

A Battlefield History of  
B Company  
274<sup>th</sup> Regiment  
70<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
World War II  
January 1 – March 25, 1945

This account compiled by Eugene and Dorothy Inzer

January 1

Left Herrlisheim at 1545 to the accompaniment of cries of “Hubba-Hubba” from the excited children. Sgt. Mitchell, Weapons Platoon mortar squad leader, cursed out one French kid who, to his surprise, answered in kind and in perfect American English. The trucks arrived in Bischweiler at 1615, the distance covered being six and one-half miles.

January 2

On this day a red air alert gave many men their first sight of an enemy plane. “B” Co. was quartered in a former school for girls. All men had to leave the building. The two jeeps with 50-caliber machine guns mounted patrolled the town. T/5 Valentine, with Pfc. Thigpen as gunner, drove one jeep. Pfc. Strickland and Merriman took the other one. T/5 Howard, Medic attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, saw one plane, a Messerschmidt.

January 3

On the afternoon of this day everyone was surprised when transportation rolled up in the form of a column of Ducks. Much humorous comment was made relative to a Rhine crossing. The Company was to leave for La Petite Pierre, the location of the Division HQ and go into reserve. The Company left at 1530. The good humor of the men decreased as the ride lengthened, and the cold increased as night fell. The men were crowded and cramped. T/Sgt. Marshall, now Platoon Sgt. of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, said that this ride was about the most miserable one he could remember. Sgt. Crowley and Pfc. Fuller and Spieglan of Weapons Platoon went to the front of the Duck and crawled in by the radiator to keep warm. The convoy arrived at La Petite Pierre at 2330 after traveling 30 miles but was immediately ordered to go back as the 275<sup>th</sup> Regiment needed help.

None of the men knew where they were or what was going on. But the feeling that something had gone wrong rapidly and imperceptibly stole through the Company. As the column was waiting to turn about, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bjork, Co. Executive Officer, was told by a 275<sup>th</sup> Officer that his regiment was being cut to pieces, all vehicles were lost, and the chances were that we would only have our vehicles the first day.

There was much difficulty in getting the column turned about. The road was narrow and the long Ducks difficult to maneuver. To make it worse, a string of tanks came along and got mixed up with us. The column finally got started toward Niederbronn. We officially left La Petite Pierre at 0100 on Jan. 4.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was not present as they had been selected the day before in Bischweiler for special duty. They relieved a Platoon in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion the night of Jan. 2 for guard and MP duty. They left Bischweiler the night of Jan. 3 and went to Div. HQ at La Petite Pierre. The few men remaining who made this trip all remember the slippery roads, the cold and the misery experienced by all.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was attached to Div. HQ as special guards. They did not take part in the battle of Phillipsbourg and will be handled separately in these remarks.

January 4

After leaving La Petite Pierre, the column next stopped at Gundershoffen. Here the men dropped much of their extra equipment, some made combat packs, etc. The men were advised to change from Shoe Pacs to Combat Boots as they had considerable walking to do. Most of the men did so, to their later sorrow, as the Shoe Pacs were to be sorely needed in the mountain snows above Phillipsbourg.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and Weapons Platoon men were loaded again on the Ducks and their Ducks started off before Co. Hdqts and the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was ready. As a result, Hdqts and 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon became lost and didn't arrive at Niederbronn until dawn.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and Weapons Platoons arrived at Niederbronn at 0300 after traveling 20 miles from La Petite Pierre. As men were unloading from Ducks, to the rumble of not so distant artillery, the report of an M-1 was heard. An "A" Co. soldier, climbing off a Duck nearby, accidentally shot himself in the hand, which incident improved the spirits of no one.

Snow had been falling for the past few hours and everyone was so tired that they went to sleep in the snow for over an hour. "B" Co. was waiting outside of a large building being used as a hospital. Next, the two Platoons were brought into a large foundry already being occupied by resting troops.

These men were back from the lines. Their faces were gaunt, haggard, drawn with fatigue. They were filthy and unshaven. The writer remembers T/Sgt. Grun, Platoon Sergeant of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, later killed in action at Phillipsbourg, saying, "You men are bitching. Take a look at these men; they've really caught hell and have something to bitch about."

Here is a description of the first few minutes in the foundry as given by Cpl. Penland, assistant squad leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, now Platoon Sgt. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon.

"Soon after being placed in the foundry, candles were lit and K rations were being eaten. While the rations were being consumed, I was startled by the cry of, 'Grenade!' followed by a loud report and cries for a medic. Candles were doused and almost everyone hit the floor and tried to take cover. My first thought was that the Jerries were pitching grenades from the roof. However, we soon learned that a member of another Company, resting in the foundry, had accidentally pulled the pin from a grenade and wounded himself. After the excitement died down, we settled down to try and get some sleep. Before I could get to sleep the Platoon Sgt. called us together and we learned that we were going to move out at dawn, which was only an hour or so away by this time."

Tanks were to spearhead the attack into Phillipsbourg. Part of the town was already held by men from "I" Co. and "K" Co. of the 275<sup>th</sup>. "C" Co. of the 274<sup>th</sup> was to take the hills to the left and "A" Co. was to take the hills to the right of Phillipsbourg. "B" Co. was to go right down the main road from Niederbronn to Phillipsbourg and into Phillipsbourg. "D" Co. was in back of "B" Co. on the road. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon not having arrived yet, led off on the tanks. The Weapons Platoon came next, followed by "D" Co. After the march had started, just about at dawn, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and Hdqts arrived. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon passed through the Weapons Platoon and "D" Co. and took the head of the column, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> had moved out with the tanks. The remaining elements, after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved out, were stalled on the highway the remainder of the day.

#### Actions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon

Two squads from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon were to ride the tanks into Phillipsbourg. As nearly as can be remembered by the few men present still available for questioning, there were five tanks and one tank servicer. A coin was tossed to determine which two squads would go with the tanks. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

under S/Sgts. Lenk and Bergstrom were chosen. Pfc. May and Farley, Mikelsavage and Smith of the 1<sup>st</sup> squad volunteered to go with the tanks to fill out the quota of men needed.

Lt. Thompson, Platoon Leader, T/Sgt. Grun, Platoon Sgt., and S/Sgt. Wood, Platoon Guide, led the men going with the tanks. The ensuing activity was the first actual combat experience of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. Pfc. Witte and Hanson were wounded and died on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January.

The lead tank had on it Lt. Thompson and T/Sgt. Grun, plus a couple of unknown men. There are no survivors available for questioning.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tank carried S/Sgt. Bergstrom and Pfc. Dourand and Condict. There are no survivors available. The 3<sup>rd</sup> tank had S/Sgt. Wood in charge, Pfc. Farley, Buysse and Witte, and Pvt. Taylor. Here follows a description furnished by Pfc. Witte, still with his platoon after being wounded twice.

