes were: the appointment of Major *Russell C. Geist, Jr.*, as the Executive Officer, with the S-3 position being given to Captain *David J. Williams, II*, who had returned from his hospitalization after January 1945, until May 1945. Captain *Leonard P. Taylor* became the Battalion Adjutant,

relieving Lieutenant *Godbold* of the strenuous duties he had performed for several months. Captain *Charlie A. Gates* was brought in from Charlie Company to become the Battalion S-3 for Air and Communications, relieving Captain *Taylor*, in July 1945, and First Lieutenant *James R. Burgess, Jr.*, Assault Gun commander, and Battalion Special Service and PX Officer, became the new commander of Charlie Company on July 26. In June 1945 Captain *Adamson*, the Battalion Surgeon, transferred out of the 761st, leaving the full burden of that post upon Captain *William H. Bruce, Jr.*, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

On the road march from Austria into Germany in June 1945, Chief Warrant Officer *James E. Williams*, of Detroit, Michigan, was injured in a jeep crash, and was hospitalized, and left the battalion.

In May First Lieutenant *Steven B. Mayo*, of Brooklyn, New York, joined Charlie Company, and in October, became the Battalion Special Service Officer, with Lieut. *Guess*, of Headquarters Company, taking over as PX Officer.

From Austria the battalion moved its CP to Bissengen, Germany, and remained there in occupational and control duties over five German towns in the Donauworth area, from June 18, until July 30, when it moved out to Teisendorf, Bavaria, near Salzburg, setting up the new CP on August 2, 1945.

The 761st had been notified in July 1945 that it "had been placed in 'Category Two', and would be held in strategic reserve in the U. S.", and it had then begun sweating out the wait for the re-deployment to the States, scheduled then for the month of September 1945. It was undergoing further tank training in the tank training area near *Chiemsee*, where the eccentric German king, *Ludwig II*, had built a fabulous castle in the huge lake. It was assigned to the Sixth Armored Group; of the XX Corps, which had taken control of the 71st Infantry Division during the drive across Germany in April.

And it was thus that the historic surrender of Japan on August 15, 1945, found the 761st *Tank Battalion*, first armored unit in the American armies to ever enter combat with Negroes manning its vehicles and weapons, and the first American tank unit to ever fire the 76 mm cannon in battle, in the ETO!

* * *

Then came the "ASR" system, of "Adjusted Service Rating" scores, and the men with high points were transferred out to other units bound for the U. S. A., and, for them, the end of their military careers. They had earned their spurs; they had carried their colors well, and they had *created* a tradition from scratch, where there had been none, and the name of the 761st *Tank Battalion* had become known throughout the military world, and on the field of battle.

* * *

Other changes are but incidental to the history of this great fighting unit. They were not part and parcel of the thing that made the 761st a great "fighting" unit, for it was that! It was not a garrison outfit. It was a combat unit, in the strictest sense of the word.

In September 1945, with eyes that glistened suspiciously of tears, four white officers took their leave of the 761st, and went to the Tenth Armored Division, for shipment to the U S and discharge. They were: Major *Russell C. Geist, Jr.*, Captains: *August W. Bremer*, Port St. Joe, Florida, the S-2; *Philip W. Latimer*, Silesbee, Texas, the S-4, who had worked side by side with his enlisted men, and won their respect and admiration during the long hard days of combat, and *David J. Williams, II*, of Pittsburgh, Penna., Yale-man, who had led Able Company into combat and was the first to engage the enemy on November 8, 1944.

Captain *Ivan H. Harrison*, of Detroit, Michigan, became the Executive Officer; First Lieutenant *Joseph O. Kahoe, Jr.*, of Washington, D. C., intrepid platoon commander, and brilliant field leader, became the S-4, and proved he was as capable there as in the lead of his platoon of tanks on the battlefield. Captain *William L. O'Dea*, of Newark, New Jersey, the only other white officer left in addition to Colonel *Bates*, became the S-2, and Captain *Charles A. Gates*, took over the S-3 post, handling it with his customary efficiency and capability.

Later, First Lieutenant *James C. Lightfoot*, of Washington, D. C., soft-spoken commander of the 81 mm Mortar Platoon, who had done a wonderful job during combat, in a most unostentatious manner, became the Battalion Adjutant, relieving Captain *Taylor*, who reverted to his old job of S-3 for Air and Communications.

* * *

And then more than a hundred former members and yet undischarged enlisted men of the 761st re-enlisted for further service, as plans for the retention of the 761st as a "REGULAR ARMY" unit, were taken under consideration. And here we take our leave of the "veteran 761st", still on duty as an Occupational Unit, having been put into *Category one* in September 1945, and policing six Bavarian towns in the heart of "Hitler's National Redoubt", as one of the five "separate" tank battalions selected for a role in the Army of Occupation, the other four being white battalions.

The following officers had carried them into combat:

Lt.-Col. *Paul L. Bates*, 329 Forbush St., Boonton, N. J.
 Major *Edwin W. Reynolds*, Box 26, Billings, Mont.
 Major *Charles M. Wingo, Jr.*
 Captain *Garland N. Adamson*, 3734 South Parkway, Chicago, Ills.
 Captain *August W. Bremer*, Port St., Joe, Florida.
 Captain *Russell C. Geist, Jr.*, 36 Upper Road Manor, Upper Darby, Pa.
 Captain *Ivan H. Harrison*, 3399 Scovel Place, Detroit, Mich.
 Captain *Philip W. Latimer*, Route 1, Box 185, Silesbee, Texas.
 Captain *James R. Lawson*, 4215 West Broadway, Louisville, Ky.
 Captain *Irvin McHenry*, 705 Fifth Avenue, Leavenworth, Kans.
 Captain *William L. O'Dea*, 19 Varsity Road, Newark, N. J.
 Captain *David J. Williams, II*, 45 Academy Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 First Lt. *James T. Baker*, 2612 Blvde Place, Indianapolis, Ind.
 First Lt. *Charles H. Barbour, Jr.*, 506 West 12th St., Junction City, Kans.
 First Lt. *William H. Bruce, Jr.*, 919 E. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ Street, Winston-Salem, N. C.
 First Lt. *Samuel Brown*, 2119 East Avenue, Austin, Texas.
 First Lt. *Richard W. English*, 705 Vernon Street, New Orleans, La.
 First Lt. *Charles A. Gates*, 2007 East Terrace, Kansas City, Mo.
 First Lt. *Joseph O. Kahoe, Jr.*, 405 N. Alfred Street, Alexandria, Va.
 First Lt. *John D. Long*, 316 Woodland Street, Detroit, Mich.
 First Lt. *Nelson B. Nelson, Jr.*
 First Lt. *Warren F. Taylor*, 1343 N. Allison Street, Philadelphia, Pa.
 First Lt. *Leonard P. Taylor*, 102 Pounder Avenue, Savannah, Ga.
 Second Lt. *Lawrence R. Bagwell*, 908 W. North St., Palestine, Texas.
 Second Lt. *Leroy A. Bell* (Address unavailable).
 Second Lt. *William E. Blake, Jr.*, Atlantic City, New Jersey.
 Second Lt. *Edward E. Cannon*, 666 Herkimer Str., Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Second Lt. *Thomas E. Bruce*, 405 Flake Street, San Antonio, Texas.
 Second Lt. *Kenneth W. Coleman*, 2007 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
 Second Lt. *Harold B. Gary*, 910 North Vine Str., Abilene, Kans.
 Second Lt. *William H. Griffin*, Box 144, Marshallville, Georgia.
 Second Lt. *Charles A. Guess*, 615 N. Gordon Str., Topeka, Kans.
 Second Lt. *Robert C. Hammond, Jr.*, 10814 Grautwood Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.
 Second Lt. *John P. Hairston*, 1056 Palwood Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.
 Second Lt. *Jay E. Johnson*, 321 West 118th Street, New York City.
 Second Lt. *Harold Kingsley*, 1901 North 10th Str., Austin, Texas.
 Second Lt. *James C. Lightfoot*, 1329 Concord Avenue, NW, Washington, D. C.
 Second Lt. *Richard A. Williams, Jr.*, 4230 Powellton Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.
 WOJG *Clarence I. Godbold*, 21 Willow Place, Yonkers, New York.
 WOJG *Mark Henderson*, 145 Fulton Avenue, South, Mount Vernon, New York.
 WOJG *James E. Williams*, 3900 Brush Street, Detroit, Mich.

It was these men who teamed up with the men in the tanks and behind the guns, and brought the 761st through its adventuresome career.

• • •

Later officers joining after the first day, included: Lieutenant Colonel *Hollis A. Hunt*, Yuma, Arizona; Major *John F. George*, Richmond, Virginia, and First Lieutenant *Maxwell Huffman*, of Newell, South Dakota.

• • •

And so, the role of the Battalion goes down in the records of history. The divisions with which

they fought had not too much to say about them, but they were there, for 183 straight solid days in the line, with young baby-faced First Lieutenant *Harold B. Gary*, of Abilene, Kansas, putting in more time in the front line than any other officer.

Other officers left the Battalion, and its work went on. But its guns bark no more. The roar of the twin motors of the M-4s is no longer heard, and big machine guns are no longer traversed at an enemy hidden in fields, or behind the concrete fortifications of the battlefields. But the 761st *Tank Battalion* has been here, and it has left its record. It had "COME OUT FIGHTING"!



Crew shows how to dismount "Snell"!



AN ODE FROM A FRIEND OF THE 761TH

(EDITOR'S NOTE: "Taffy" was one of the Charlie Company tanks, and was commanded at times by Sergeants Teddy Windsor and Billy McBurney.)

"To Taffy"

"OH! NOBLE TANKER WHO BORE MY NAME
HOW BRAVELY YOU DID FIGHT!
IN THE SAAR, THE ARDENNES, AT THE RHINE,
YOU PROVED YOUR ARMORED MIGHT!

YOUR GUNS HAD ROARED DESTRUCTION,
YOUR CREW HAD NAMED YOU WELL!
YOU'D STILL BE IN THERE HITTING,
BUT THE BRIDGE THAT HELD YOU FELL.

IT TORE YOUR TURRET FROM YOU,
IT CRACKED YOU LIKE A SHELL —
AND YET YOU LET YOUR MEN ESCAPE,
THE MEN YOU'VE HOUSED SO WELL!

MIGHTY TANK THAT IS NO MORE — OH
TANK THAT MY NAME BORE,
YOU'LL NOT BE KNOWN LIKE 'IRONSIDES',
BUT I SHALL MOURN YOU MORE!"

"Taffy"



SECTION TWO

AWARDS AND CITATIONS

Our Silver Star Awards

The CITATION:

"Lieutenant Colonel HOLLIS A. HUNT, 0347622, Cavalry, United States Army, for gallantry in action in the vicinity of — France, on 9 November 1944. During the general offensive operations of the 26th Infantry Division and attached troops commencing 8 November 1944, east of — France, provisional Task Force A, composed of the — Tank Destroyer Battalion, — Tank Battalion, an infantry company and a platoon of engineers was assigned the important mission of spearheading the attack from — to — France. At the outset of the operations, the commander of the — Tank Battalion was wounded and evacuated, and Lieutenant Colonel HUNT was sent forward to assist the executive officer, acting as tank battalion commander during the entry of the battalion during its first battle action. Shortly after his arrival at the battalion, both Lieutenant Colonel KOPCSAK, Task Force A Commander, and Lieutenant Colonel HUNT were wounded by enemy shell fire. Upon the evacuation of Lieutenant Colonel KOPCSAK, Lieutenant Colonel HUNT, in disregard of his own personal welfare and refusing to be evacuated, assumed command and directed the further operations of the Task Force. Subsequently, the acting battalion commander of the — Tank Battalion was evacuated, and Lieutenant Colonel HUNT assumed command of the battalion also. In his dual capacity and in the face of stiff enemy opposition, he continued the action then in progress, effected the necessary reorganization of elements, and brought the day's operations to a successful conclusion. His heroic action, his demonstration of outstanding leadership and initiative under enemy fire, and his strong devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon Lieutenant Colonel HUNT and the armed forces of the United States."

(PHOTOGRAPH OF LT COL HUNT UNAVAILABLE)

The CITATION:

"Sergeant WARREN G. H. CRECY, 18232347, Infantry, United States Army, for gallantry in action near — and — France, on 10 and 11 November 1944. During offensive operations near — and — Sergeant CRECY, a tank commander, lost his tank when it was knocked out by enemy antitank fire. He immediately dismounted, took command of another vehicle which carried only a .30 caliber machine gun and wiped out the enemy antitank gun and crew. On the next day of the offensive when his tank was bogged down in the mud, he fearlessly faced enemy antitank, artillery and machine gun fire by dismounting and attempting to extricate the vehicle from the mud. In the course of his work, he saw the advancing infantry units crossing open terrain under enemy machine gun fire and unhesitatingly manned the tank's antiaircraft gun from an exposed position, neutralized the enemy machine guns by direct fire, thereby aiding the infantry in its advance. Later in the day he again exposed himself by mounting his tank turret and destroying enemy machine gun nests by direct fire and aided in silencing one enemy antitank gun. His brilliant display of leadership, courage and initiative reflects the highest credit upon Sergeant CRECY and the armed forces of the United States."

The CITATION:

"DAVID J. WILLIAMS, II, Captain, Infantry, Co. A, *** Tank Battalion, who distinguished himself by gallantry in action on *** November 1944 at ***, France. In complete darkness he crossed three hundred yards of open ground on foot, and swam a canal, under heavy artillery fire and enemy flares, to reconnoiter possible routes of approach for his tanks to take up firing positions for an attack on the following morning. The results of this personal reconnaissance enabled his company to successfully support the *** Infantry in capturing its objective. On *** November 1944, at ***, France, three of Captain WILLIAMS' tanks were disabled by direct antitank fire. Two injured crew members were unable to reach shelter from direct antitank and machine gun fire. In the face of intense enemy fire, Captain WILLIAMS immediately led a group of his men to the injured, and carried them to safety. On *** December 1944 at ***, France, Captain WILLIAMS' company was assigned the mission of firing on antitank and machine gun positions. He was unable to direct fire on the enemy because of the exposed character of the terrain. From open ground, subjected to artillery and machine gun fire, he observed and directed the indirect fire of his tanks, and succeeded in silencing the enemy guns. He sustained injuries during this mission."

(POSTHUMOUS AWARD)

The CITATION:

"Staff Sergeant RUBEN RIVERS, 38063493, Infantry, United States Army, for gallantry in action near — France, on 7 November 1944. During the daylight attack on — Staff Sergeant RIVERS, a tank platoon sergeant, was in the leading tank when a road block was encountered which held up the advance. With utter disregard for his personal safety, Staff Sergeant RIVERS, courageously dismounted from his tank in the face of directed enemy small arms fire, attached a cable to the road block and had it moved off the road, thus permitting the combat team to proceed. His prompt action prevented a serious delay in this offensive operation and was instrumental in the successful assault and capture of the town. His brilliant display of initiative, courage and devotion to duty reflects the highest credit upon Staff Sergeant RIVERS and the armed forces of the United States."