“Our tank had just about reached the first house (in Phillipsbourg proper) and we were all planning a beer party for after the war in St. Louis when the first 88 shell rocked the tank and sprayed shrapnel all over the place. Everybody then made the roadside ditch in one leap. The second shell struck the edge of the ditch. I was hit in the neck by a piece of shrapnel. Pvt. Taylor had his back torn open by the same shell. He later died. Pfc. Richardson (3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon) gave me first aid and the artillery fire was plenty hot. Within 25 minutes, aid men took me in a jeep back to Bn. Aid Station. I went to the 46<sup>th</sup> Gen. Hospital at Besancon and came back to the Company about February 2.”

On the fourth tank were Cpl. Porter, Ass't Squad Leader of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squad, in charge with Pfc. Mikelsavage and Hanson and Pvt. Kluck. It went to a small hill slightly to the right of the town. Here is a description given by Pfc. Hanson, wounded and returned to the Company:

“On a little hill the riders left the tanks and took cover on the side of the hill. We were under constant heavy fire from 88's and mortars. I was hit by shrapnel in the leg. I called to Pfc. Hammond, also 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, that I was hit. Hammond told me to crawl over to a medic who was lying behind a nearby woodpile. My leg was patched up and I was able to start walking to the aid station. On the way I saw a funny looking soldier. He was a German prisoner, the first Jerry I had seen in the flesh. I went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital at Vettel and rejoined the Company on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March.”

On the last tank were Cpl. Penland, Asst Squad Leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, in charge, and Pfc. May, Smith and Francis. Here is a description furnished by Cpl. Penland, now Platoon Sgt. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon:

“We arrived near the first house in Phillipsbourg proper when our tank had to back up because of the heavy artillery fire. We all got off and dispersed, taking what cover could be found, principally a shallow, sunken roadbed leading off to the right of the main road (Lembach 1:50000--87.9--42.1). Enemy 88's and mortars zeroed in on a forward Artillery O.P. which was located in an old Jerry foxhole about 150 yards to our right front. This heavy concentration of fire continued for about 30 minutes, the concussion from which rolled us around and shook us up considerably. This fire continued intermittently during the remainder of the day. During the day, I saw 21 Jerries blasted off a hill to the left of town (Lembach

1:52000--87.5--42.40--approx.). Our artillery and mortar fire failed to bring them out until white phosphorus shells were used. Then I observed about 18 Jerries come out of the woods to give themselves up. They came across the railroad and then across a field to get into town. As they started to cross the field three more came out of the woods, all of whom were killed at the edge of the woods by an almost direct hit. It was somewhat amusing to watch the remaining supermen trying to keep their hands on top of their heads while running across the field, overcoat tails flapping.

“A little later 12 P-47’s, bearing a very faint white cross, swooped low over us. I first thought they were our planes until two of them peeled off and laid eggs on our artillery position about 500 yards to our rear and also on communication lines on the road. Then 88’s and mortars started zeroing in on all possible cover. Chunks of shrapnel were whizzing all around us, clipping limbs off the bushes which line the road. A piece of almost spent shrapnel hit me on the helmet, causing my ears to ring. It seemed likely that they would start traversing the sunken road. I issued orders for the men to leave the road one at a time to cross an open space and seek cover in a quieter place in ditches along the main road to left rear. In the ditches was about three inches of running water from melting snow which we had to lie in for the rest of the day.

”At dusk we dug in and prepared to stand guard for the tank during the night. About 10 o’clock we were ordered to withdraw back down the road to some barns (Lembach 1:50000—89.0--40.9.) at the side of the road. All tanks and men withdrew, our tank bringing up the rear. We were harassed in the withdrawal by artillery and mortar fire. Cpl. Porter and I had one blanket between us. We lay down on the floor to try and sleep. About midnight we awoke, frozen stiff. There was hay in the hayloft but we had been afraid to go up there because the 88’s were still coming in. We were so cold and tired that we threw caution to the winds and climbed up the ladder and buried ourselves in the hay.”

Left in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, after the tank detachment was selected, was the remainder of the 1<sup>st</sup> squad, consisting of S/Sgt. Inzer, Squad Leader, Pfc. Anderson, Lindensweig, Sunde, Traum and Depas and Sgt. Mann, Asst. Squad Leader. They were first attached to the Weapons Platoon but later formed into two bazooka teams. One consisted of S/Sgt. Inzer, Anderson and Lindensweig, whose mission was to keep contact between “A” Co. on the right and the column on the road and later to help protect “A” Co. against possible mechanized attack. The other, consisting of Sgt. Mann, Pfc. Sunde, Traum and Depas, had the same mission for “C” Co. on the left.

“C” and “A” Companies became stalled on the hills outside of Phillipsbourg. The two patrols hence remained on the road about 400 yards in front of the head of the road column. “A” and “C” Companies finally moved ahead late in the day but the patrols were ordered to remain where they were. They underwent almost constant mortar and 88 fire and took cover in an old Jerry foxhole. Later in the day about a dozen P-47’s circled and swooped. To their surprise one of them peeled off to lay two eggs on the column to the rear. They then knew these were enemy held American planes. Pfc. Anderson took a couple of shots at one with this M-1 as it swooped low over this hole. Later the two patrols moved to the right of the road from between 25 and 50 yards into other foxholes. They became local security for Co. Hdqts. When the 1<sup>st</sup> and Weapons Platoons moved out for an attack, which will be described next.

As related before, the Co. Hdqts and 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had become lost on the Ducks and were late in getting to Niederbronn, arriving there about dawn just after the column had started moving towards Phillipsbourg. They left some of their extra equipment in the foundry. All were anxious to get to Phillipsbourg and see what was going on. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon passed through the Weapons Platoon and "D" Co. and took the lead of the column as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon pulled out on tanks. The forward motion of the road column stopped near a house on the right of the road, where the tankers had a CP. Here S/Sgt. Whalen, a 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Squad Leader, was wounded. He was near a 60-mm mortar set-up (probably 275<sup>th</sup>) and was wounded in the arm by shrapnel. He was taken into a barn by T/Sgt. Kelsey, Platoon Sgt., who aided Medic T/4 Howard in dressing the wound. He went to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital and has never returned to the Company. At the same time as S/Sgt. Whalen was hit, Pvt. Applegate was hitting the ground in the approved fashion, rifle butt first. He had the butt on the ground and was prepared to follow it when it was shattered by mortar shrapnel. As described by T/Sgt. (then Pfc.) Marshall, "He just froze, sort of bending over, and couldn't go any further. Finally he straightened up and ran into the barn."

During the morning, Pfc. Madaras (1<sup>st</sup> Platoon), during a heavy 88 barrage, was trying to get behind a tank. A shell struck alongside of him and lifted him right off the ground. He was knocked about eight feet. He received shrapnel in his right shoulder. He went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convalescent Hospital and returned to duty the 17<sup>th</sup> of January. He was wounded again on Spicheren Heights, 19<sup>th</sup> of February. Medic T/4 Howard dressed his wound.

Medic T/4 Howard, then 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon medic, left the Company at two o'clock and went forward to Phillipsbourg with four riflemen as litter bearers. They evacuated several "A" Co. casualties. Sgt. Mann, from his position with the forward contact patrol, observed medics and riflemen in jeeps moving in and out of the town all day, under heavy artillery and mortar fire, removing casualties.

The first shells landed about 30 yards away from the Weapons Platoon and nobody had to tell the men to dig in. Pfc. Bryan had wandered down to the railroad tracks to the left of the road when the first shell landed near him, spraying dirt all over him. Some record was broken when he double-timed back to the outfit. Two Jerry P-47's came along, each laying two eggs. They were after Cannon Co., set up to the right rear. Two landed near Weapons Platoon.

About dusk the 1<sup>st</sup> and Weapons Platoons pulled out to make a night attack on a steep hill to the immediate of Phillipsbourg (Lembach 1:50000--88.0--42.8).

They moved along the road about 400 yards and then out to the right, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon leading, over the hill to the road and across a draw from the objective. While crossing the draw, Pfc. Burrow of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was hit in the left thigh by shrapnel from an 88 shell. He was brought back by Medic Howard and Pvt. Applegate. Pfc. Burrow went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Gen. Hospital and rejoined the Platoon recently at Kastel, Germany. The two Platoons reached the base of the hill which they were to take without further incident. They started to dig in right above a wagon trail which ran along the base of the hill. After a short while they were ordered to withdraw. They skirted the edge of Phillipsbourg and then back down the road a ways. They then went to a hill left of Phillipsbourg (Lembach 1:50000-87.9-41.8) and dug in, remaining there until noon of the next day.

On this hill Sgt. Luther and T/Sgt., then Pfc., Marshall took two prisoners. As T/Sgt. Marshall told it:

“We were digging in when two Jerries came walking down the hill. Our weapons were not in our hands as we were digging. I reached for the BAR and yelled ‘Halt!’ The Jerries seemed to wish to surrender, but they still had their weapons. I tried to fire a couple of shots but the BAR didn’t work. While trying to make it work it suddenly went off, one shot going into the ground, scaring the Jerries to death. They fell on their knees, yelling, ‘Bitte, bitte!’, One of them spoke some English. He said they were the only two left out of their outfit. He said they had been transferred from the Luftwaffe only 10 days before. T/Sgt. Kelsey and I took them back to Bn.”

When the 1<sup>st</sup> and Weapons Platoon pulled out to make the attack, the Co. Hdqts stopped on the hill to the right of the road. Here they established the Co. CP, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon contact patrols, which they picked up here, as local security. All dug in and orders were for everyone to stay awake all night. Lt. Bjork received information about an enemy machine gun nest farther up the hill, which had given trouble earlier. In the dark he personally led a four-man patrol, consisting of himself, S/Sgt. Inzer, and Pfc. Anderson and Depas, to take it. Approaching the position from a flank, it appeared to be deserted. Lt. Bjork told the other three to wait, and going forward, found the position was deserted by the gun still there. They brought it back, and it was the first machine gun taken by Baker Co.

January 5

At one o’clock the Co. CP received word to move across the hill behind Charley Co. to the left of Phillipsbourg. This is the hill on which 1<sup>st</sup> and Weapons Platoons had moved earlier. It was snowing again and the ground was white. It was necessary to move across the highway, the railroad tracks, over a fence, down a steep bank, across low, marshy ground, and a stream. The change was made without incident, except for two minor (except for the individuals concerned) mishaps. Pfc. Simmons of HQ walking behind S/Sgt. Inzer, slipped on the muddy bank and fell in the brook, wetting himself to the skin. Someone (believed to be Pfc. Lindenzweig, later killed in action) lost his helmet and had to flounder back across the field to look for it. There was then about three inches of snow, the ground underneath was soggy and slippery, and everyone had difficulty in keeping on his feet. A building to the right in Phillipsbourg was still burning fitfully, its crackle providing the only noise except for some distant artillery.

After daylight C rations were issued. At noon a messenger arrived from Wrecker (275<sup>th</sup>) saying that we were to move out immediately against Phillipsbourg. Capt. DeCamp had gone to battalion during the night and arrived back at noon.

January 5, Noon

At noon the Company jumped off against Phillipsbourg again. The order of march was: 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, less the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squad, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Weapons Platoon, HQ, with 3<sup>rd</sup> Squad of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon attached as security.

Instructions were for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons to go to the lake and turn right. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was to clear houses on the left of the road, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon houses on the right side of the road. Weapons were to be used as needed. Instructions were later changed for 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon to move onto hill 88.0-42.8-Lembach, 1:50000.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon advanced to houses at 87.7-43.1-Lembach, 1:50000, digging in on the forward nose, supported by one heavy machine gun section from Dog Co. They remained there until early next morning.

The Company, in order to reach the road into town from its starting point, had to cross the low marshy ground to the left of the highway and railroad. There was absolutely no cover against artillery or air attack until the roadside ditches were reached. In crossing, it was necessary to disperse the men to a great extent. The Company was strung out for over one-half mile, making control difficult.

The road through town was being pounded incessantly by 88's, the men ran into machine gun fire, and were harassed by snipers. The hill to the right of Phillipsbourg overlooking the town was pine covered, rocky and precipitous. It was very hard to just climb it.

#### Action of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon

First Platoon moved out with the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad leading, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> squads were at first attached to Co. HQ. Many men had full packs but threw them away in town. The trip into the lower part of town was made without serious incident. Pfc.'s Marshall and Ekstrom were Company Scouts. They reached a ditch which ran along the road. There was water and low marshy ground to the left of the highway and railroad. There was absolutely no cover against artillery or air attack until the roadside ditches were reached. They were pinned down by machine gunfire as described by T/Sgt. Marshall:

“Between the ditch and road was a barn in which Col. Malloy (275<sup>th</sup>) was directing the attack. After I had been in the ditch for about an hour, Col. Malloy called to me and said, ‘Where is the rest of your Company? Where is your Captain? Go back and bring up the rest of your company.’ I went back and tried to get the men to come back. It was hard as they were scattered along the road and couldn’t hear well above the noise. They kept coming up a few at a time. Here Pfc. Webber was killed. Pfc. Webber was the sniper in Sgt. Luther’s squad but he had turned in his ’03 for a Grease Gun. Sgt. Luther was trying to bring his squad forward. It was necessary for them to cross the road under machine gun fire. Luther kept yelling at Webber to come across but he wouldn’t come at first. He finally came and wasn’t there a second before an 88 shell came in alongside and the concussion killed him immediately.