(PHOTOGRAPH OF SERGEANT RIVERS UNAVAILABLE)

The CITATION:

"Second Lieutenant KENNETH W. COLEMAN 0517590, Infantry (Armd), United States Army for gallantry in action near §§§ France, on 9 November 1944. Lieutenant COLEMAN, a tank platoon leader, was leading his platoon in the attack on §§§ when his tank was disabled by enemy antitank fire thereby halting the advance. He immediately dismounted and courageously led his crew on foot under the heavy artillery and small arms fire against a much larger enemy force, driving them from their positions, and thus enabling his platoon to proceed on its mission. During the performance of this outstanding feat, Lieutenant COLEMAN was killed by enemy small arms fire. His brilliant display of leadership, initiative and devotion to duty exemplifies the highest traditions of the service and reflects the highest credit upon Lieutenant COLEMAN and the armed forces of the United States."

(PHOTOGRAPH UNAVAILABLE)

The CITATION:

"First Sergeant SAMUEL J. TURLEY, 37009405, Infantry United States Army, for gallantry in action near §§§ France, on 9 November 1944. During the attack in the vicinity of §§§ France, on 9 November 1944, the tank of which First Sergeant TURLEY was acting as tank commander, was disabled by enemy antitank fire. He immediately dismounted and rapidly organized a dismounted combat group from the members of his own crew and the crews of two other tanks. Skillfully led by First Sergeant TURLEY, this group fought counter-attacking enemy troops to a standstill, making it possible for the crew members of three other tanks to escape uninjured from their disabled tanks. During the fire fight, First Sergeant TURLEY was killed by enemy artillery fire. His initiative, his inspiring courage and his strong devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon First Sergeant TURLEY and the armed forces of the United States."

(PHOTOGRAPH UNAVAILABLE)

The CITATION:

"Sergeant ERVIN LATIMORE, Armored, Company "B", 761st Tank Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the night of 23 March 1945, near ***, Germany, Sergeant LATIMORE, tank commander of the leading tank of a task force, led the attack on an enemy column of trucks, towed guns, and horse drawn artillery, completely destroying it. Although wounded, Sergeant LATIMORE refused to be evacuated. Upon reaching the outskirts of ***, Germany, his tank was fired upon by enemy anti-tank guns. Locating the hostile emplacements by gun flashes, he overran the enemy positions. Sergeant LATIMORE's actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ***"

AWARD OF SILVER STAR MEDAL

The CITATION:

7 May 1945

"GEORGE C. BLAKE, Private First Class, Infantry, Company "D", 761st Tank Battalion, for gallantry in action against the enemy on 9 November 1944, in the vicinity of Morville Les Vic, France. Private First Class BLAKE, seeing many of his comrades wounded by artillery and small arms fire, dismounted from his 1/4-ton truck, and under intense artillery and mortar fire carried the wounded to his truck and evacuated them to a medical aid station. Private First Class BLAKE returned and remained in the field during the night to administer first aid and evacuate the wounded. Private First Class BLAKE's courageous action and devotion to duty exemplifies the highest tradition of the Armed Forces."*

The CITATION:

22 July 1945

"CHARLES A. GATES, Captain, Infantry (Armored), Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 403, U.S. Army, for gallantry in action against the enemy on 9 January 1945, in the vicinity of Tillet, Belgium, while the 761st Tank Battalion was in support of the 87th Infantry Division during the Ardennes Campaign. Captain GATES, in command of a small force of ten tanks with supporting infantry after a personal forward reconnaissance, launched an attack against an organized enemy defensive position which was supported by self-

propelled anti-tank guns. Captain GATES gallantly led and directed the attack on foot, keeping his force going forward against heavy opposition, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy and disregarding his own safety until the objective was reached after five hours of bitter fighting, up a long, gradually rising slope. When the objective was reached only two of the tanks and a remnant of infantry remained of the original force. Captain GATES' initiative, leadership ability, and fidelity reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces."*

The CITATION:

13 October 1945

1- Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Silver Star is awarded to:

Lieutenant Colonel PAUL L. BATES, 0280450, INF (ARMD), 761st Tank Battalion, for gallantry in action against the enemy on 25 March 1945 at KLINGENMUNSTER, Germany. Lieutenant Colonel BATES, Task Force commander, advanced on foot to personally direct his battalion, halted after breaking through the SIEGFRIED LINE. Despite his physical exhaustion, intense enemy artillery and anti-tank fire, which twice had knocked him to the ground, he undauntedly led his battalion from an exposed position to achievement of its objective. His bravery, unflinching courage and stalwart leadership inspired his men and reflect credit upon himself and the Army. Entered Military Service from New Jersey.



Sergeant Ervin Latimore,
115 East 12-1/2 Street,
Winton-Salcm, North Carolina.



Second Lieutenant Warren G. H. Creey, of Corpus Christi, Texas, winner of the Silver Star Medal (it should have been the CMH), and holder of the reputation of being "The baddest man in the 761st"! Has a son, Lawrence, whom he has never seen. Was battle-field commissioned in 1945. Slew more Germans than any other single man in the battalion. Lives at 1518 Chipito Street, Corpus Christi.



Corporal George C. Blake,
963 Proprietor Road,
Washington, Ohio.





1st Lt. Bruce
(See Page 110)



1st Lt. Kingsley
(See Page 111)



2nd Lt. Cochrane
(See Page 109)



2nd Lt. Dade
(See Page 110)





Sgt. Freddy C. Reedy,
Cleveland.



Sergeant Moses Ballard,
4452 Douglas Street, NE.,
Washington, D. C.



Corporal Dwight Simp-
son, 813 Ninth Street, Rock
Island, Illinois.



Sergeant Emery G. Tho-
mas, 268 1/2 Els Street,
Youngstown, Ohio.



Sergeant Otis Johnson,
3716 Columnet Avenue, Chic-
ago, Illinois.



Corporal George Goins,
2418 North 25th Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.



Sergeant Louis M. Daniel,
2217 McComb Street, Detroit,
Michigan.



Sergeant Ivery Fox, Route
4, Box 188-B, Spencer,
North Carolina.



Sergeant Daniel Cardell,
1970 Seventh Avenue,
New York City.



Technician 4th Grade Crawford O. Pegram, Route 2,
Box 82, Natchitoches,
Louisiana.



Private First Class Leonard
Smith, 105-20 144th Street,
Jamaica, L. I., New York.



Private Christopher P.
Navarre, 3235 Reba Drive,
Houston, Texas.



Sergeant Isiah Parks, 1047
Brown Street, Charlotte,
North Carolina.



Staff Sergeant Buck A.
Smith, 45th & Denison,
Muskogee, Oklahoma.



Sergeant James Hawkins,
306 South Calumet Street,
Kokomo, Indiana.



Corp. Buddie V. Branch,
505, South Kilmer St., Dayton,
Ohio.



Staff Serg. Johnnie Ste-
vens, Jr., 212 Baker Street,
NW., Atlanta, Georgia.



Sergeant John E. Jenni-
son, 8 East 33rd Street,
Chicago, Ills.



Master Sergeant Ernest D. Hill, 6449 Vernon Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.



Sergeant Ray Roberson, Pawhuska, Oklahoma.



Technical Sergeant Archie C. Young, 630 West Main Street, Everett, Penna.



Technical Sergeant William H. Newkirk, 614 East Cross Street, Ypsilanti, Michigan.

MERITORIOUS
ACHIEVEMENT
AGAINST
THE
ENEMY



Sergeant Paul H. Murphy, 6507 Musgrave Street, Philadelphia, Pa.



Sergeant Simon Brooks, 569 Warren Street, Brooklyn, New York.



Corp. Richard Yewell.



Technician 4th Grade Charles P. Ashby, 38 Walcott Avenue, Long Island, New York.

Our Bronze Star Awards

AWARD OF BRONZE STAR MEDAL

THE CITATION:

"Major EDWIN W. REYNOLDS, 0355792, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States at §§§ France, on 11 November 1944. During the joint tank-infantry attack on §§§ France, heavy enemy artillery fire disrupted communication lines between the two elements. Vital information on the immediate situation was needed by one tank unit to give strong support to our advancing infantry. With utter disregard for his personal safety, Major REYNOLDS, Executive Officer in charge of coordinating tank company operations, proceeded on foot through the heavy enemy artillery fire to inform the tank company commander of the situation. His courageous action materially assisted in the successful assault on the town. His strong devotion to duty, his courage and initiative reflect the highest credit upon Major REYNOLDS and the armed forces of the United States."

(PHOTOGRAPH OF MAJ REYNOLDS UNAVAILABLE)

The CITATION:

"Captain GARLAND N. ADAMSON, 0693106, Medical Corps, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States, at §§§ France, on 11 November 1944. On 11 November 1944, the bivouac area of the §§§ Tank Battalion, in the vicinity of §§§ France, was subjected to heavy enemy artillery fire. During the shelling one member of a tank crew was seriously wounded and could not be safely removed to the aid station. Captain ADAMSON, in total disregard of his own personal safety and under the enemy's artillery fire, proceeded on foot from his aid station to the wounded man and gave emergency first aid coolly and efficiently. His prompt, courageous action saved the man's life. His strong devotion to duty, his courage and solicitude for our wounded reflect the highest credit upon Captain ADAMSON and the armed forces of the United States."

(See STEYR, Austria Photo-Officers)

The CITATION:

"Technician Fourth Grade JAMES I. ROLLINS, 33471896, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near §§§ France, on 11 November 1944. When the battalion bivouac area was heavily shelled by enemy artillery and a comrade seriously wounded by shell fragments, Technician Fourth Grade ROLLINS, a tank driver, courageously ran to the side of his wounded comrade under intense artillery fire and helped carry the wounded man to a shelter where first aid was administered. His fearless action was instrumental in saving the life of his wounded comrade as the shell fragment had cut a vital artery and immediate treatment was required to prevent his death from loss of blood. His display of courage, initiative and solicitude for his wounded comrades reflects the highest credit upon Technician Fourth Grade ROLLINS and the armed forces of the United States."

The CITATION:

"Private First Class FREDDIE C. REEDY, 35268504, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near §§§ France, on 9 November 1944. Private First Class REEDY, a tank driver, while driving his tank near §§§ saw some seriously wounded infantry soldiers lying in the open terrain. Utterly disregarding his personal safety, he dismounted his tank, moved across the open terrain under heavy enemy artillery and small arms fire, evacuated the wounded men to the shelter of a disabled tank and administered first aid to them. His courageous action and initiative was instrumental in saving the lives of three of the wounded. His display of courage, initiative and solicitude for his comrades reflects the highest credit upon Private First Class REEDY and the armed forces of the United States."

The CITATION:

"Private First Class AUSTIN C. JACKSON, 12155248, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near §§§ France, on 11 November 1944. When the battalion bivouac area was heavily shelled by enemy artillery and a comrade seriously wounded by shell fragments, Private First Class JACKSON, a cannoneer, courageously ran to the side of his wounded comrade under the intense artillery fire and helped carry the wounded man to a shelter where first aid was administered. His fearless action was instrumental in saving the life of his wounded comrade as the shell fragment had cut a vital artery and immediate treatment was required to prevent his death from loss of blood. His display of courage, initiative and solicitude for his wounded comrades reflects the highest credit upon Private First Class JACKSON and the armed forces of the United States."

The CITATION:

"Staff Sergeant FRANK C. COCHRANE, 32047557, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States near §§§ France, on 9 November 1944. In the offensive action against the enemy near §§§ France, on 9 November 1944, Staff Sergeant COCHRANE, tank commander, Company C, §§§ Tank Battalion, having exhausted all his ammunition was on his way to rear lines to obtain additional supplies when he saw two critically wounded men. With total disregard for heavy enemy fire, he dismounted from his tank administered rapid, efficient first aid as best he could, and, still under fire, placed Corporal ERNEST CHATMON on the rear of his tank, and Technician Fifth Grade GEORGE COLLIER inside the vehicle. He then successfully evacuated them behind the outpost line where further treatment by aid men was available. His courageous action beyond the call of duty, his initiative and solicitude for wounded comrades reflect the highest credit upon Staff Sergeant COCHRANE and the armed forces of the United States."

The CITATION:

"Sergeant MOSES BALLARD, 33061448, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy between §§§ and §§§ France, on 25 November 1944. Sergeant BALLARD, a Company C tank commander, while engaging in an attack upon enemy positions in the vicinity of §§§ France, was proceeding forward in the face of intense enemy mortar and antitank fire when his tank was knocked out and several members of his crew wounded. Still under severe enemy fire and with utter disregard for his own safety, although slightly wounded, he dismounted from his vehicle, evacuated his wounded comrades from within and administered first aid treatment to them. He courageously continued to do so until the arrival of medical aid men. His display of courage, initiative and solicitude for his comrades reflect the highest credit upon Sergeant BALLARD as a soldier and the armed forces of the United States."

The CITATION:

"Sergeant JAMES E. STEWART, 35328509, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations between §§§ and §§§ France, on 25 November 1944. Sergeant STEWART was commander of a Company C tank during an attack on §§§ France, when heavy enemy fire from the front and flank disabled his tank, injuring several of the occupants. Sergeant STEWART, with utter disregard for his own personal safety, dismounted from his tank and, under the intense fire of the enemy, removed the men from the tank and administered first aid to them. He remained in this exposed position until medical aid men arrived on the scene. This heroic action by Sergeant STEWART was instrumental in saving the lives of his wounded comrades. His display of courage and initiative reflects the highest credit upon Sergeant STEWART and the armed forces of the United States."

(PHOTO UNAVAILABLE)

8 Jan 1945

The CITATION:

"RUSSELL C. GEIST, Jr., Captain, Infantry, *** Tank Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy, between *** and *** France, on *** November 1944. While in command of a medium tank platoon, a 105-mm howitzer assault gun platoon, and mortar platoon of this battalion, Captain GEIST had the mission of supporting the *** Infantry, in capturing the towns of **** and ****, France, which was successfully accomplished. Strong enemy resistance was encountered by the forces at *** France, resulting in heavy losses of personnel and vehicles. At length, Captain GEIST, with utter disregard for his personal safety, and under direct artillery and mortar fire, reconnoitered on foot, and located positions for an assault gun and a tank, which enabled them to fire on the enemy flank. Captain GEIST's leadership, courage and coolness under fire was an inspiration to all, and in keeping with the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States.****"

6 April 1945

The CITATION:

"First Lieutenant HAROLD B. GARY, Cavalry, Company "B", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. On the night of 23 March 1945, near ****, Germany, Lieutenant GARY, in command of the point of a task force, was fired on by two enemy anti-tank weapons. Due to the darkness, the exact location of the enemy weapons could not be determined. Lieutenant GARY, without hesitation, maneuvered his force and his own tank into a position from which effective fire was directed upon the hostile positions. Lieutenant GARY's courage and initiative, which permitted the remainder of the task force to accomplish its mission, reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

26 April 1945

The CITATION:

"JAMES HAWKINS, Sergeant, Armored, Company "B", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 655, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on the night of 23 and 24 March 1945, between Birkenhardt and Klingenmunster, Germany. As tank commander, Sergeant HAWKINS successfully accomplished his mission of supporting the lead tank of a night task force. His quick thinking and desire to destroy the enemy materially aided in the complete destruction of an enemy column. His intelligent and effective support of the lead tank, while it charged and over-ran an anti-tank gun at Klingenmunster was instrumental in reducing the position and led to the capture of the town. ****"

4 April 1945

The CITATION:

"Sergeant LOUIS M. DANIEL, Armored, Headquarters Company, 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. On 23 March 1945, during an attack on ****, Germany, an enemy antitank gun was encountered. Sergeant DANIEL, tank commander, dismounted from his tank, and braving enemy artillery, mortar, anti-tank and small arms fire, went forward alone and located the enemy emplacement. Returning to his tank he approached to within 50 yards of the emplacement and destroyed the hostile anti-tank gun with well directed fire. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. Residence: Detroit, Michigan."