“When I got back in the ditch, Col. Malloy was telling the tanks to move up the road. They wouldn’t go. He gave them a direct order and they still refused to go. Col. Malloy went over and talked to them and they said they wanted infantry. Col. Malloy gathered together a bunch of men, including myself, Sgt. Luther, Pfc. Ekstrom, and “I” Co. 275<sup>th</sup> man, and a couple of unidentified men. Col. Malloy said, ‘Here is your infantry.’ The tanks then went up the road a ways, with us going along, until they reached a row of houses on the right. We pointed out the machine gun nests and they wiped them out. Later in the afternoon Col. Malloy came out in the road to talk to the tankers and was hit. He was carried back to the house nearest the road. We cleared the other houses in the row, taking about eight prisoners, an officer and another man. Many of us gathered in one house. Our men kept dribbling in all afternoon. Among those in the house were Col. Malloy, a Co. “I” Lt. (275<sup>th</sup>), T/Sgt. Kelsey, Sgt. Chappell, Sgt. Luther, Pfc. Corley, Condon, Ekstrom, Poteat, S/Sgt. Wilkins, Medic Howard, two wounded Jerries, a Lieutenant and a Non-Com., 10 civilians – three women, three babies, and four men. Medic Howard gave first aid to Col. Malloy, two wounded Jerries, and two civilian women.”

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved out with the 1<sup>st</sup> squad leading, followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> squads. After reaching the lower part of Phillipsbourg the Platoon was directed to move to the hill on the right above Phillipsbourg. The Jerries opened up with a terrific 88 barrage and kept it up all afternoon. The 1<sup>st</sup> squad moved forward around the side of the hill and the 3<sup>rd</sup> moved higher up the hill and moved forward on their flank. As near as can be determined, the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad stayed in town and was the last to move up. The first squad, after moving away, was pinned down by machine gun fire from the town below. The hillside was steep and rocky and was rough. The 88's kept pounding in. Sgt. Mann took cover in a partly dug foxhole and saw GIs in the doorways of some of the houses below. Then a tank came up and they moved forward with it past a few other houses. As the tank turned to direct fire on a house, about eight Jerries came running out yelling, "Kamerad". The GIs herded them together and moved back shouting, "Get going, you sons of bitches."

While lying along this hillside, Pfc. May was killed, doubtless instantaneously. No one saw him get hit. He was in the 1<sup>st</sup> squad. Pfc. Dourand, later killed in action, saw his body. It is believed that he received a direct hit by an 88 shell. Cpl. Penland, the asst. squad leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, also saw his body lying behind a tree.

Here S/Sgt. Wood, Plat. Guide, was wounded. Pfc. Smith, 1<sup>st</sup> squad, saw Wood hit. Here is his description:

"S/Sgt. Wood was lying behind a tree, his legs sticking out to the rear. I was lying near him. He told me I was too close and to move up. Just as I arrived at my new position, an 88 shell came in and got Sgt. Wood in the leg. I probably would have been hit if he had not told me to move."

S/Sgt. Wood went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital and has never rejoined the Company.

The Medics, Howard and Gellerman, came onto the hill behind the 1<sup>st</sup> squad. Gellerman was struck in the left shoulder by shrapnel as he was taking cover behind a tree. He was given first aid by Howard. Howard a little later went into the town and joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in the house where they were gathered. Gellerman went to the 45<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Besacon. He returned to his medical outfit when "B" Co. was at Stiring-Wendel.

Cpl. Penland, asst squad leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, was lying in a ditch near the church near the foot of the hill. In his own words:

"I had charge of the bazooka team at that time and was lying in a ditch seeking cover from a terrific 88 barrage. An 88 hit the base of the tree on the edge of the ditch, caving in the sides and almost covering me with dirt and snow. My rifle was completely buried. I was addled for a minute or so. After my senses returned, I dug out my rifle and found that I could not open the bolt. I completely field-stripped my rifle, using my handkerchief to give it a hurried cleaning. While I was working, shells continued to drop all around. One reason for cleaning my rifle under these conditions was because I feared an enemy attack from the top of the hill and I didn't want to be caught without a weapon."

In the late afternoon the Platoon reached the forward part of the hill overlooking the upper part of Phillipsbourg. Squads were assigned positions and the men began digging in. Digging was difficult because the hill was extremely rocky. One heavy machine gun section was placed here, with 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men as local security. The Weapons Platoon had two light machine guns up on the 3<sup>rd</sup> squads

left. The enemy had apparently direct 88 fire on this hill, as the round could be heard leaving the gun and then the explosion heard. The shells seemed to come from a hill at 87.5-43.7-Lembach, 1:50000. As the 1<sup>st</sup> squad began digging in, the Jerries threw two smoke shells which burst nearby. No one could understand the reason for the smoke shells. The 3<sup>rd</sup>'s positions were on top of a practically sheer cliff.

Sgt. Mann, asst squad leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> squad, and Pfc. Traum were digging a hole together when an 88 shell hit a 10 foot pine tree about 10 yards away right at its base, cutting it down cleanly. Some of the men were fortunate in finding holes partially dug.

Others dug far into the night and did not finish the holes because of the rocks. One Dog Co. man was wounded by a shell fragment. While it was still light there was quite a commotion across the valley in the vicinity of the lake. Someone had fallen in the water and was crying, "Help! Help! Get me out. I'm drowning!" The cries could be plainly heard on top of the hill. It was learned much later that Pfc. Spaabeck and Carpenetti of Dog Co. were walking along the lake. Spaabeck had the receiver of a heavy machine gun and Carpenetti the tripod. The going was tough, as the mud was very deep. Just then Jerry opened up with artillery and mortars and the boys tried to speed things up by walking on the ice, which had been weakened by mortar and artillery fire. Pfc. Spaabeck fell in first, as the ice gave way, but managed to drop the receiver on the ice. After he got out, Pfc. Carpenetti fell through, but saved the tripod. Next, they both fell in and this time the entire machine gun went to the bottom of the lake. They were hauled out unharmed except for a good soaking.

#### Weapons Platoon and HQ Platoon

The Weapons Platoon followed the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons. The rear of the column was caught out in the open field and road by the 88 barrage which opened up as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons hit the town and hill. As Weapons crossed the railroad, six German-held P-47's attacked the railroad, dropping bombs and shelling. They couldn't understand why they weren't strafed. They were pinned down for quite some time by mortar fire. The company was strung out for one-half mile.