4 April 1945

The CITATION:

"Second Lieutenant MOSES E. DADE, Infantry, Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 15 to 21 March 1945, during our advance from *** France, to **, Germany, Lieutenant DADE displayed outstanding leadership and initiative under enemy fire. Constantly exposed to enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire while leading his platoon in support of attacking elements of the 411th Infantry, he succeeded in neutralizing 13 pillboxes, destroying an ammunition dump, capturing one anti-tank gun intact, and killing many of the enemy. Lieutenant DADE's devotion to duty reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

4 April 1945

The CITATION:

"Sergeant DANIEL CARDELL, Armored, Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 18 to 21 March 1945, from ****, France, to ****, Germany, Sergeant CARDELL, tank commander, displayed outstanding initiative and devotion to duty in closely supporting attacking elements of the 411th Infantry. On numerous occasions as his tank was returning for a resupply of ammunition, he evacuated casualties in the face of heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire. Near ****, Germany, Sergeant CARDELL assisted in clearing a road blocked by several pillboxes and destroying many enemy automatic weapons. Sergeant CARDELL's actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

4 April 1945

The CITATION:

"Technician Fourth Grade IVERY FOX, Armored, Company "A", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. On 23 March 1945, near ****, Germany, Technician FOX was driving the third tank in an armored column when his tank was struck three times by enemy anti-tank fire, forcing the crew to take cover in the woods on the side of the road. Observing that the two lead tanks were unable to move forward over unfavorable terrain and were blocked from the rear by the damaged tank, Technician FOX mounted his tank and, although the enemy diverted their fire to his vehicle, he attempted to move the tank until it was again struck by enemy fire. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

4 April 1945

The CITATION:

"First Sergeant WILLIAM R. BURROUGHS, Armored, Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 15 March to 22 March 1945 in our advance from *** France, to ****, Germany, Sergeant BURROUGHS, tank gunner, displayed outstanding devotion to duty and courage in closely supporting attacking elements of the 411th Infantry. During this period Sergeant BURROUGHS assisted in destroying or neutralizing 23 pillboxes, covered the evacuation of a crew from a disabled tank, and evacuated numerous casualties. In the face of enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire, he covered engineer operations and reduced enemy automatic weapon and sniper fire. Sergeant BURROUGHS' actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

(PICTURE UNAVAILABLE)

4 April 1945

The CITATION:

"First Lieutenant THOMAS E. BRUCE, Infantry, Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 15 to 22 March 1945, in our advance from *** France, to ****, Germany, Lieutenant BRUCE, platoon leader, displayed outstanding leadership and initiative in closely supporting attacking elements of the 409th Infantry and the 411th Infantry. On 15 March 1945, he personally led his platoon through a minefield to give direct supporting fire and neutralize all enemy automatic weapons in the vicinity of ****, France. He frequently reconnoitered routes and firing positions for his tanks while under direct enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. Lieutenant BRUCE's actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

4 Apr 1945

The CITATION:

"Private First CRAWFORD O. PEGRAM, Armored, Company "D", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroism in action. On 24 March 1945, near ****, Germany, Private PEGRAM's tank and three one-quarter ton trucks on reconnaissance were fired on by the enemy. The vulnerable trucks withdrew and Private PEGRAM moved his tank behind a wall, opened fire, killed the crews of two hostile machine guns and pinned down two bazooka teams and one antitank crew, permitting nearby infantrymen to capture the pinned down enemy. Moving forward, his tank was fired upon by an antitank gun. Private PEGRAM dismounted and located the hidden weapon but was cut off from his tank by small arms fire. Crawling to higher ground, he met a group of soldiers with a mortar, and quickly setting the mortar in position, he fired five rounds into the emplacement, forcing the enemy to abandon the gun. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

7 December 1944

The CITATION:

"Sergeant EMERY G. THOMAS, 35308388, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near **** France, on 22 November 1944. When a platoon leader's tank was destroyed by enemy antitank fire during the daylight attack on **** France, Sergeant THOMAS, a Company C tank commander, opened fire and continued firing until his tank was also disabled. When he and his crew dismounted from their tank, Sergeant THOMAS saw three wounded comrades from the other tank lying on the open terrain. Utterly disregarding his personal safety, he courageously led a few men to the wounded men under heavy enemy mortar and machine gun fire, dragged the wounded men to a sheltered point and administered first aid to them. This done, he personally carried one of the men who required immediate treatment into **** to the aid station, then returned and evacuated the other wounded. His display of courage, initiative and solicitude for his wounded comrades reflect the highest credit upon Sergeant

4 April 1945

"Private First Class LEONARD SMITH, Armored, Company 'Y', 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 15 to 22 March 1945, in our advance from *** France, to *** Germany, Private SMITH, tank gunner, displayed outstanding devotion to duty in closely supporting attacking elements of the 411th Infantry. On one occasion Private SMITH successfully assisted in the evacuation of a crew from a disabled tank, in the face of enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. He materially assisted in destroying 23 pillboxes, and effectively reduced enemy automatic weapon and sniper fire. Private SMITH's actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

The CITATION:

4 Apr 1945

"First Lieutenant HAROLD KINGSLEY, Infantry, Company 'A', 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. On 20 March 1945, near *** Germany, Lieutenant KINGSLEY's tank platoon was stopped by anti-tank, mortar and sniper fire. Lieutenant KINGSLEY dismounted from his tank and reconnoitered for possible approaches to the concrete pillboxes which had well prepared defenses against advancing tanks and infantry. Directing fire from his platoon, he neutralized ten pillboxes and then moving his tanks to an exposed position, diverted hostile anti-tank fire from the other tanks in his platoon. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

The CITATION:

4 April 1945

"Private CHRISTOPHER P. NAVARRE, Armored, Company 'C', 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 15 to 23 March 1945, in our advance from *** France, to *** Germany, Private NAVARRE, tank gunner, displayed outstanding devotion to duty in closely supporting attacking elements of the 411th Infantry. Although wounded in the hand and leg early in the attack, he refused to be evacuated. Continuing the attack, he assisted in destroying or neutralizing 23 pillboxes and evacuated casualties in the face of enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. Private NAVARRE materially assisted in the clearing of automatic weapon and sniper positions and effectively covered engineer operations. Private NAVARRE's actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

The CITATION:

4 April 1945

"Technician Fourth Grade ISIAH PARKS, Armored, Company 'C', 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. During the period 18 to 21 March 1945, in our advance from *** France, to *** Germany, Technician PARKS, tank commander, displayed outstanding initiative and devotion to duty in closely supporting attacking elements of the 411th Infantry. On numerous occasions as his tank was returning for a resupply of ammunition, he evacuated casualties in the face of heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire. Near *** Germany, when a road block halted the advance, Technician PARKS assisted in neutralizing several pillboxes and destroying many of the enemy, thereby clearing the road block. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

The CITATION:

8 Jan 1945

"JOSEPH A. TATES, 33389646, Sergeant, Hq Co., Tank Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy between *** and *** France, on *** November 1944. During an attack, Sergeant TATES, while under intense enemy fire, distinguished himself by exhibiting outstanding courage and leadership, by placing continuous fire upon enemy installations to cover the movements of six tank crews which were injured; by radioing all necessary information regarding the operation to higher headquarters; by aiding in evacuating litter cases under heavy mortar and sniper fire; and then taking command of three 105-mm guns, until finally relieved. Sergeant TATES' inspirational courage, his loyal devotion to duty, and solicitude for his wounded comrades, exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States. *****"

7 December 1944

The CITATION:

"Corporal DWIGHT SIMPSON, 3639036, Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States near *** France, on 9 November 1944. In the attack operations by Company C, Tank Battalion, and other of our units against the town of *** France, on 9 November 1944, heavy enemy artillery, antitank, machine gun and sniper fire met our forces. Tank crews of several disabled tanks were hastily organized into a defensive combat group to engage enemy infantrymen and to permit other tank crews to escape their burning vehicles - Corporal SIMPSON, tank gunner of Company C, was actively participating in this combat group when he saw a comrade severely wounded by a shell burst. With total disregard of personal safety and under enemy fire, he removed the wounded man to cover, administered first aid as best he could, and remained with the casualty till dark. Under cover of darkness, he evacuated his wounded comrade three hundred yards to a rear position for further treatment by aid men. His initiative, his courageous conduct, and his devotion to a wounded comrade reflect the highest credit upon Corporal SIMPSON and the armed forces of the United States."

8 Jan 1945

The CITATION:

"OTIS JOHNSON, 36021373, Corporal, Company A, Tank Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near *** France, on *** November 1944. While Corporal JOHNSON advanced towards the enemy in his tank, he encountered intense machine gun fire. However, he continued forward and fired upon a camouflage net, thereby exposing enemy antitank guns in position, that were immediately put out of commission by two other tanks sent out to neutralize the pocket of resistance. The next day, in the vicinity of *** France, Corporal JOHNSON's tank, ordered into defilade, courageously destroyed an enemy self-propelled antitank vehicle, thus permitting infantry reinforcements to proceed into position to repel counter-attacks. The valor and determination displayed by Corporal JOHNSON in the above actions merits praise, and serves as an inspiration to those men with whom he is associated. *****"

8 Jan 1945

The CITATION:

"GEORGE GOINES, 33471934, Private First Class, Hqs Co., Tank Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near *** and *** France, on *** November 1944. Private First Class GOINES, after having performed his duty as a cannoneer, voluntarily dismounted from his tank, and with utter disregard for his personal safety, distinguished himself by commendable bravery in the face of heavy enemy fire. Private First Class GOINES succeeded in inspecting six disabled tanks, aided in the removal and evacuation of seven litter cases, carrying each one back approximately three hundred yards to shelter, while enemy 88-mm guns, mortars, machine guns and snipers continued firing upon the disabled tank column. His courageous action, initiative, and solicitude for his wounded comrades are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States. *****"

8 Jan 1945

The CITATION:

"CHARLES A. GATES, First Lieutenant, Infantry, Tank Battalion, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy between *** and *** France, on *** November 1944. Lieutenant GATES was commander of a 105-mm Howitzer assault gun platoon. His vehicle was disabled and burned by antitank gun fire, which severely wounded Lieutenant GATES, his loader, and killed his driver. After freeing himself from the disabled tank, Lieutenant GATES, with utter disregard for his personal safety, succeeded in carrying an injured man to shelter, out of range of heavy antitank, mortar, and small arms fire of the enemy. Thereafter, Lieutenant GATES remained with the disabled tank column, locating wounded men and helping to carry them to shelter, all the while refusing treatment for his own wounds. Lieutenant GATES' display of courage and leadership, his devotion to duty, and his solicitude for his wounded men, exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States. *****"

The CITATION:

4 Apr 1945

"Technician Fourth Grade OTIS JOHNSON, Armored, Company "A", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. On 23 March 1945, near *** Germany, when two enemy antitank guns knocked out a tank and blocked the advance of an armored column, Technician JOHNSON, tank commander, dismounted from his vehicle and made his way 200 yards under intense antitank and small arms fire. He returned to his company and reported the location of the antitank guns. Again disregarding the hostile fire he accompanied the mortar section leader forward and assisted in directing mortar fire which silenced the guns. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service."

The CITATION:

4 Apr 1945

"Major RUSSELL C. GEIST, Jr., Infantry, Headquarters 761st Tank Battalion. For heroic achievement in action. On 23 March 1945, artillery fire was needed on *** Germany, in order that a task force could continue its advance. Unable to contact the forward observer by radio, Major GEIST, Battalion S-3, went forward in a light tank to adjust the fire of nine battalions of artillery. Despite enemy artillery and mortar fire directed at him, he remained with his tank in an exposed position, adjusting devastating fire on the village. Major GEIST's actions which enabled tanks and infantry to enter the village reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

The CITATION:

22 July 1945

"PAUL L. BATES, Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry (Armored), Commanding Officer, 761st Tank Battalion, APO 403, U.S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 7 November 1944, in the vicinity of Bezange La Petite, France, when the 761st Tank Battalion was supporting the 26th Infantry Division during its offensive against the enemy launched that date. On this date, Lieutenant Colonel BATES led his tank column through Arras Court, France to its line of departure, selected as the result of his previous personal reconnaissance on foot. As the tank column approached the cross roads near Arras Court, a French collaborationist jammed the traffic of trucks, tank destroyers and the tank column with a herd of cows. Lieutenant Colonel BATES personally arrested the Frenchman and got the traffic moving. About the same time the cross roads came under heavy enemy artillery fire, disabling one of the tanks. Despite all this Lieutenant Colonel BATES, on foot, continued to direct his tanks to their line of departure. Just as the situation became clear an enemy patrol, infiltrating the position, opened fire with automatic weapons seriously wounding Lieutenant Colonel BATES. Lieutenant Colonel BATES' courage, initiative, and fidelity reflect great credit on himself and the Armed Forces. ****"

The CITATION:

4 June 1945

"BUDDIE V. BRANCH, Corporal, Infantry, Company "B", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 655, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 25 November 1944, in Honskirch, France. Corporal BRANCH, after having established covering fire for seventeen walking casualties, voluntarily dismounted from his tank, and with utter disregard for his personal safety, distinguished himself by courageous bravery in the face of heavy enemy fire. Corporal BRANCH succeeded in inspecting six disabled tanks, aided in the removal and evacuation of seven litter cases, carrying each one back approximately three hundred yards to shelter, while enemy 88mm guns, mortars, machine guns, and snipers continued to fire upon the disabled tank column for a period of four and one-half hours. Corporal BRANCH's courage and devotion to duty is an inspiration to all. ****"

The CITATION:

16 July 1945

"JOHN E. JENNISON, Sergeant, Infantry, Company "D", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 403, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 11 November 1944, in the vicinity of Haracourt, France. Two platoons of medium tanks were given the mission of clearing a wooded area of enemy troops prior to firing on the town of Haracourt. Strong opposition was encountered in the woods disabling several tanks. As the men were abandoning the disabled tanks, Sergeant JENNISON observed one member of another tank crew who had not vacated a disabled tank. Sergeant JENNISON crawled to the disabled tank under direct enemy anti-tank and small arms fire and assisted the soldier, who had been wounded and unconscious, from the tank. Sergeant JENNISON successfully evacuated the wounded soldier to the Battalion Aid Station. Sergeant JENNISON's courageous and heroic action reflects great credit on himself and the Armed Forces. ****"

The CITATION:

22 July 1945

"THEODORE W. WINDSOR, Sergeant, Infantry (Armored), Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 655, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 15, 18, 21 and 22 March 1945, in France and Germany. During this period Sergeant WINDSOR successfully led a section of tanks destroying fourteen pill-boxes, neutralizing automatic and sniper fire, capturing one anti-tank gun intact, and directing successful evacuation of his crew members. On one occasion when his tank was disabled in an enemy tank ditch Sergeant WINDSOR remained calm under intense mortar and automatic fire and directed the remaining tanks of his section to cover his vehicle while he succeeded in evacuating his crew without casualties. He then relieved another tank commander and continued to exploit the successes gained. Prior to this operation, Sergeant WINDSOR had lost two tanks as a result of enemy anti-tank gun fire and in each instance he successfully returned with his crew to the organization despite extremely dangerous conditions. Sergeant WINDSOR's devotion to duty reflects the highest credit on himself and the Armed Forces. ****"

The CITATION:

5 June 1945

"THEODORE A. WESTON, 2d Lieutenant (then Staff Sergeant), Infantry, Company "A", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 655, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 9 December 1944, in the vicinity of Achen, Germany. Lieutenant WESTON, acting Tank Platoon Leader, demonstrated great courage by entering Achen on foot in advance of the Infantry and tanks to ascertain the location of enemy positions in the town. Despite the intense shelling of the town, Lieutenant WESTON made a reconnaissance of the enemy positions and returned to his organization with this valuable information. As a result of Lieutenant WESTON's heroic act, the tanks of the Battalion moved into town firing on the enemy positions and enabling the Infantrymen to quickly advance. Lieutenant WESTON's courage and devotion to duty is an inspiration to all. ****"

The CITATION:

5 June 1945

"JOHNNIE STEVENS, Jr., Staff Sergeant, Infantry, Company "A", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 655, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 18 April 1945 in the vicinity of Neu, Germany. Sergeant STEVENS ordered to have his platoon of tanks support the infantry elements to which his section was attached, unhesitatingly brought them to the scene of the action. By prompt and vigorous action his section, advancing at the head of the infantry, eliminated the enemy position without casualties among our troops. The aggressive action of Sergeant STEVENS and his platoon resulted in eight enemy killed, and thirty-four taken prisoners. His courage and devotion to duty reflects the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. ****"

The CITATION:

5 June 1945

"JAMES T. BAKER, Captain (then First Lieutenant), Infantry, Armored, Company "A", 761st Tank Battalion, APO 655, U. S. Army, for heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 9, 11 and 12 November 1944, in the vicinity of Morville, Haracourt, and Marsal, France. During the attack on Morville, Captain BAKER, without regard for his personal safety and under heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire, dismounted from his tank and led it on foot to rescue and evacuate several injured Infantrymen and Tank Crewman. Near Haracourt and Marsal on 11 and 12 November 1944, Captain BAKER, suffering face burns received from an exploding shell continued to command his platoon. Captain BAKER assumed command of a platoon of Company "C" when the leader's tank had become disabled. His courage and control of both platoons in the face of direct anti-tank, mortar and small arms fire led to the success of the mission of laying fire on Haracourt. ****"

The CITATION:

6 April 1945

"Sergeant BUCK A. SMITH, Armored, Company "C", 761st Tank Battalion. For heroism in action. On 22 March 1945, near *** Germany, Sergeant SMITH, tank commander, was assigned the mission of destroying enemy automatic weapons and previously picked pillboxes with a single tank. Although covered by only infantry troops on the adjacent hill and without close protection, Sergeant SMITH moved his tank in range of hostile positions. Sergeant SMITH remained exposed fire, and directed accurate fire which destroyed numerous enemy automatic weapons and effectively damaged several pillboxes. His actions reflected the highest traditions of the military service. ****"

SECTION THREE

MISCELLANEOUS



Our Battlefield Commissioned Officers

Front Row (left to right): Second Lieutenants: Joseph A. Tate, Baltimore, Md.; Theodore A. Weston, Washington, D. C.; Frank O. Cochran, Beacon, New York, and Warren G. H. Crecy, Corpus Christi, Texas. Second Row: Second Lieutenant Moses E. Dade, Washington, D. C., Leonard J. Holland, Detroit, Michigan; Horace A. Jones, Detroit, Mich., and First Lieutenant (promoted in August) William Kitt, of Milstead, Alabama.

All got it in the first six months of 1945.



The lighter Side!

The war was not without its humor, in spite of the grim pathos which accompanied the roar of the guns, and shrill whine of the return fire from the enemy. There was a little "fun" on the side, even if not much.

* * *

For instance, the *Isiah Parks* crew of Charlie Company had "liberated" a nice fat hen up on the front one day, and had settled down to the pleasant mission of fixing the yard-bird for service, with the fire ready, and the water getting hot, for the picking of feathers. All was quiet, except in the distance where the muffled boom of heavy arty going off, formed the only sound. Suddenly, without a word of warning, the approach of an 88 was signified by the 88 itself, and it sounded like the range was good, and the crew hit for cover. It was wise, for the shell landed right in the center of the fire, blowing the preliminary preparations into kingdom-come, and spoiling the play. P. S. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, PARKS AND COMPANY ATE THE BIRD RAW!

* * *

In the early days of combat it was a bit difficult for the officers to persuade the men to dig the slit trenches, when parking in a bivouac area. That didn't last long, after the first few shellings, and before the Shermans had halted at a bivouac spot, the crew members were out and digging! But fast!

* * *

Speaking of shellings, the guys still laugh over the way First Lieutenant *James C. Lightfoot*, of

Washington, D. C., threw a perfect block on Captain *Gates*, who was a former physical education instructor in Kansas City, Mo., and a member of Gid Smith's powerful *Hampton Institute* football squads, when the game was really rough.

It was at Moyenvic, and the 761st was getting a heluva shelling from frantic German Artillery OCS students at Marsal. The captain and the lieutenant were in a mess tent, when it broke loose, and the natural formula was to "seek cover". Both started out simultaneously, but the agile lieutenant threw one on *Pop Gates*, and managed to get there first! Captain *Gates* later remarked: "That was the most perfect block I have ever seen in all of my days of football!"

* * *

Operating with the 87th Infantry Division, during "The Bulge" several crewmen of a Sherman got cut off from their comrades, and had to join up with the infantry while sweating out a re-union with their own troops. And for three days the tankers fought as infantrymen, when the whole works got surrounded by the enemy, and had to fight their way out.

* * *

"Cool Stud", the rooster-mascot of Sergeant *Dan Cardell's* Charlie tank, wasn't the only adopted member of the 761st, for just before the junction with the Russians at Steyr, the unit received a Moroccan of the French Coast of Africa, Abdul, or Ali Bendu, or some name like that. Ali, or Abdul, stayed with the 761st for four weeks, and left us, with tears rolling down his cheeks. He got U. S. equipment, and was mighty proud of his khaki stuff, with the armored shoulder patch.





And the Orchestra Made its Contribution

Shown here are the members of the 761st's fine orchestra, which livened the activities with fine music, and then when battle time came they put aside their instruments, and went into the roar of the battle.

Five members of the Orchestra were killed in action. The members of the orchestra shown here are (left to right):

Front row: Tech 5, Ira Austin, Chicago, Ills. (Hqs Co); Pfc. Vinton E. Hudson, Hartford, Conn. (Co. A); § Sergeant Horace G. Johnson, Tabor City, N. C. (Hqs Co.); Corp. Mozee Thompson, Palestine, Texas (Co. C); Tech 5, John M. Simmons, Corona, N. Y. (Co. B); Pfc. Levi Yogi Bough, The Bronx, NYC. (Hqs Co.); Staff Sergeant Humphrey McCarter, Columbus, Ohio (Co. B), and Tech Sergeant Leonard J. Keyes, Port Jervis, N. Y. (Hqs Co.)

Standing: First Lieut. Warren F. Taylor, Phila, Pa. (Hqs); § Sergeant James W. Nelson, Detroit, Michigan (Co. A); Tech 5, Javan Council, Dayton, Ohio (Co. B); Pfc. Frank Jowers, Hartford, Conn. (Co. A); Tech 4, James Grissom, Indianapolis, Ind. (Co. B); 1st Lieut. (then Sgt.) William Kitt, Milstead, Ala. (then in Co. B); Tech 5, Herman Grimes, Los Angeles, Calif. (Co. A); Pvt. Lawyer Holland, Jenkinjones, West Va. (Co. D); Pfc. James Fryer, Tampa, Fla. (Co. D); § Sergeant James Harrison, Brooklyn, New York (Co. C); Pfc. David Gripes, Hartford, Conn. (Co. D); § Private Thomas A. Bragg, Elizabeth, New Jersey (Co. A); § Private Alexander S. Anderson, Washington, Penna. (——), and Tech 5 Elwood Roberts, Cleveland, Ohio (Service Co.).

The "§" denotes the five men killed in action.

Sergeant *Eugene Matthews*, of 310 Ronda Street, St. Paul, Minn., was a Headquarters Company quarter-ton driver (we don't say "JEEP", we say, "quarter-ton"), and in the battling near Sarre-Union in December 1944, his quarter-ton got into the field of fire of Nazi mortars. The barrage was falling pretty steadily, and so *Matty* decided to seek cover in the rear on foot. The mortars began following him, as if by pre-arranged plan, so the lanky sergeant (a trifle over 6-feet) began to put on the steam, and speeded up. The last report showed him some seven miles west of his starting point, at about 40 kilometers and hour, and still going strong. The mortars never caught him! P. S. His quarter-ton was wrecked by the shells.

. . .

The boys are still laughing with pleasure over the memory of that "joy" house, which enterprising members of the 761st had set up, right underneath the Battalion CP, in Belgium, when the 761st was in the "Battle of the Bulge". The joke is on the fellows, for the brass knew the sin-dive was there, but kept mum, because the fellows were getting their real kicks out of it. Downstairs in the basement, and "the line starts on the right!"

. . .

It was only incidental that when the "point system" became official, several members of the 761st came forward to lay claim to "dependents", whom they had once stoutly denied, rejected, and otherwise refused to admit. Among them were several "Kinder"!

. . .

Back in France in 1944, in the coldest part of the Saar Campaign, the snow was many inches deep on the ground, and during an enemy artillery shelling of the battalion bivouac area one evening, Private *Thomas W. Athaley*, of 1801 Thirteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., was observed taking leave from his dug-in tent position.

Accosting *Athaley* one of the lads asked him: "Say, where are you going *Athaley*?" The heavy stuff was falling fast, and the snow was cold and deep. "Just going for a walk", said *Athaley*, adding a little more speed to his strides. "Well then," said the comrade, "where the hell are your shoes?"

Sergeant *Willie Brent*, 2318 First Street, New Orleans, La., a member of Dog Company, tells this one:

"It happened one day in December 1944 during the push for *Sarre-Union*. Two light tanks were protecting the flanks of three assault guns. While being on the front for sometime in the mud and snow without fire, the crew members decided to make a fire to dry out their boots and socks. ("Trench-foot" was the prevalent scourge of those days.)

While sitting around the fire having one of their bull sessions, all of a sudden hell broke loose. An 88 shell exploded 25 yards from the fire. Everyone scattered for shelter. Then a second one came in and put out the fire. Then everyone rushed for their vehicles for protection, but the Germans threw a mortar barrage in, cutting one tank crew off from their vehicle. Then everyone dived for the mud.

The firing ceased for a few seconds, and the men made another attempt to reach their vehicle. But everytime they would start, the Jerries would throw in another mortar barrage. Finally three members made it to the vehicle. They were Sergeant *Brent*, and Pfc's *Eugene A. Henry*, 2127 Pennsylvania Avenue, Baltimore, Md., and *John Teno*, Route One, Box 236, Jeanerette, Louisiana. That left Pfc. *Riley Russell, Jr.*, of 823 18th Avenue, Middletown, Ohio, still out. *Russell* made it to the side of the tank. But every time he attempted to mount the Germans would pin him down. They finally ceased firing for a few seconds and *Russell* made it into the interior of the vehicle. The other crew was still sweating it out. Barrages coming in from both sides held down the four crew members of the other tank. They were: Staff Sergeant *Elmo Johnson*, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Sergeant *Robert Williams*, 14092 Riopelle Street, Detroit, Michigan, Pfc. *Raymond G. Johnson*, 2023 Grey Avenue, Evanston, Illinois, and Private *Louis S. Jackson*, 422 North Stricker Street, Baltimore, Md.

As suddenly as the barrage had started it also ceased! The assault gun observer had located the enemy gun positions, and the 105s proceeded to fire on their positions. After about ten rounds the observer called back for the assault guns to cease firing. The enemy was no more. And Sergeant *Brent* adds: "It was just another day on the Western front!"