Pfc. Spiegelan, gunner of the 1<sup>st</sup> machine gun squad, was the first man in the Weapons Platoon to be hit. He was hit in the hip by a piece of 88 shrapnel while digging. He refused to be evacuated and the next day carried a light machine gun in the assault position during the attack on "Baker Hill". He was later awarded the Silver Star for this action. After he was evacuated next day he went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital at Vittel and returned to the Company on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March.

Weapons boys tell a few funny tales about their actions that evening. Sgt. Mitchell, mortar squad leader, tells this one about Sgt. Cosner, then squad leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> machine gun squad:

"During a heavy 88 barrage Sgt. Cosner, not having his foxhole completed as he hit solid rock about one foot down, started crawling from hole to hole trying to find room. He finally got in with some men who hadn't quite finished their hole. After an 88 hit five yards from this hole and the smoke cleared, Sgt. Cosner was not to be found. After the barrage he was found in his hold, which was seen to be about four feet deep."

Sgt. Mitchell tells another about himself and his foxhole companions:

"Sgt. Gill and S/Sgt. Hess and myself were digging a hole and were trying to figure out how three men were going to get in, when a shell landed very close. After the smoke cleared, we found by actual trial that there was room for four men."

Pvts. Gurien and Saucedo, after vainly trying to dig a foxhole, spent the night under a rocky ledge. They were late joined by Pvt. Bennett during a barrage.

January 6

#### Purple Heart Hill

This was the day of the attack on what came to be known as “Baker Hill”. On the map it is called “Le Stengelhalt”. However, to “B” Co. boys who were there and never will forget it, the place became familiarly known as “Baker” or “Purple Heart Hill”. Like most of its neighbors, it was pine covered, rocky and steep. A wagon trail winds around it, providing the only access for small vehicles and the best for foot travelers. From the wagon trail the hill falls away almost precipitously to the draw below. Above the trail the hill rises steeply, thickly studded with pines and huge boulders to the ridge line above. At the first bend in the trail, where it doubles back on itself, is a little rivulet where the boys used to get their water. When “B” Co. first took the hill no other outfit was nearby on either flank. “B” Co. was somewhat out on a limb.

The hill was held against violent counterattacks until “B” Co. was ordered to withdraw. The blood of many Americans and Germans stained its snow and its pines were shattered by the violence of the shelling.

Capt. DeCamp, who had been to Bn., arrived back on the hill where 3<sup>rd</sup> and Weapons Platoons were dug in, about one o’clock on the morning of Jan. 6. He immediately called for Platoon Leaders Safford and Thompson. Lt. Bjork, Executive Officer, reports that there was a delay of about half an hour and DeCamp was on pins and needles. They had removed their shoes, which froze stiff, and could not get them back on again. Their orders were, “Move off the hill at once and go back to where Bn. had been in town (88 Corner). Draw blankets and extra rations. Move against Baker Hill.” Maps were brought out and the officers were shown the hill. Order of march: 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, HQ, and Weapons Platoon.

The positions then occupied were taken by another Company. None of the men knew just what was in store when they moved off the hill in the early morning hours. The descent down the hill was made on a narrow foot trail, with a sheer drop to the bottom in many places. It led back into town above, or north of, where the Company had ascended. The snow-covered rocks and half frozen earth made the footing treacherous. It was dark as pitch. It is a wonder no one fell. The men walked one behind the other so as not to lose control. There were two places where almost everyone sat down and slid. One of these places was at the bottom of the hill, and a pile of trash at its end made a clatter when the men bounced into it. The trip was made without mishap, except that Pfc. Fuller of Weapons, 1<sup>st</sup> mortar squad, dropped his helmet, which banged and clattered all the way from the top of the hill to the bottom.

When the file made “88 Avenue” it turned left and proceeded to 88 Corner. Some of the men got mixed up with Co. “I” going the other way but this was eventually straightened out. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon came there from the houses in town where it had been located the men were given K rations, water, and as many blankets as they cared to carry. Then they were all packed into a couple of empty barns and got a few minutes rest.

While waiting here, Sgt. Lindseth, 1<sup>st</sup> mortar squad leader, discovered a cow in his barn. Being an old farmer, the Sgt. immediately got to work and provided the boys with their first milk since landing, and to the accompaniment of the zooming 88's, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Pfleghar's enjoyment was somewhat diminished when, in the dark, he came too close and got the snow washed off his boots, receiving as far as is known the only hot shower taken in Phillipsbourg, and it wasn't milk.

About an hour before dawn the Company moved out along a wagon trail around the back of the mountain off of which it had just come. Making a right turn it crossed the draw to "Baker Hill" and proceeded up the wagon trail. About 500 yards past the bend in the road where it doubled on itself and where it began to curve sharply around the hill, the first opposition was met. Patrols were sent out and within a couple of hours, all Germans were driven off the hill with only one "B" Co. casualty.

About 10 Jerries were captured and at least two killed. Then the Company moved up the hill and dug in.

1<sup>st</sup> Platoon – January 6 morning

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon led off. Pfc. Marshall and Pitman were Co. scouts. The 2<sup>nd</sup> squad led, followed by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. About 500 yards past the sharp bend in the trail, Marshall was halted and several words in guttural German were flung at him. He immediately took off over the bank and doubled back and reported. He saw no Germans, just heard. Patrols from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon were sent out. Later a 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon patrol went out. It consisted of T/Sgt. Kelsey, S/Sgt. Broome, Sgts. Horner and Chappell, and Pfc. Washburn. They carried burp guns and 1 BAR! T/Sgt. Kelsey had a carbine. They were looking for a Jerry machine gun nest which had bothered a 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon patrol on the right flank. On the way up, Pfc. Washburn was struck by a mortar shell. S/Sgt. Broome went back and brought up Medic Howard, who aided Washburn. As the patrol was carrying Washburn back to the trail, they saw three Jerries approaching from the hill across the draw. They allowed them to reach the trail and then opened up, killing two, one escaping. Pfc. Washburn went to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital and has not returned to the Company. Later in the morning, about 11:30, while digging, S/Sgt. Broome was struck by a mortar fragment. He went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital and rejoined the Company about March 10.

3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and Weapons Platoon

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was second in line. When the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was halted, patrols were sent out on the right and left with the mission of knocking the Jerries out and clearing the way. The left patrol was led by S/Sgt. Inzer and within were Pfc. Smith, Depas, Anderson and Lindenzweig. They met no opposition.

One the right were two patrols. One was led by S/Sgt. Bergstrom, who had with him Pfc. Dourand and Condict, Pfc. Dennison with the BAR, and Pfc. Harrington. All were from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They moved ahead to the right of the road and discovered a Jerry road block with a machine gun pointing straight down the road. If the Jerries hadn't been asleep our casualties would have been heavy. They took the Jerries prisoners.