(Photo by S-Sgt. Humphrey McCarter)

These Medics Performed Heroic Service Under Fire and Under all Sorts of Conditions

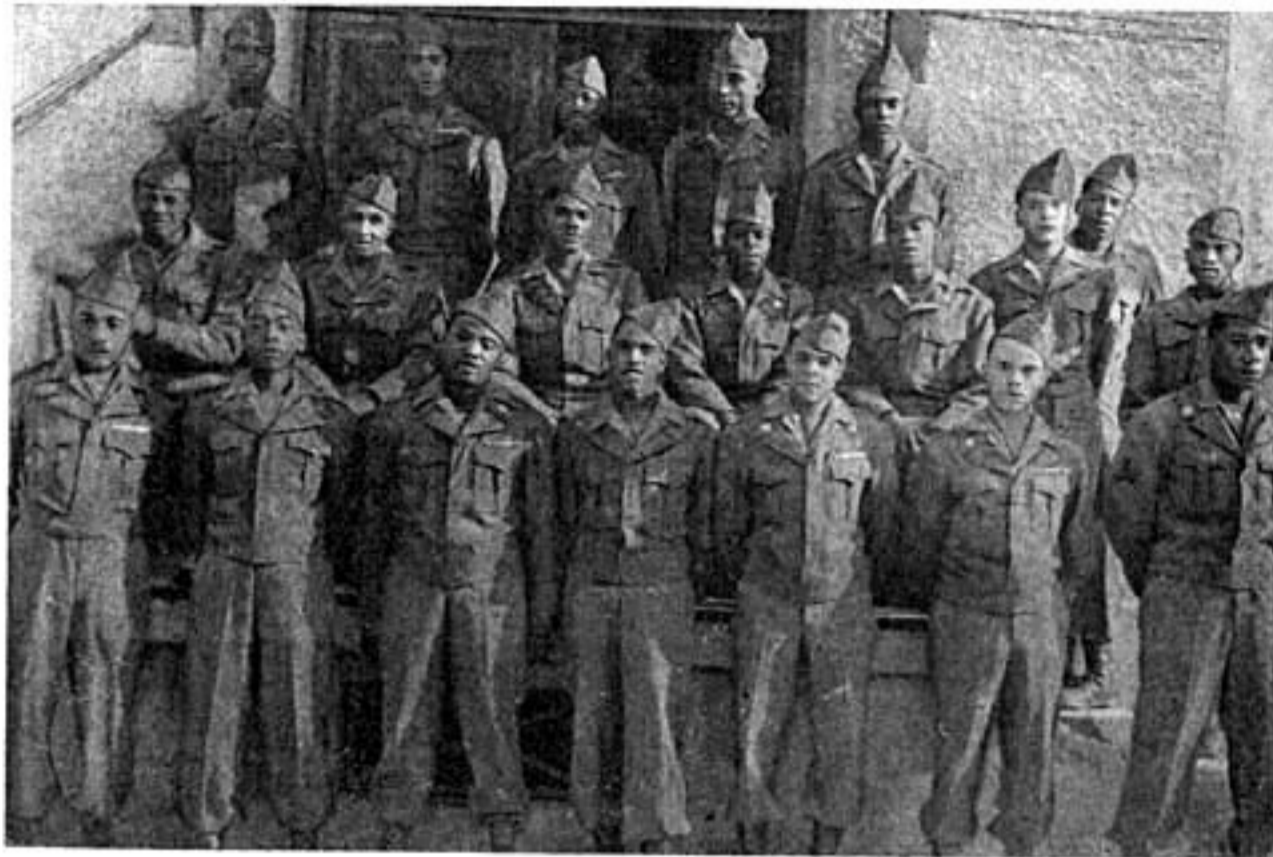
Here is our Medical Detachment, at the end of the war. It was this detachment which lost the first member of the 761st to die in action, when Private Clifford C. Adams, of Waco, Texas, was killed on November 8, 1944, on the first day of battle.

In the picture, from left to right, they are:

Front row: Sergeant Ray Roberson; Private First Class Arthur Fowler; Private First Class Wardell Hughes; Private First Class Ralph Crayton; Private First Class Albert Aikens; Private First Class Louis Hayles, and Private First Class Jessie Fobbs.

Standing: Corporal Floyd Humphrey, Jr.; Corporal Nathan Folse; Corporal Richard Yewell; Staff Sergeant John Phifer; Captain William H. Bruce, Jr.; Private First Class Farris Phillips; Corporal Homer Bracey; Sergeant Charles R. Stewart, and Technical Sergeant Howard Bowman.





The Communications Section - They Kept the Lines of Contact Open

First Row (L-R): Elwood Roberts, Alfred G. Malone, James Mills, Herbert Lewis, Ira W. Austin, Robert E. O'Daniels, and Forrest Bell.

Second Row: James H. Burel, Robert H. Ward, James Caldwell, Robert Lewis, and Herman Taylor.

Third Row: Henry Jackson, Samuel F. Burch, Levi G. Bough, Herbert V. Riley, Rogers S. Crimiel, and Humphrey McCarter.





An Other Unsung Hero

First Sergeant Robert L. Linzy, 48 North Wadsworth Street, Geneva, New York, from Able Company, and a veteran of 18 and one-half years in the Regular Army, who exemplified the true spirit of the 761st and the men who made it great.

This intrepid top-kick, like Burroughs and Navarre, of Charlie Company, refused to stay in the office for paper work, but went right on up to the front, in a tank, and stayed there, as a member of the crew of Lieutenant Teddy Weston, of Washington, D. C. Sergeant Linzy saw much action, and was on the ball in TASK FORCE RHINE, which halted at Klingenstein on March 23rd, after having completed its mission of breaking through the Siegfried Line.

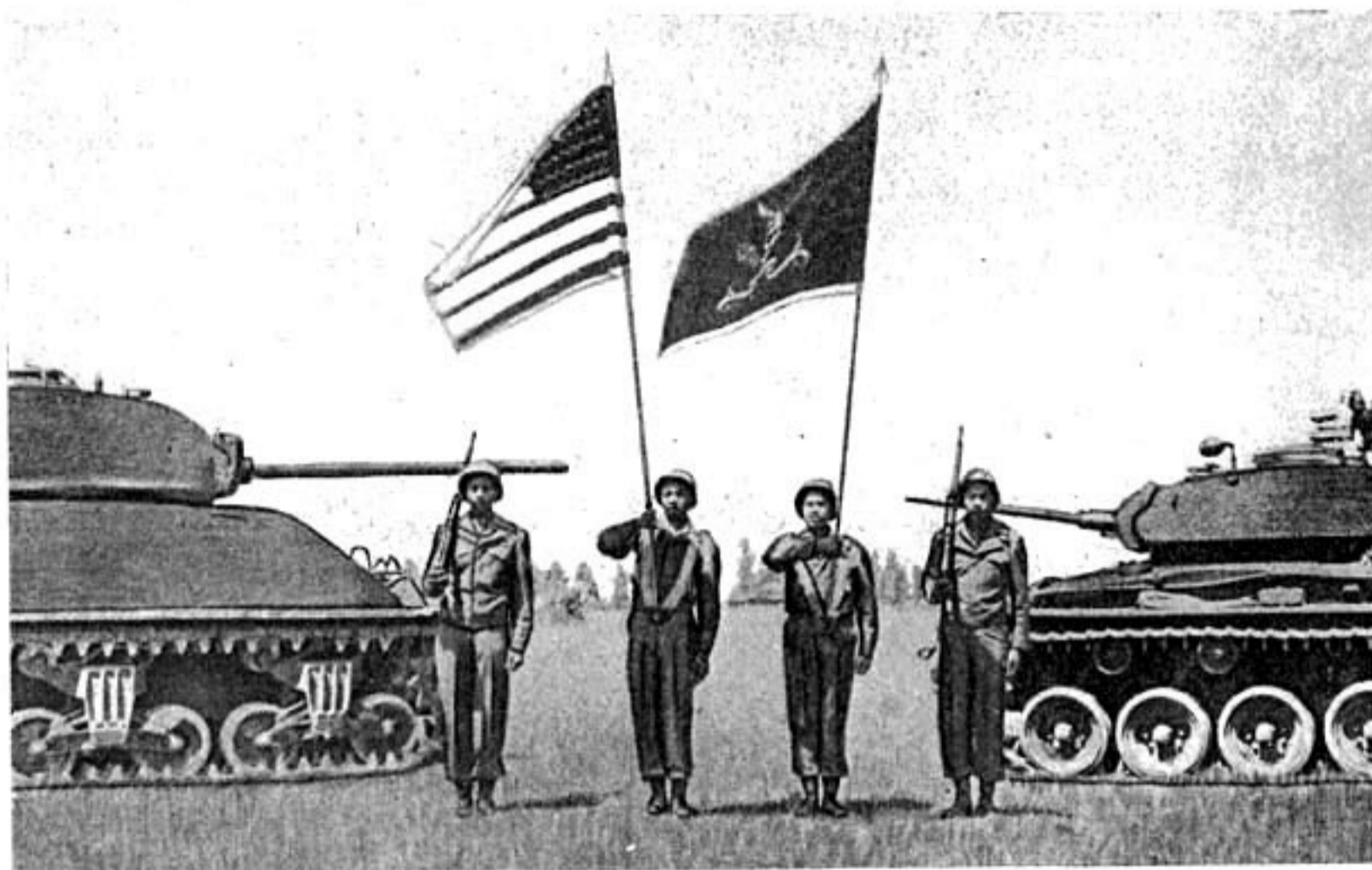
The Little Man with a Big Job

Corporal Joseph Dixon, of Hartford, Conn., who was the stenographer in Battalion Headquarters throughout the service of the 761st in combat and occupation. He got out the voluminous orders, and documents needed in the operation of a fighting headquarters like that of the 761st.



"Well, Now We Can Take it Easy"

Corporal John Snow, of Chillicothe, Ohio, sits in this quaint reminder of American horse-and-buggy days, in the peaceful Bavarian town of Teisendorf, Germany, near the Austrian border. The shooting is all over, and the 761st is taking it easy, with things like this above to pass off the leisure moments.



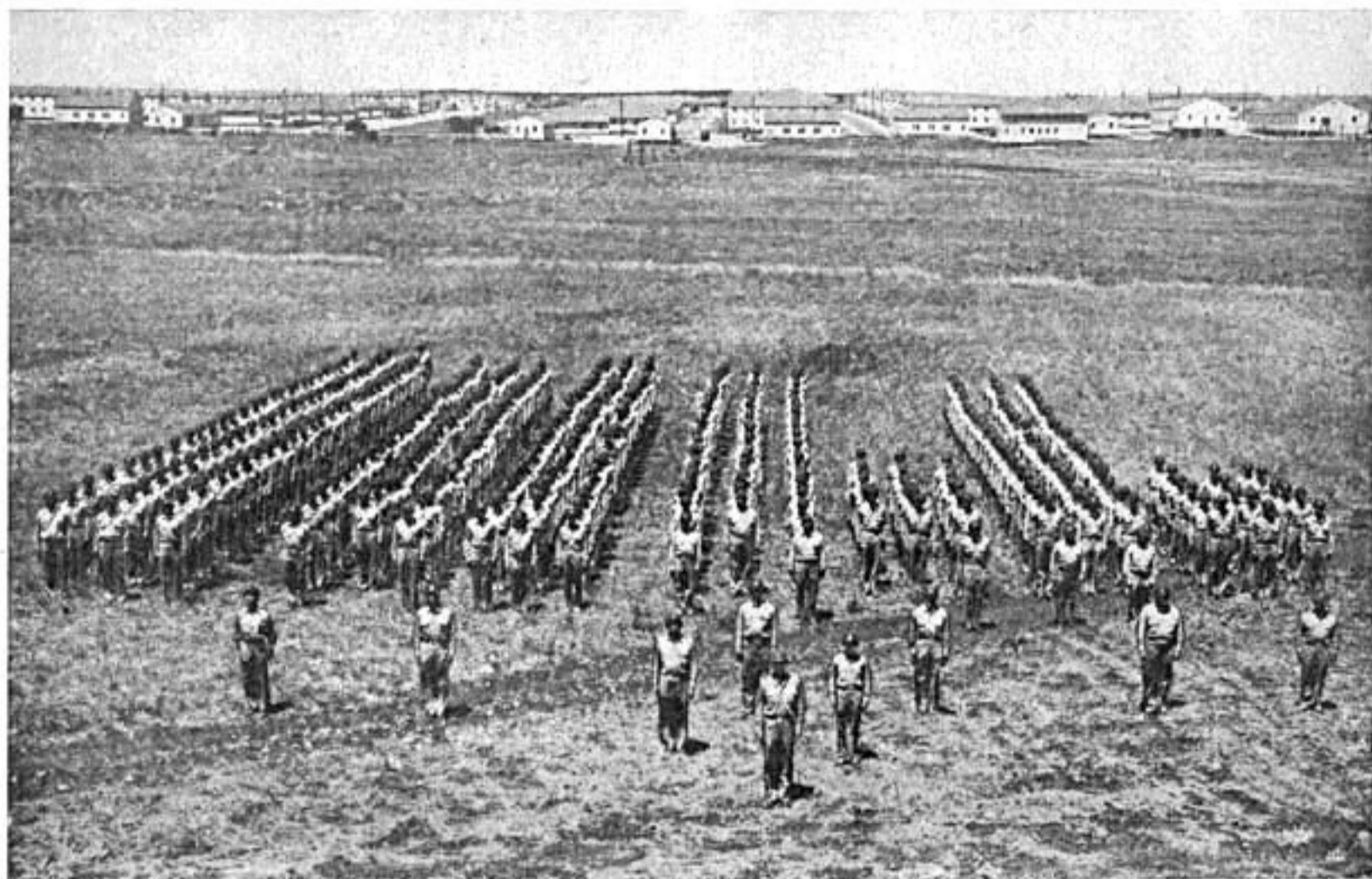
(Photo by S/Sgt. H. McCarter)

We Bore Them Well / Our Colors

The National Flag and the Colors of the 761st Tank Battalion stand waving in the gentle breeze, before the fitting background of two of the battlewagons which carried the "veteran 761st" through the wars in six European countries. And as they wave proudly, just as proudly our color bearers and their guards, say: "We bore them well!"

Under the flags, left to right, Tech 4 Nathaniel Johnson, Master Sergeant Joseph Thomas, Technical Sergeant James F. Hall, and Private First Class Sidney A. Dickerson.





(Photo U. S., Signal Corps)

Just Before the Takeoff

The 761st, with Lieutenant Colonel Paul L. Bates, commanding (foreground), fronting his men, stands at attention at Camp Hood, Texas, in August 1944, just before leaving the scene of their hardest training for the Port of Embarkation, and "The Glory Road".

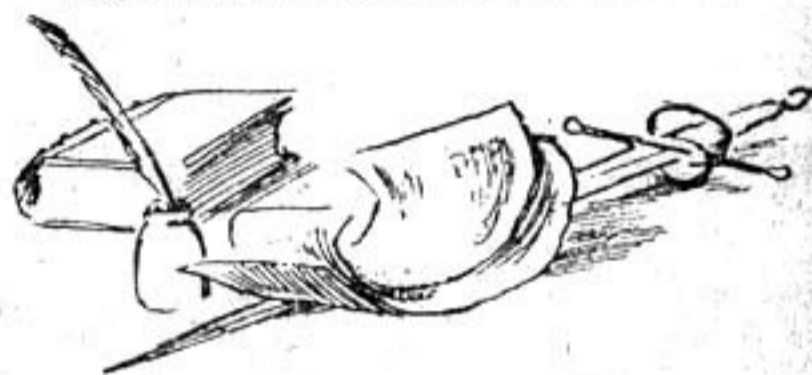


CONCLUSION



The Writer of this Book

Private Trezzvant W. Anderson, 705
East 9th Street, Charlotte, North Carolina,



Billie C. Thompson, 23, of 1000 East Lynn Street, Springfield, Mo., and from Battalion S-4, who composed "The S-4 Combat Diary". — no small job itself, for that was really important, for S-4 was the battalion supply section, and through those long cold, dreary, wet, icy winter days, we had sweated while wondering if we would have the things we needed to keep on battling! We got them!

Billie is married; has 3 brothers (one in the Navy), and 3 sisters (one in the WACs). Attended Lincoln University (of Mo), where he sang baritone in the Glee Club and Chorus, in '41 and '42. Came to the 761st in 1944, and was sweating it out with 69 points, at press time.



Conclusion

The spirit of the men of the 761st was exemplified by the demonstrations of men like First Sergeant *William R. Burroughs*, 3273 East 126th Street, Cleveland, Ohio, who came to the battalion as a replacement, and refused to take a first sergeant's job, and gave up his rating "to ride with *Crecy*", in Charlie Company.

While taking an airfield on the autobahn outside Bayreuth in central Germany, Sergeant *Burroughs* was serving as the tank commander for *Crecy*. He had to dismount from his tank to locate an enemy machine gun nest. While seeking this information, and successfully getting it, *Burroughs* was shot over the left eye. He was evacuated and hospitalized and later lost the eye, after leaving the battalion. It was *Burroughs* who fired the 76 mm cannon that knocked out the pill-box on the Nieder Schlettenbach action pictured in this book, showing *Crecy* firing the 50 caliber, in a remarkable action shot on March 21, 1945.

Private *Christopher P. Navarre*, of Houston, Texas, like *Burroughs* a Bronze Star Medalist, a former First Sergeant, and a replacement; Staff Sergeant *Walter L. Sadler*, of Washinton, D. C., Sergeant *O. D. Collins*, of Teague, Texas, and men like them, represented the spirit of the 761st as they came in with no previous tank training or experience, and made good, on the field of battle, thus enabling the veterans of the 761st to continue the sterling work that made them an outstanding "separate" tank battalion. Not "supermen", but just "damned good men", typical of the American soldier.

When Lieutenant Colonel *Hollis A. Hunt*, CO of the 761st in November, 1944, sat in the mud of a rain-soaked tent on November 20, 1944, and told the writer: "I'm satisfied with their combat ability!", there was a tribute from a field commander who knew what battle was, and what kind of men it

It had been something new under the sun for those people of France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Austria, to watch these sepia Americans coming up to their towns in their huge steel behemoths and give battle. It was new! And they stood by awed, and watched them force the enemy back. — And in France they had flung flowers, wine and kisses at these deliverers as they moved up to the battle lines in October, 1944.

took to win battles, and his words said in effect: "These men are that kind!" And they stayed that way, through the entire 183 days of front line service, seeing never for themselves any relief, but continually battling against the enemy, without any relief!

The folks in the ordnance gave them tanks to replace their shot-up tanks, but other kinds of vehicles were never forthcoming. That is not mine to explain "why". I simply state the facts. The same jeeps, weapons carriers and trucks which started the war with the 761st ended the war with the 761st, and still were with them in October 1945, when this book went to press.

No glamorous accounts of their stirring deeds emblazoned the front pages of the newspapers, for War Correspondents were few and far between. "Why?". The War Correspondents will have to explain that. But it is no different from other Negro combat units. Covered by a fog of obscurity, there were 32 different Negro COMBAT UNITS in service on the Western Front, and in Italy. VERY FEW, VERY, VERY FEW of these were visited by Correspondents. From "STARS & STRIPES" *Allan Morrison* went into battle with the 761st in its initial engagements, spending two days at the battalion. From the AFRO-AMERICAN came *Ollie Stewart* twice. Once was for a period from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon of the same day. The other time was for one day. Other than those two no other Correspondent visited the 761st Tank Battalion, except the author, who was with them three times, being the last to visit them in November 1944, and the first to see them again in 1945, after six months of darkness had covered their whereabouts.

But the story of the 761st Tank Battalion is garnished by the fact that it represented a unique experiment in the history of the United States

"We are expecting great things of you in battle"

LT. GEN. LEAR, CAMP HOOD TEXAS, JULY 1944



Well, here is your answer!



Army. It received scant attention in histories of some of the infantry divisions with which it worked, the author having been privileged to read the histories of the 26th and 103rd Divisions. The 761st was mentioned *twice*, by name, in the history of the 26th Division. And in the 103rd Division's "REPORT AFTER ACTION", published this year, our M-4, General Sherman tanks, were frequently pictured and referred to as "614th Tank Destroyers". This is the story of the 761st *Tank Battalion*, not a "towed" tank destroyer battalion, but a *Tank Battalion*, which fought and fought, and earned its place in the sun, by the sheer weight of its relentless drive, push and might, and by the sweat of the brows of dusky Negro soldiers, who fought for their country, and gave their blood and their lives on the field of battle, ASKING NOTHING, but HOPING that their sacrifices would not go unheeded and un-noticed by history, and that their record would go down in history, as a contribution to the winning of World War II, and the creation of a *Tradition* which had never before existed in the annals of armored warfare, which completely revolutionized battle in all of its aspects, and military tactics.

That is the purpose of COME OUT FIGHTING: to record it here, so that historians will know that once again the Negro has been loyal and true to his trust, and has delivered the goods, under the most trying circumstances and conditions, without shirking, but willingly.

The going was not always smooth, and the tempo was not always pleasant to these Negroes, for the fact remained that they were *Negroes*, and there were occasions when they were brutally reminded of that fact, after the battle had ended. The problem of RACE, which had NOT EXISTED on the field of battle, raised its ugly head after the din of battle had subsided, and IT HURT, it REALLY HURT! To think that while the enemy shells were falling, and death was a matter of but moments, yea, seconds, and every man was a brother when safety could save a life, that all that could be so easily forgotten after the risks and perils of the battlefield had vanished. But it was a ghastly truth, and it hurt to the very core! But these grim warriors who had faced the enemy's "finest troops" took it with quiet, calm solicitude, and realized in their hearts, that they were men of quality, men of character, and men of calibre! That had been proved in the crucible of war, where one mistake is the last mistake.

A few hours after going into battle in November 1944, the 761st was without a commander, as the fire-test proved too much for certain parties, but the men passed over that lightly, and continued to carry on, and give battle to the enemy of their country. Men in the ranks, likewise, suffered from "battle fatigue", but it never halted the urge to go "FORWARD", and it was always COME OUT FIGHTING for the men of the 761st *Tank Battalion*, carrying upon their shoulders the weight of an experiment which was to prove or disprove whether the late Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair was right or wrong! The record is *here*! General McNair was right! The 761st has proved it. And now, let history give them their just dues, for what they did, and how they did it. The end of the trail has been reached, and the echoes of the blasting cannons fade way into the distance, and there are no more fire missions.

To their leaders and commanders all credit, but more so to the men in the tanks with the guns. For they are the men who really made the record. Those men up front in the tanks! It was they who made the great contribution.

The calm steadying influence of the leadership of Colonel Hunt; the effervescent energy of Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) George, who was a dynamo; the quiet soothing voice of Colonel Bates, guiding TASK FORCE RHINE on its great adventure, were matched by the tireless front-line duty of platoon commanders like Lieutenants: Gary, Taylor of Baker Company, Kahoe, Hammond, Coleman, Weston, Kitt, Kingsley, Cochrane, Dade, Holland, Crecy, Williams, Bagwell, Johnson ("The Frantic One"), Bruce and Lightfoot, and the peerless leadership of Captain Charles "Pop" Gates, whose insistence resulted in that most effective teaming of infantry and tanks, which carried the American forces to victory on more than one occasion. The sparking of other commanders like Captains McHenry (the scourge of the earlier days of battle), Baker, Long (the dashing), English, and Williams, with Major Geist who won his spurs with the men because he did not fail to stay up ON THE FRONT LINE, all had their counter-parts in those fearless enlisted men in the tanks, those sepia sons of America, who showed from the very first day when Sergeant Isiah Parks, of Charlotte, N. C., fired

the 30 calibre machine gun from his hands, at fleeing Germans while he was a member of the Assault Gun Platoon, that their courage was unquestionable!

They were the men whose names will emblazon the pages of history as the men who made the 761st what it was! Names like: Lutimore, Hawkins, Mitchell, Gilbert, Winbush, Windsor, Cardell, Johnson, Cavens, Hall, Rivers, Crecy, Turley, Woodard, Graham, Cochran, Taylor, Stewart, Otis Johnson, Pegram, Fox, Thomas, Daniels, Tate, Alexander, Ford, Collins, Sadler, Smith, and many others, who went out there in "No Man's Land", and made that land "American land", by the might of their strength, and the aid of their terrible guns! These and others made the 761st Tank Battalion a dreaded and hated foe of the Nazis of the Third Reich, and paced those five major campaigns.

And soldiers like: Technical Sergeant Malcolm Thomas, Aurora, Illinois, Master Sergeant Robert Jenkins, Brooklyn, N. Y., First Sergeants: Cornelius, House, Parker, Staff Sergeants: Jack Mitchell, Samuel Saunders, Herman Taylor, Sergeant George Pennington, and others who were in that original group of 98 enlisted men who came down to Fort Knox, Kentucky, in March 1941, with Samuel J. Turley, and others, as the



First Lieutenant William H. Griffin, of Marshallville, Georgia, the new CO of Service Company, and the Battalion Special Service Officer in September 1945. Fulla life, and adds plenty of zest to the party! Did a swell job during the war, and kept the stuff rolling to where it was most needed! Succeeded Captain Ivan H. Harrison.

On the Supply Line



WO (JG) Mark Henderson, Jr., the dynamic little bundle of energy, who kept the supply line moving. Home: New York City.

FIRST NEGRO SOLDIERS TO EVER TAKE ARMORED TRAINING, stayed with the 761st from the beginning to the end, even though their ranks were depleted by death, wounds, and other things. They can look back with well-justified pride upon the accomplishments which have followed since that historic arrival in The Blue Grass State, on battlefields in Europe, in the six countries in which the 761st fought, and in Italy where the 758th fought, and the lands where the 784th fought.

They have wrought well, and may the deeds of the 761st TANK BATTALION serve as an inspiration to the younger generation of America, to know that it is "THE WILL TO DO" that makes men great, and it was the Motto of the 761st which made it great, for it lived up to that Motto: COME OUT FIGHTING.

There is little need to dwell upon the vast social difference made by the post-war relationships of these soldiers, upon the people of the Nazi-influenced Third Reich, for all the things that had been said about "THE BLACK SCOURGE" by the vicious propaganda newspaper of the Nazi Party, "THE VOLKISCHER BEOBACHTER" were proven to be

nothing more than vicious lies, for the people of Nazi Germany actually (and literally) fell in love with these easygoing warriors, who had, weeks before, been vicious killers, and from Austria into Germany, the story was the same as it had been in France, Belgium and Holland: "THE GIRLS LOVED THEM!"

When the 761st moved out of Steyr, Austria in June there were frauleins who walked, and rode bicycles for many miles to follow to the next camp of the 761st. When it left Bissengen, Germany, for Teisendorf, more than 175 miles away, there were frauleins (and fraus also), who left their fathers and mothers, and their husbands, and followed the trail of these brown tankers, whose gentle ways, mannerly dispositions, and tender natures, so bitterly opposed to their battlefield conduct, had caused German women of the Third Reich to fall in love madly, with many of them.

When the first large shipment of men for discharge left Teisendorf, Bavaria (in The National Redoubt), their were frauleins who openly wept in the streets, crying not quietly to themselves, but aloud little caring that former red-hot Nazis, who had taught them that the "schwarz soldat" was nothing less than a fiend, should see that their hearts were broken, because the end of the trail had also come for love and romance.

And as I listened to "Maria" (we won't call her last name) say, with tears rolling down her cheeks: "Ich leiben das Mann; ich wohlen das Mann; ich, auch, wohlen das Baby", there was a tug at my heart, for here was a lovely girl of twenty-three, married, who had left her home, her parents, and her husband, a German like she, to be with this Negro soldier, and had become pregnant! The tragedy of it: the soldier is married and has a wife in a great Mid-western metropolis in the U.S. But the case is no different from many others.

Superb on the field of battle; no less brilliant in the field of social relations, where human emotions are stronger, backed by instinct, than the urge to think clearly of the consequences. But that was characteristic of the men of the 716th Tank Battalion: **WHATEVER THEIR MISSION WAS, THEY COMPLETED THAT MISSION!**

Then came the climatic anti-climax, on November 3, 1945, when Colonel Bates took his leave of the 761st, going to the 90th Infantry Division for shipment to the U. S., and we received a new commanding officer! This time it was **ONE OF OUR OWN!** Captain Ivan H. Harrison, tall, brown, handsome, with a Grecian profile, and an aquiline nose, assumed full command of the 761st Tank Battalion, and issued his first General Order, on November 5, 1945.

And the 761st was then led by a man who had come through the mill, and over the long road from Claiborne, and a Negro commanded the Battalion! It was a fitting anti-climax, and it put that sweet, soothing, syrupy taste in our mouths, and our chests expanded with pride. The 761st had done it again, for we had the **FIRST** Negro combat battalion commander in the European Theater of Operations in World War II!

* * *

And so, "Adieu" to those three valiant officers and the thirty-one enlisted men to whom this tale is dedicated! The things that you have wrought, and the inspiration that you have in death provided for those who came after you, will live on and on! And some day, the world will place a wreath of roses upon your tomb, putting it there with tenderness which spells the love and affection of a grateful nation and your comrades in arms! You have: **Come out fighting!**



Awards and Citations

For meritorious performances and achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Austria, during various periods between 8 November 1944 and 8 May 1945, the following officers and enlisted men were awarded

THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

ROSTER

Sgt. ROBERSON
 Capt. O'DEA, Newark, N. J.
 M/Sgt. HILL, Chicago, Ills.
 T/Sgt. NEWKIRK, Detroit, Mich.
 Capt. Long, Detroit, Mich.
 CWO WILLIAMS, Detroit, Mich.
 Lt. Col. BATES, Boonton, N. J.
 Capt. TAYLOR, Atlanta, Ga.
 Pvt. JONES, Louisville, Ky.
 Capt. NELSON, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Capt. LATIMOR, Silesbee, Tex.
 Tec 4 BROOKS, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 T/Sgt. YOUNG, Everett, Penna.
 T/Sgt. PALMER, Chicago, Ills.
 1st Lt. GRIFFIN, Marshallville, Ga.
 1st Lt. GUESS, Topeka, Kansas.
 Capt. BREMER, Port St. Joe, Fla.
 S/Sgt. WILLIAMS,
 Sgt. McBURNEY, New York City.
 Sgt. MURPHY, Phila, Penna.
 Tec 4 ASHBY, Long Island, N. Y.
 Tec 4 JONES,
 Corp. KUYKENDALL,
 Tec 5 YEWELL,
 2nd Lt. HOLLAND, Detroit, Mich.

Addendum

14 November 1945

AFTER THIS BOOK HAD GONE TO PRESS, THERE CAME ADDITIONAL AWARDS TO MEMBERS OF THE BATTALION, AND THESE AWARDS LIFTED THE TOTAL NUMBER OF OUR AWARDS TO THE FOLLOWING FIGURES:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| SILVER STAR MEDALS: | 11 |
| BRONZE STAR MEDALS: | 69 (With 4 Clusters) |
| CERTIFICATES OF MERIT: | 3 |
| PURPLE HEARTS: | 296 (With 8 Clusters) |
| GRAND TOTAL: | 391 Battle Awards. |

THE SILVER STARS WENT TO:

Lt-Col. PAUL L. BATES, former CO.
Tec 4th BEVERLY E. JOHNSON, Pewee Valley, Ky.