Another patrol on the right went father up the hill. It consisted of S/Sgt. Lenk, Cpl. Porter, Pfc. Farley with BAR, Pfc. Andrews. All of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and Pfc. Spiegelan with a light machine gun, Pfc. Grgurich and Ruth of Weapons Platoon. This patrol drove the remaining Jerries over the hill and down into the draw. Pfc. Farley and Andrews saw two Jerries in a cave. Farley leveled his BAR and said, "Come on out!" They didn't come out so he fired at their feet and scared them out. When he pulled the

trigger, nothing happened. He became so furious he started cussing the BAR and forgot all about the Jerries. Andrews then fired a couple of shots with his M-1, which brought the Jerries out.

Pfc. Spieglan, although wounded in the hip the night before, fired about 350 rounds with his light machine gun in the assault position, helping drive the remaining Jerries over the hill and down in the draw. Two more Jerries were captured. Pfc. Spieglan received the Silver Star for this action. After all firing had ceased and the Company was digging in, he was evacuated and went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital. He returned to the Company on March 2.

Altogether, 10 prisoners were taken. Lts. Bjork and Thompson and T/Sgt. Kelsey were discussing what to do with the prisoners. T/Sgt. Kelsey said, "Let's wait until we get a dozen and then shoot them." One Jerry could understand English and there was considerable excitement among them and they finally had to be told to shut up.

Cpl. Schaab, Co. HQ, and Pvt. Wentling, bugler, marched the prisoners back to Battalion.

After the hill was cleared, the Company moved up and dug in - 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon forward and right; 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon left flank and rear.

The weather was fine but very cold with more snow than down in the valley. There was only about one entrenching tool for every three men. CPs were established under rocky ledges. Holes and caves were dug in the hillside. Heavy concentrations of mortar fire fell intermittently during the day. The men all had cold and wet feet. Very few had shoe pacs, as the pacs had been discarded at Gundershoofen. All were tired from lack of sleep.

At about 1615, while men were still digging, the first counter attack came. Many of the men had their shoes and socks off, drying them. The Jerries struck from the right front. It has been estimated that it was a combat patrol of about 20 men. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> squad positions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon were almost immediately partially overrun. The hole of Pfc. Walsh and Pvts. Conley and Condon was overrun and they were captured. In a hole to the right of this one was a hole in which were S/Sgt. Kerns, Platoon Guide, S/Sgt. Luther, Squad Leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, Pfc. Marshall and Pvt. Ekstrom. Here is the action as described by Marshall, now Platoon Sgt. of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon:

"The Jerries were rolling grenades off the rocks and throwing them into the holes. One grenade fell in our hole. I yelled, 'Grenade!' and jumped out of the hole and went over to the rock where T/Sgt. Kelsey, acting Platoon Leader, was loading magazines for the BAR man Lamphere. After the grenade exploded I thought all the rest were killed, but after the report I heard them screaming and yelling. I could not get to them because of enemy fire. Pfc. Lamphere got hit. A bullet went through his helmet and was deflected down into his mouth. He was bleeding from the nose and mouth. We sent him to Medic Howard. I took over the BAR. Luther and Ekstrom rolled over the hole and down the hill to the Co. C.P. Ekstrom rolled all the way down the hill and took off for the Bn. Aid Station. Medic Howard saw that Luther was hit in the stomach with a burp gun, apparently after he had crawled out of his hole. He died about 0125 the next morning.

"We were keeping the Jerries pinned down. We were going to pull back but then we heard that Lt. Bjork had sent flanking squads out on the left. Then the weapons men moved up and we all

pushed forward and drove them back. Very few Jerries got away. I think that there were about 12 dead there. We then went out and got S/Sgt. Kerns. He had a badly shattered leg. S/Sgt. Kerns was given first aid by Medic T/4 Howard. He went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and has never returned to the Company. Pfc. Lamphere also went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General and has never returned.”

In the 1<sup>st</sup> squad’s sector, Sgt. Chappell and Pfc. Applegate and Hagen shared one hole. None of their M-1s worked so Sgt. Chappell made the other two stay in the hole and he kept firing single shots while the two in the hole kept reloading them. The fighting was furious about this hole. After this action, about four bodies were found near the hole. Some fell in and Sgt. Chappell had to throw them out. His overcoat, which he removed during the action, had 45 bullet holes in it. He was awarded the Silver Star for this and is now a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.

In the meantime, Lt. Bjork sent squads from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon around the enemy’s left flank. The Weapons and some of the Hdqts men pushed forward in the center. All moved forward and the remaining Germans were driven back. Pfc. Grgurich and Ruth started out with a light machine gun in the assault position. As they tired on the steep slope, T/Sgt. Ignaszewski, Platoon Sgt., and Sgt. Cosner, squad leader, relieved them. They moved up through the center and onto the ridge, the machine gun on T/Sgt. Ignaszewski’s hip blazing steadily. Sgt. Mann on the right saw them take one prisoner. He came out from behind a rock calling, “Kamerad!” When motions were made as if to shoot him he cried, “Nein, Nein. Ich habe Frau and Kinder.” T/Sgt. Ignaszewski is now Platoon Leader of the Weapons Platoon, having been given a battlefield commission.

Another prisoner was taken, the one that threw the grenade into the hole occupied by S/Sgt. Kerns, Luther and Pfc. Marshall. T/Sgt. Kelsey intended to kill him, but his burp gun didn’t work. Furious, he took the magazine out and threw it at the German.

Pfc. Simmons, Colonna and Foulston, messengers, fought in the American counter action. Communications Sgt. Rostain was given a direct order by the Company Commander to remain at the C.P. with his radio when he started to leave his hole to fight.

Pfc. Hagen was evacuated after the action, badly shell shocked. He went to the 51<sup>st</sup> Station Hospital and has never returned to his company.

The estimates of the number of dead Germans ran from 12 to 15. Two prisoners were taken. We lost three men captured, one killed, three wounded, and one shell shocked.

After the action had ceased, weapons were cleaned and by that time it was dark. That night an outpost was put out, consisting of a Jerry machine gun and a couple of burp guns. It was manned by 3<sup>rd</sup> and Weapons Platoon men.

No one knew what to expect that night and grimly prepared for the worst. It was bitter cold and there were no shoe pacs. Cases of frozen feet were beginning to develop. The men could not light fires at night. Parties were down to the bend of the road to get water. The water froze almost solid in the canteens.

That night Cpl. Schaab, Pfc. Harris and Pvt. Wentling got on the wrong hill trying to find their way back to their Company and almost ran into the Kraut lines. They got so close they could hear them talking. They went back a ways and ran right into another mortar barrage. They were lying on one side of the road and shells were landing on the other. Finally they went back to town and road out with the chow truck the next morning.