THE BRONZE STARS WENT TO:

§ 2nd Lt. WARREN G. H. CRECY, Corpus Christi, Tex.
§ Sgt. ROBERT P. HAYES, Stamford, Conn.
Sgt. JAMES R. HOLLY, Hempstead, N. Y.
§ Sgt. CLAUDE IVEY, Cleveland, Ohio.
Tec 5 ISAAC CHATMAN, New Orleans, La.
Tec 5 JOHN R. HENRY, Ashland, Va.
§ Pfc. ARTHUR FOWLER, Lake Providence, La.
("§" Denotes combat award; others meritorious awards)

THE THREE CERTIFICATES OF MERIT WENT TO:

Staff Sgt. ALLEN ARVIN, Baltimore, Md.
Corp. HOWARD R. RICHARDSON, Chillicothe, O.
Pfc. LOUIS GAINS, Picayune, Miss.

(ED. NOTE:

These awards were too late for fuller detail in "COME OUT FIGHTING".)

VOL. XXXVI—No. 1

PITTSBURGH, PA., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1944

"Sergeant Rivers Led The Way . . ."

Tank Outfit Proves Mettle

KILLS 200 GERMANS TO WIN SILVER STAR

WITH THE U. S. THIRD ARMY—Many stories of heroism and bravery developed about the 761st Tank Battalion, the first Negro armored unit to enter combat, during its first ten days of battle with Maj. Willard S. Paul's 26th Division. The tankers served as one of the spearhead elements in the division's drive to its initial objective, which was taken November 20.

Among them, the feats of S/Sgt. Ruben Rivers, Tecumseh, Okla., son of Mrs. Lillian Rivers, stand out like a beacon. The daring tank commander was awarded the Silver Star following the slaying of an estimated 200 of more Germans. He took his tank into the thick of every battle and it became a popular theme that when Company A entered battle, "Rivers led the way" for he was always there first.

ACCURATE GUNNER ACCOUNTS FOR 20

A few days after Lt. Col. Hollis A. Hunt, commander of the 761st, pinned the Silver Star on Sergeant Rivers, his unit again went into battle at Guebling, a key communications point for German lines between Chateau-Salins and Saarburg. River's tank hit a mine and was knocked out. He climbed out of the disabled tank, got into another, and continued fighting.

Pfc. Obie J. Smith, a quiet young fellow who came to the Army from the little town of Leesvale, W. Va., is the gunner of a light tank in Lt. Richard English's company. On "D-Day" for the unit Smith one of the most accurate gunners in the company, personally accounted for 30 Germans killed. He is married to Mrs. Marie Smith of Leesvale, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Isom Smith, reside at Leesvale, W. Va.

Sgt. Warren Creecy of Corpus Christi, Texas, won the reputation of being the most fearless man in his company by his repeated exposures of his person to enemy fire as he rescued fellow tankers, provided protection for infantry units, and performed other feats of valor which have won commendation for him.

BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE

On November 10 at Morville, the battalion's tough spot, Sgt. Creecy returned through enemy positions under heavy artillery to get aid to his men after his tank had been disabled by anti-tank fire. He then led other tanks to a point from which destructive fire could be brought upon the enemy.

A few minutes later he mounted the "ack-ack" gun of another vehicle and while still under fire aided in the annihilation of enemy artillery ob-

servers who directed the fire that pinned down our infantry. This permitted the ground units to move forward.

The day before Sgt. Creecy had moved ahead of the infantry without regard for his personal safety and destroyed German machinegun positions and Jerry rocket-launcher teams. Then when his own tank was mired down in the mud, he dismounted and performed operations leading to the extraction of the tank. He then mounted the rear of the tank and held his AA gun on enemy positions to protect an infantry unit. He personally eradicated the enemy guns.

OFFICERS SPUR MEN TO ACTION

Crew members of Sergeant Creecy's tank include Sgt. Roy L. Robinson of Spartanburg, S.C., the driver, and Pfc. Raymond G. Johnson, Evanston, Ill., gunner.

In the same area, the crew of tank commander S/Sgt. Jack

Two Tank Heroes Killed In Action

WITH THE U. S. THIRD ARMY—The War Department has officially released information on the first deaths in the all-Negro 761st Tank Battalion, now pushing its way into the Reichland, with Lt. George S. Patton's Third U. S. Army. The first deaths reported were that of a private, a first sergeant, and a second lieutenant.

Gilbert, dismounted and recaptured their tank after it had been hit and taken by the Germans. With him were Gunner, Pfc. Judge Favors, Plant City, Fla.; bow gunners, Pfc. Albert D. Fulwood, Huntington, W. Va., and driver, Sgt. James C. Harris, Detroit, Mich.

Spurring his men to keep moving forward, Lieutenant English, commander of the company, took a tommy-gun from one of the tanks, and proceeded on foot to perform reconnaissance to direct the movement of his unit. He is a former instructor in the Hoffman school, New Orleans, and made his home at 705 Vernon street. A graduate of Dillard university, he is married to Mrs. Loretta English, and is the father of three sons, Richard, Jr., Ernest and James.

Cont'd on next page

The first man in the first Negro combat unit to hit front lines in France was Pvt. Clifford C. Adams of 1615 N.W. second avenue, Miami, Fla., a member of the medical detachment, who died from wounds received on November 8, the D-Day for the battalion. He was wounded as he gave aid to an injured member of a tank crew, while under heavy German shellfire, and died later the same day.

TWO HEROES DIE IN COMBAT ACTION

The next deaths reported were the result of strictly combat action, both men being killed in action, at Morville-les-Vic, November 9. They were 2nd Lt. Kenneth W. Coleman of Washington, D.C., and 1st Sgt. Samuel J. Turley of 815 Trinity avenue, the Bronx, New York City.

Lieutenant Coleman and First Sergeant Turley died the death of heroes, for they were together in the act of removing a .50 calibre machine gun from their disabled tank, in order to pour fire on German AT gun emplacements, and rocket-launcher spots, as their company, commanded by Capt. Irvin McHenry of Leavenworth Kas., was immobilized facing an anti-tank ditch in the bitter fight for Morville-les-Vic, the toughest spot in the battalion's first battle action.

BEST SERGEANT

They were mowed down as they pulled the deadly weapon from its moorings on the tank, and started to get under the tank to begin firing. A hail of fire from German guns in the center of the fighting area, and from a point to their right, tore into the pair, and both were killed.

Both were veteran members of Company C, under Captain McHenry, and First Sergeant Turley had won the reputation of being "the best first sergeant in the battalion." He is survived by a sister, Mrs. Sophie Montgomery, 5145 Prairie ave., Chicago, Ill.

TANKMEN TAKE FOUR TOWNS

WITH THE THIRD U. S. ARMY IN THE METZ AREA—Spearheading a task drive of the 26th "Yankee" Division which jumped off November 8, the all-Negro 761st tank battalion now in action with the U. S. Army captured four important towns, secured two bridge crossings and successfully battered its way

through the strongly defended Forest de Bride, the War Department announced last week. The tankmen were committed to action following the 26th Division's capture of Metz, which never before fell to direct assault in modern times.

They lunged into the battle with such ferocity and courage that Captain Irvin McHenry of Leavenworth, Kansas, received the nickname of "The Bronze Devil," and Staff Sergeant Reuben Rivers of Tecumseh, Okla., received the Silver Star for routing nearly 300 Germans. A dozen members of the medical detachment were cited for heroism under fire.

A captured German officer, after having had a taste of the Negro tankmen and their work, said: "So far as fighters are concerned, I have never before seen such bravery except once before, and that was on the Russian front."

There was an occasion when Sergeant Warren G. H. Creecy, of Corpus Christi, Texas, a tank commander, climbed upon the

rear of his tank which had been immobilized by anti-tank fire, and held an enemy force at bay with his own anti-aircraft gun, while protecting the advance of an infantry group.

The unit moved out from Athianville for its first action at six o'clock on the morning of November 8, as part of a task force, which was operating in two columns. Athianville is approximately 14 miles east of Nancy. This task force consisted of tank destroyers, infantry, engineers and medics, with units of the Negro tank battalion.

The two columns moved out for the attack, and in short order captured Vic-sur-Seille and Moyenvic, two strongly defended towns which skirted a German rail supply route leading from the Saar Basin. They secured crossings over two canals.

After securing these two towns, the tanks took Morville and Harnport.

Tank Unit With Patton Proves Mettle In Fierce, Initial Battle

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NEVER SEEN SUCH BRAVERY

A captured German officer, after having had a taste of the Negro tankmen and their work, said: "So far as fighting is concerned, I have never before seen such bravery except once before, and that was on the Russian front."

It came when a German rocket gun knocked out a tank of the Negro unit. The crew dismounted, brought out the 50 calibre and 20 calibre machine-guns, crawled under their tanks for protection, and continued to blast away at the enemy.

There was an occasion when Sergeant Warren G. H. Creecy, of Corpus Christi, Texas, a tank commander, climbed up on the rear of his tank which had been immobilized by anti-tank fire, and held an enemy force at bay, with his own anti-aircraft gun, while protecting the advance of an infantry group.

TWO COLUMNS

The unit moved out from Athianville for its first action at six o'clock on the morning of November 8, as part of a task force, which was operating in two columns. Athianville is approximately 14 miles east of Nancy. This task force consisted of tank destroyers, infantry, engineers and medics, with units of the Negro tank battalion. It was divided into two columns, with their ultimate objective being a town some twenty miles away, beyond the edge of the dense Forest De Bride.

STRONGLY DEFENDED

The two columns moved out for the attack, and in short order captured Vie-sur-Seille and Moyenvic, two strongly defended towns which skirted a German rail supply route leading from the Saar Basin. They secured crossings over two canals. These towns were some

fifteen to eighteen miles east of Nancy, and constituted the German frontline defenses at that point. Here the forces began to meet with stiffer opposition.

After securing these two towns, the next task was to move on to Morville, a town some four miles beyond Vie-sur-Seille. Splitting up here, one column moved toward Morville for the attack.

STUBBORN OPPOSITION

It was here that they ran into their most stubborn opposition of the drive, for here the Germans had constructed a two-mile-long anti tank ditch in anticipation of the offensive. They had re-enforced this tank barrier with staggered concrete pill-boxes, completely covered with earth, and with rocket launchers and bazooka teams dug in in strength.

Facing Morville, which was at the entrance to the Forest de Bride, the columns met these obstructions, and Company B was halted by pill-box opposition at the edge of the woods. Company C, commanded by Captain McHenry, on the left flank, moved up the anti-tank ditch, where it encountered fierce opposition. With Company B halted, the German guns in the center were turned on Company C, and immobilized the unit for a while. Company C finally retired the position.

ACTION FIERCE

During this action, the crack assault platoon, with 105-mm howitzers commanded by First Lieutenant Charles Gates of Topeka, Kan., a Hampton Institute alumnus, moved up to support these two companies. It shelled the German positions in the woods. The 81-mm mortar platoon, commanded by Second Lieutenant James C. Lightfoot of Washington, D. C., also moved into action and pounded the Germans. Elements of the Fourth Armored Division,

Chicagoan Leads First Tank Platoon To See Russians

By Trezzvant W. Anderson

equipped with bull-dozer tanks and flame-throwers, also moved in, and the positions were finally taken.

Captain McHenry's company saw the hardest fighting.

All units gave a good account of themselves. Company C knocked out approximately 18 enemy anti-tank guns. Company B knocked out ten, and Lieutenant Gate's assault platoon knocked out six German armored vehicles and two pill-boxes.

After passing Morville, which they had practically destroyed, the columns moved on to Hamport, four miles further east, where units of Companies B and C reached the town.

Meanwhile, Company A, commanded by Captain Dave Williams, of Pittsburgh, Pa., entered the action and helped to obliterate and capture Chateau-Salins, the first major town east of Nancy. Following this, Company A also moved to Hamport. It was during these engagements that Staff Sergeant Rivers began earning his spurs, for in almost every instance his tank was the first to enter a town and he was always in the thickest of the fight.

A platoon of Company D, commanded by First Lieutenant Richard W. English, of New Orleans, La., a former teacher at the Hoffman School, there, moved up and took the town of Salva single-handed, with no infantry units along. Sergeant Creecy, who displayed heroism on several different occasions under fire, was a member of this platoon.

72 HOUR BATTLE

After the juncture at Hamport, Companies B and C pulled back for a brief rest, maintenance and vehicle check. B Company came up to relieve Company A after its check-up. Company D was doing screening and reconnaissance. Company C returned to action southeast of Salva operating

WITH THE 761st TANK BATTALION IN EUROPE, June 29—(ANP)—First Lt. James R. Burgess Jr., of Chicago, was the commander of the first tank platoon of the 761st Tank battalion to sight the red-starred Russians of Marshal Ivan S. Koniev's First Ukrainian army when the 761st rolled to a halt on the west bank of the Enns river at Steyr, Austria, on May 6.

While Lt. Burgess' platoon was not the first to reach the river, his was the first group of the unit to actually see the Russians. The act came after a 465-mile drive across Germany, in front of the 71st Infantry division of the third army command by Maj. Gen. Willard G. Wyman, of Washington. The 761st tankers spearheaded this drive from Oppenheim to Steyr.

Lt. Burgess took pre-medical work at the Central YMCA College of Chicago and was formerly a member of the 164th Field artillery. He became an officer of the 795th Tank Destroyer battalion remaining with that unit until its deactivation in April, 1944, joining a quartermaster battalion.

He came to the 761st while it was in Holland in March and took part in the now-famous "Task Force Rhine," which made the sensational Siegfried break through later in that month. Lt. Burgess commanded a platoon of that task force

as a team with the 101st Infantry Regiment which cleared all Germans from the woods up to the edge of the forest just west of Harracourt.

Following this action, it retired again. Company B then teamed with the 101st Infantry Regiment and pushed forward to Lidrequin, a town approximately twelve miles beyond the initial point of action. All these events transpired during a period of 72 hours. And then the maintenance crews took the battlewagons for servicing.

The tank commanded by Corporal Dennis A. Osby, a member of Captain McHenry's Company C, was hit by AT fire and caught on fire. His four crewmen dismounted through the escape hatch and sought cover in a ditch. Corporal Osby discovered one man was missing, and returned to the tank to find the assistant driver, Private Archie Fletcher, unable to dismount because his feet were entangled in a machine gun ammunition belt. Osby entered the burning tank and helped to free Fletcher.

COMMENDED BY PATTON

For this deed Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Third Army commander, commended the men personally.

In all this action, the task of the 761st in its first battle action was all the more difficult because it was faced by the members of a German Officer Candidate School of Artillery at Marbach, who fired heavy concentrations at the tanks during the entire engagement.

Tank Outfit Proves Mettle

Cont'd from page 1

Characteristic of the attitude of these new arrivals to the combat scene was their reaction when Jerry AT guns or bazooka teams knocked out tanks in Capt. Irvin McHenry's company. The crews would leap out, get under the tank and continue their fire with machine guns. One German company facing Captain McHenry's unit near Morville, was practically annihilated by this small arms fire.

FORM CREWS INTO DEFENSE TEAM

1/Sgt. Samuel J. Turley, Bronx, New York City, demonstrated his sterling leadership qualities by organizing his tank crews into defense teams when his vehicles had been hit and set afire. By this strategy several crews were permitted to escape from their burning tanks.

S/Sgt. Frank C. Cochrane,

Brockway, N.Y., assisted in evacuating the tank gunner, Cpt. Carlton Chatman of Pembroke, Va., and tank commander, T/S George Collier, Tampa, Fla., after their tank had been hit. While under direct fire, he assisted T/S Collier into his own tank, saving his life.

Gunner Dwight Simpson, Rock Island, Ill., rescued T/4 Horatio Scott, Lynn, Mass., from his burning tank.

These and many other deeds of valor marked the first ten days of combat for the first Negro tank battalion and gained for the entire unit the praise of the division commander, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., has manifested personal interest in the tankers on several occasions. An appropriate citation is being recommended for the battalion for its services with the 26th Division.

The Red Circle News

71st Infantry Division

Record set by Negro Tankers

First tank battalion with colored personnel ever to enter combat under the Stars and Stripes, the 761st, one of the 71st Division's attached units, established an enviable campaign record for itself since its commitment on October 31, 1944. During a total of 183 days of combat service, the Battalion fought in six countries and was attached, at different times, to six infantry and one airborne division, the 17th.

Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Paul L. Bates, former All-American football player (1930) from Western Maryland College, the Battalion went into action with the 26th Division in France in October, 44. During the Battle of the Bulge, that highly critical period in the ETO campaign, the 761st was in the thick of the fight, operating with the 87th Infantry and the 17th Airborne Divisions.

"Task Force Rhine"

Toughest assignment for the Battalion came in March, 45, when it spearheaded "Task Force Rhine", which broke through the Siegfried Line, in the heart of the Harde Mountain Range, and opened a hole through which the 14th Armored Division poured the following day. This drive continued on through Landau, Wourth, Kandel, Karlsruhe and Stuttgart, as the Seventh Army surged deep into southern Germany. The breakthrough was accomplished in three days flat, from Bobenthal to Klingenmünster, where the Battalion waited for the 14th to pass.

ARMORED NEWS

Negro Tankers In Combat For 183 Days

WITH THE 761st TANK BATTALION.—During its 183 days of front-line combat service between October 31, 1944, and May 6, 1945, the 761st Tank Battalion, veteran Negro armored unit, and first of its kind to enter combat in the Army, wiped out the equivalent of "three or four German divisions" in enemy equipment," says The Red Circle News, official newspaper of the 71st Infantry Division, with which the 761st finished its European operations, after having fought in six European countries during combat duty.

Enemy casualties inflicted by the guns of the 761st, alone, were: 6,246 killed, 650 wounded and 15,818 captured. These figures do not include any of the casualties inflicted in co-ordination with the infantry and airborne divisions with which the 761st fought during the period.

One division, the 71st, took 106,926 prisoners from the date the 761st joined it, March 30, 1945, until the cessation of operations at Steyr, Austria, on May 6, 1945. At this time the unit was in the group of farthest eastern advanced troops of all the American forces in the European Theater of Operation.

The 761st has six white officers. The other 34 are Negroes, and all its enlisted personnel are Negroes. It is slated for re-deployment in September.

In cracking the Siegfried Line, the 761st racked up the following box score: It destroyed 49 machine-gun nests, neutralized 31 pillboxes, accounted for 29 anti-tank guns and captured 29 more, knocked out 4 self-propelled guns, 12 37mm guns, one 170mm artillery piece, 9 nebelwerfers, 11 ammo trucks, and killed more than 200 horses.

(Continued on the next page)

Tankers, Relaxing In Austria, Turn Up With Crack Basketeers

By TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON

WITH THE 761st TANK BATTALION IN AUSTRIA — (AN P) — Now that the wars have ended for the fighting 761st tankers, the fellows have been out on the athletic fields limbering up from their tank-and-turret cramps, and out of the jumble have popped a number of crack hoopsters whose names are well known on the basketball floors back home.

The losses suffered by the battalion during combat were: 71 tanks through battle action, three officers and 31 enlisted men were killed in action, and 29 officers and 221 enlisted men were wounded in action. Of these latter all officers and 50 enlisted men returned to duty after hospitalizing. Two officers and two enlisted men were captured by the enemy, but later re-captured.

During its operations eight enlisted men received battlefield commissions in the battalion. Eight Silver Star medals, and 62 Bronze Star medals, with four clusters, were awarded, as were numerous Purple Hearts, more than 250 of these being given.

The battalion entered combat under Lt. Col. Paul L. Bates, of Boonton, N. J., who was wounded on Nov. 7, 1944. Lt. Col. Hollis E. Hunt, of Yuma, Ariz., led the 761st from Nov. 3, 1944, until Nov. 29, 1944, when he was succeeded by Maj. John F. George, of Richmond, Va., who carried the unit through into Germany in December, 1944, and led it in "The Battle of the Bulge" in January, 1945, and into Holland in February. Colonel Bates returned to the command on Feb. 17, 1945, after hospitalization in England, and led the unit until its junction with the Russians of Marshal Ivan S. Koniev's First Ukrainian Army, at Steyr, Austria, on May 6, 1945, when it ceased operations.

It was activated at Camp Claiborne, La., on April 1, 1942, came overseas in August 1944, and landed in France on Oct. 7, 1944. It was committed to battle on Oct. 31, 1944 with Maj. Gen. Willard S. Paul's 26th "Yankee" Infantry Division, in General Patton's Third Army.

The 761st fought with the 26th, 71st, 79th, 87th, 95th, and 103rd Infantry Divisions and the 17th Airborne Division, in the Third, Seventh, and Ninth Armies.

It received commendations from four major generals, and was cited by Under Secretary of War Robert L. Patterson, as one of the two outstanding examples "of the success of Negro troops in combat," along with the 24th Infantry Regiment on duty at Saipan now.

COMMENDATION

I want to personally commend the officers and men of the 71st Division, the 761st Tank Bn., the 635th TD Bn.,

HEADING the five for the 761st are such figures as: Yogi Bough, New York City who was on Henry Hucles' "dream team" at Virginia Union in 1938, 1939, 1940 and 1941; there's Leroy Johnson of Greencastle, Ind., who caged them for Henry Kean's tough combo at Kentucky State in 1938, 1939 and 1940. There is Leslie James, the former Cleveland pro cager, Prescott McNeil, of New York who played at Shaw university, Henry Wiley a New York City cager, Claude Paxton of Red Bank, N. J., the former national hop-skip-and-jump champion, who hooped them with Giles Wright's Xavier "Gold Rush" at New Orleans; and there is Wilbur Slaughter, who dropped them through the net for West Kentucky college.

Also Steven Reid, of Portsmouth, Ohio, from Florida A. and M.; Robert Cooper, of Georgia, also from Florida A. and M.; Jimmy Coles, of Baltimore, Nat. Johnson of Philadelphia from Virginia State college; Jimmy Caldwell, of Springfield, Ohio, Frank C. K. Alexander, of Philadelphia. Finally Stewart of St. Paul, at Lawrenceville, Va., a native of Richmond.

NOW THAT they've stopped the cannon-fire from their tanks and are getting a slight rest, the jads are trying a few while counting points in anticipation of getting back to the boards as soon as they return to the U. S. A.

The Afro-American, August 4,

The most distant advance made by colored fighting men came when the 761st Tank Battalion battled its way to the shores of the Enns River at Steyr, Austria, where it linked up with the Soviet Army under Marshal Ivan Koniev.

and the 13th FA Brigade who took part in the operation of plan "Tallyho" last weekend. The complete success of the operation attests to the skill with which it was prepared and carried out. Once again you have completed a mission in the growing tradition of the Division. I extend my congratulations to all of you.

Sincerely,

Willard G. Wyman
CG 71st Division.

Negro Tankmen in Thick of Fight for Goering's Castle

By TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON
For The Associated Negro Press.

WITH THE 761st TANK BATTALION IN EUROPE.—It has now been officially revealed that Negro tankmen of the 761st Tank Battalion were in the thick of the fighting which ended in the capture of Reichsmarschal Hermann Goering's castle, high atop a bluff overlooking the German town of Neuhaus, in April.

Two platoons of Capt. Charles A. Gates' Company C were the firing units which operated with the First and Second battalions of the 66th Infantry Regiment of the 71st division in taking the town and bringing into American custody the fabulous loot of the former Luftwaffe chief.

The platoons were commanded by Second Lieutenants Frank C. Cochran, Beacon, N. Y., and Moses E. Dade, of Washington. When the attacking elements

approached the town, they met stiff resistance from Nazi troops who seemed determined to hold onto the redoubt of the Nazi chieftain. Heavy concentrations of 155-mm. howitzer and chemical mortar fire softened up the resistance, and the platoons were ordered to take the high ground beyond the town.

Lt. Dade's platoon hit the town from one side and Lt. Cochran's platoon hit it from the other. They were slightly defying the usual principles of attack warfare because it was late in the evening, but the town had to be taken and so the order was to attack.

The attack took place at half-past eight that evening, and the suddenness and viciousness of the attack dazed the German defenders, and the tankers shelled the town, and the infantry elements moved up the bluffs towards the residence of the fat man.

Army's Experiment Pays Big Dividends

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles by Trezzvant W. Anderson on the 761st Tank battalion. It will be followed by others, since the 761st was covered in obscurity from Dec. 1, 1944, until it made the junction with the First Ukrainian Army in Austria on May 6.)

By TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON

WITH THE 761st TANK BATTALION ACROSS THE ENNS RIVER FROM THE RUSSIANS IN AUSTRIA. — (ANP) — The piano made merry music; Capt. Charles A. Gates, Kansas City, Mo.; Irvin McHenry Leavenworth, Kans., and Dick English of New Orleans, with Chief Warrant Officer Jimmie E. Williams of Detroit, were doing an "Inkspots" version of "Rosetta." The scene was laid in an old Austrian castle, high atop a cliff, overlooking the peaceful (now) Enns river, at Steyr, in Austria.

On the West Bank

In the huge fields around the castle were many M-4 medium tanks and light tanks with their guns capped; half-tracks were parked around the perimeter, and pup-tents dotted the landscape. It was on the west bank of the Enns. On the other side red-starred Russians of Marshal Ivan Koniev's First Ukrainian Army were bivouaced, and in a field below the castle were hundreds of Russian prisoners of war, just freed from their captivity. It was May 20.

A few days before, and for six months prior to that time, these same two-barred officers, and those battlewagons on the greensward had been engaged in the bitterest fighting against the Nazi armies in six different European countries. But now the war was over, and for the first time since Nov. 8, 1944, these men and their fellow-soldiers were having a chance to relax.

Mixed Staff

It was the 761st Tank battalion, with a mixed staff of officers, all companies commanded by Negro officers, and an entire Negro personnel, resting from the wars after six months, 183 days of furious campaigning on

foreign soil, in the first venture of a Negro-composed tank battalion in the history of the United States Army.

They deserved this rest, too, for they had come far, they had fought hard and well. They had commendations from four major generals, and the praise of thousands of white infantrymen with whom they had worked in battle in the European theatre of operations.

Noble Experiment

This battalion, and others which followed it later, were the report to the nation on the experiment fathered by the late Lt. Gen. Leslie J. McNair, former commander of the army ground forces, who first got the Army brass-hats to see the idea years before. The general had fought for his project and had finally won out, and down in Louisiana and Texas this unit was activated, trained, and in August, 1944, it sailed for England and came to France in October.

It marshalled its equipment on a muddy field east of Nancy, France, on Oct. 30, 1944, and listened to a welcome from Maj. Gen. Willard S. Paul, of Springfield, Mass., commanding the 26th "Yankee" Infantry division of Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy's XII corps. The 761st had been assigned to that division for battle. The next day saw old "Blood and Guts," himself, Gen. George S. Patton Jr., atop a half-track giving them another welcome speech. One thing Gen. Patton made definitely clear: "I don't care what color you are, so long as you kill those (unmentionables) up there!"

They listened, those brown tankmen, and their officers. All-American football star, Lt. Col. Paul L. Bates, white, and his other officers listened tensely, for they knew that in a few days "this would be it," and those few days passed not too slowly.

Push Started

"Frantic Incorporated," the organization headed by Lt. Jay E. Johnson, New York City, the maintenance officer at that time, busied itself getting the vehicles, tanks, trucks, jeeps,

half-tracks, guns, cannons, 39 and 50-calibre machine guns, and everything readied for the jump-off, for it had been whispered everywhere that "Blood and Guts" was going to start a "push."

The enemy was just a few miles east, and now and then dropped a few long-range artillery shells into the Army headquarters not too far away. He had been digging in for three months, preparing all sorts of defenses against the day when the Americans would start a new attack against him. Since September the Third Army had not moved very far, and Jerry had had time to put more care into his work of building defenses.

The area in which the 761st was to operate headed in the general direction of Sarreguemines, and important Saar basin city, down towards Sarrebourg, another key town. You'll find them on your map. Above Sarreguemines was Saarbrücken, the sort of "capital" for the area. South of Sarrebourg was Strasbourg, a larger city than Saarbrücken, and equally as important. Directly north of the 761st area was the tough German-held bastion of Metz, still untaken but hard-pressed by three Third Army divisions of infantry at that time. South of the 761st area were troops of the Seventh U.S. Army, with

whom the Third had formed a junction at Dijon, far south, previously.

It is important to understand the geographical background in order to appreciate the way a military operation at the front lines is planned, its purposes and objectives, and the strategic value of these elements.

In the region designated for the 26th division and its attached units lay escape and supply routes, both rail and motor, for the hard-pressed Nazis ensconced in Metz with its numerous forts. The Third Army wanted Metz. It had to have it. Plans embraced the cutting of each of these routes on a set schedule, with every Third Army element given a specific time for the accomplishment of its mission to fit in with the completion of other missions by other units. Everything was planned to the most minute detail.

Elimination of the escape and supply routes behind Metz, towards the Saar basin, would allow the three divisions on the north and south, to complete the encirclement. And that was the task of the 26th "Yankee" Infantry division, which had the 761st Tank battalion as its armored support. The 761st was a "separate" battalion, not a part of any armored "division."

Record set by Negro Tankers

(Continued from page 3)

In its assault on a fleeing Jerry horse and motordrawn column, 450 wheeled vehicles were destroyed. One ammo dump was blown up, seven Siegfried towns were taken, three of them being completely demolished. A total of 833 Germans were killed, and 3,260 captured. All this action took place over some of the most difficult mountain terrain in all Germany.

Inflicted heavy casualties

A complete total of damage inflicted on the enemy by the

Battalion would read like a T/E for three or four divisions. Included among its accomplishments are the taking of four airfields and a radio station, destruction of 64 of the Nazis' famous 88mm guns, 34 Mark V and VI tanks, and 331 machine-gun nests. Casualties to the Germans include 6,246 killed and 15,818 captured. It must be emphasized that these figures represent definite totals accredited to the Battalion itself, and do not include those for which it was responsible, directly or indirectly, while operating with various divisions.