Also that night the Company jeep got lost with a load of BARs, rifle ammo and dry socks for the men. Driving the jeep was T/5 Valentine and the other occupants were Capt. DeCamp, Asst. driver Thigpen, and Company messenger Foulston. The Captain thought he knew a short cut but the road they turned on came to a dead end. It was impossible to turn around so they started to back up when suddenly there came a terrific mortar barrage. The Jerries had apparently spotted them. It was decided to leave the equipment at the spot and send a carrying party across for it. After unloading, the jeep was back out into an open field and turned around. Thigpen and Foulston continued on foot and later a carrying party picked up the equipment.

January 7

Little happened this day. It was cold and more snow fell. The men dug caves and built better holes. They built shelters and made small fires. There were frequent mortar barrages. Pfc. Cole of the Weapons Platoon was hit by mortar shrapnel. Medic Howard gave him first aid and he was evacuated to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital. He returned to the Company on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. He was captured on March 15.

January 3

The kitchen had much difficulty in leaving Bischweiler due to lack of transportation. They finally got a Negro outfit to take them out. Every route but one was cut off, and that was under artillery fire. They finally landed in Neuweiler. They were cut off from Bn for three days. Next they went to Reichofen.

January 3 – 7

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon remained with division on special duty.

January 8

Between Jan. 6, the date of the first Jerry attack, and Jan. 10, the date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon combat patrol, there was only minor patrol activity and intermittent artillery barrages. There were frequent mortar barrages. The hill was a good target. Several contact and reconnaissance patrols went out during this time. Sgt. Mann, Asst Squad Leader, 1<sup>st</sup> squad, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, led the first patrol to contact “C” Co. on the right flank.

“C” Co. was believed to be on the hill called “Le Garnfirst”. A patrol consisting of Sgt. Mann, Pfc. Farley, Pfc. Anderson and Pfc. Andrews, all of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, left about 0300 with orders to contact “C” Co., if possible, but to be back by 0600 in any event. They started on the trail, which proceeded around Baker Hill, and went around it for about 100 yards. Sounds of chopping and digging were heard in the draw below. Also, voices which did not seem to be using English although words could not be distinguished. The descent from the trail was so precipitous and heavily wooded that it was impossible to get to that point without detection, and as the patrol was engaged in another mission it proceeded cautiously along the trail. It was necessary to go slow as there was an almost full moon and the ground was covered with snow. When it was past 0430 and no contact was made with “C” Co. it was deemed advisable to return, as it was necessary to be back at the Company by 0600. When the patrol returned it

reported the location of the sounds it had heard to Capt. DeCamp. The point where these were heard was on Lembach 1:50000, approx. 88.8-43.6. Other patrols later determined that they were Germans.

At 0800 the same morning, another patrol, consisting of Sgt. Mann, Pfc. Anderson, Lindenzweig and Andrews, all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, started off to contact "C" Co. again. Orders were to be back by 1100 and to give "C" Co. the Bn orders to move at 1300 to "Le Anglesberg Hill". Bn had apparently lost contact with "C" Co. This move would have strengthened "B" Co.'s right flank. This time the patrol started from a point on top of Baker Hill and proceeded generally southwestward. "C" Co. was located without much trouble. In fact, the patrol contacted them from the rear and walked up to a machine gun guarding the trail, unobserved, the nearest men being about 25 yards away warming themselves about a fire. The CP was nearby and could have been wiped out by its own machine gun. Our lines were so extended that patrols from either side could easily penetrate under cover of numerous hills and thick pines. "C" Co. CO said that a Major from Bn had contacted him and he had said that they would move forward at 1300. Then he went back to check the order to move forward in case he had orders from Bn not to. Such orders were apparently received as "C" Co. did not move forward. The patrol proceeded back and arrived at Baker Hill before 1100 hours without incident. The only surviving member of this patrol is Sgt. Mann, the other three men having been killed in action later.

On Jan. 8, the Company CP received a Jerry decoration in the form of a 77-mm dud. Pfc. Harris, Simmons, Collona and T/4 Howard were present at the dedication. As described by Harris and Simmons, "We heard the shell come howling along and we all dived for our hole. There was a crash and then silence. When we crawled out we saw that the shell came right through the trunk of a pine tree and was sitting right on top of our hole. As no one wised to fool with it, it remained there until we left the hill. We were always afraid that something would hit it but nothing ever did. Incidentally, the top of the hole was a rock ledge.

January 9

Sgt. Lindseth of Weapons Platoon took out a reconnaissance patrol. Besides himself there were Pvts. Saucedo, Clark and Bryan. They saw the Germans in the place previously mentioned and turned in a sketch showing the location.

January 10

Early this morning a 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon patrol went out to seek information and to try and capture four or five Germans. The patrol consisted of S/Sgts. Lenk and Bergstrom, Squad Leaders of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> squad, Pfc. Farley, Anderson, Lindenzweig, Dourand and Pvts. Andrews, Depas and Traum. The patrol left about 0530 and started out along the trail about the hill. Then it turned down and went into the draw. Pfc. Depas, the only member available for questioning, states that, "We saw a lot of Jerries chopping wood and working around. There were two or three walking around on guard. We figured that there were too many for us to handle so we returned to the Company."

Later that morning Capt. DeCamp decided to send out a combat patrol. It was preceded by a 60-mm mortar barrage by our mortars. Lt. Ignaszewski, then Weapons Platoon Sgt., tells of his activities as follows:

"Early that morning Sgt. Lindseth and I went down into the draw and could see the Krauts moving around. We took a couple of shots at them before we came back. Later on Capt.

DeCamp called me to his CP and told me to lay in a barrage on the enemy positions. My mortars

were not set up, as the only place that could be used without frequent tree bursts was on top of the hill, and that was the Jerries' favorite spot for mortars and artillery. I told him that the only place I could set up was at the top of the hill where artillery had blown all the trees to bits. For my CP I had to string wire out along 400 yards across the trail and down the hill to the bottom of another hill past the Jerries' positions. This was the only place I could observe the position from, and the woods were so thick I couldn't tell how many Jerries were there. Sgt. Lindseth and I observed on the Observation Post that Jerry could have cut us off completely as we were so far out. We started firing about 1200 and fired for about two hours. We fired about 40 rounds. Before our mortars ceased firing, Jerry opened up with a barrage. As we ceased firing, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon patrol moved out."

The 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon combat patrol consisted of about 25 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men plus six Weapons Platoon men with one light machine gun. The story of this patrol is difficult to piece together, as there are few members available for questioning, and each of these saw the action from a different viewpoint. I will briefly describe the main movement of the patrol and then let each man available speak for himself.

The patrol was led by T/Sgt. Grun, Platoon Sgt of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. On the patrol was S/Sgt. Inzer, Pfc. Anderson, Lindenzweig, Farley, Pvts. Andrews, Depas and Harrington, Pfc. Smith, Sgt. Mann, S/Sgt. Lenk, Pfc. Bornkind, Buysse, Francis and Helaszek, Sgt. Porter, Pfc. Condict, Piela and Hammond, Pvt. Kluck and a few others who cannot be identified. The foregoing are all from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. From the Weapons Platoon were Sgt. Crawley, Pfc. Duwell and Grgurich with the machine gun, Sgt. Mitchell, Pfc. Hunt and Pvt. Clark.

The patrol started out somewhere about 1400 hours along that same trail that ran around Baker Hill. Pfc. Lindenzweig and Anderson were scouts, closely followed by Sgt. Inzer. There was a lull in the enemy fire when they started and it wasn't until the patrol left the trail and started down into the draw that the Jerries began again. The patrol proceeded along the trail until it reached a point past the enemy positions and then it turned left, changing into a diamond formation and basing its direction on a path going down the hillside. Upon nearing the bottom, it turned left again, based upon a trail running approximately parallel with the higher trail above. In explanation of these movements it must be said that the terrain was almost impossible except near the trails. Here the enemy was contacted and at least one Jerry machine gun opened up. Also Jerry threw in mortars and 88s. Most of them landed uphill as he could not throw them too near his own positions. After a brisk fire fight it was decided to withdraw, and the patrol started up the steep hillside. As the patrol got up higher it ran right into the mortar and artillery barrage, and here all the casualties occurred. Two men were killed and four were wounded. All wounded made their way to safety, where Medic Howard took care of their wounds.

T/Sgt. Grun was killed. Pfc. Duwell was long listed as missing but recently was confirmed as killed.

Pfc. Buysse received serious leg wounds and went to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital. He has never returned to his Company.

Pfc. Condict was hit in the arm and returned to his Company on March 3, and was seriously wounded in the leg in the last battle above Saarbrucken.

Pfc. Harrington was hit about seven times in the back and shoulders. He went to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital and rejoined the Company on May 9.

Sgt. Mann was hit in the leg and went to the 46<sup>th</sup> General Hospital. He rejoined the Company on March 10.

Here follows Pfc. Harrington's description:

"I was on the left flank with Buysse. Buysse had a BAR and I was assisting him. After we turned off the upper trail we turned down about 25 yards and turned left, walking parallel with the lower trail. The Jerries had holes dug along the hillside. They were good holes, covered on top. After we went a little ways the Jerries opened up with a machine gun to our front. I saw Sgt. Grun trying to get men around the flanks. It was hard to see as the trees were so thick. Then I saw Sgt. Grun motion for us to go back up the hill. I saw Sgt. Grun get hit. He said to Sgt. Porter, 'I'm hit,' and kept going. Then another round burst and he fell. Sgt. Porter was trying to make sure everyone was out. I got hit in the back and shoulders but kept going. I saw Buysse being helped back by Francis and someone else."

Pfc. Depas states:

"We crossed the lower road and left the machine gun there, somewhat above the road, and the patrol turned left. After the scouts had gone a few yards the Jerries opened up with a machine gun. I don't think they saw us. I think they saw the rear of the patrol coming down the hill. We fired awhile to see if we could knock it out and I think Sgt. Inzer got a couple of Jerries. I saw a German run along the bottom of the hill and up towards the machine gun. Just after he disappeared, the mortars opened up heavy. Sgt. Grun hollered, 'Let's get out of here.' We ran up the hill. Sgt. Porter stayed down and tried to get everyone up the hill."

Sgt. Mann's story follows:

"When the patrol turned down into the draw, I and Pfc. Smith and Bornkind were left behind as rear and flank guards. Also, Sgt. Mitchell with Pfc. Clark and Pvt. Hunt were left as rear guards. Our orders were to proceed with the patrol parallel as it turned back in the draw below. The patrol had just turned off the upper trail when the 88s and mortars started coming in. I had sent Smith about 20 yards above the trail to observe to our rear. The first round fell about 15 yards from him. Jerry must have had the trail well zeroed in as he pounded the devil out of it. The only cover we had was a ditch about seven or eight inches deep in the trail. After the patrol had been down a short time I heard small arms fire and a lot of shouting. Just about then I caught a nice piece of shrapnel in my right leg, but was able to stay. Then I heard Sgt. Grun call my name over and over. He was calling something else but all I could make out was 'Coming up.' I thought he meant some of the Jerries were coming up our way and told the men to watch out for them. However, the first men I saw were our men. I saw Buysse being assisted by two men. Among the last to come up was Sgt. Porter, who told me they ran into the mortar and artillery fire coming up the hill. He said the hardest thing he ever did was to leave Sgt. Grun there but he could not get him up the steep slope. He told me another man was down there too. After I got back, Pfc. Marshall patched up my leg and Condict, Harrington and I walked back to the Bn Aid Station. It was dark before we got there. On the way we met litter bearers coming for the other casualties."

Sgt. Mitchell, Weapons Platoon, says:

"I, with Hunt and Clark, was left as rear guard at the point where the patrol started down the hill. Then Sgt. Grun sent a messenger back and told us to move parallel with the fire The Germans

started throwing mortars and 88s. A tree burst almost got me, and did wound Sgt. Mann. I heard Sgt. Grun calling and I thought he said the Jerries were coming up the hill. I looked down in the draw to see and a sniper almost got me. Then our own boys started coming up.”

On returning to the Company, Sgt. Porter reported the ones that came back and the ones that were missing. He asked permission to go and look for the missing who were Sgt. Grun and Pfc. Duwell. He believed the two were hit by a small shell. In the meantime, while the artillery was still falling, T/Sgt. Ignaszewski, S/Sgt. Inzer, Sgt. Lindseth and Pfc. Lindensweig went out to try and get Grun and Duwell. They couldn't reach them because the fire was too heavy. They were pinned down and returned when the firing stopped. After dark, T/Sgt. Ignaszewski, Lt. Safford, S/Sgt. Inzer and Sgt. Porter tried again. It was too dark to see anything. They listened for moaning but no sounds were heard so they went back. The next day T/Sgt. Ignaszewski, Sgt. Inzer, Sgt. Porter and one other found T/Sgt. Grun's body. There was no trace of Duwell. The machine gun was there and they brought it back. For a long time it was believed that Duwell was alive and taken prisoner, but his death was recently confirmed. He probably died in German hands.

During our preliminary barrage with the mortars, Sgt. Hess was in charge of the mortars. They laid in about 40 rounds and had a few tree bursts. Pfc. Bollinger and Pvt. Edwards were on the mortar. Sgt. Hess said that, “In spite of tree bursts and German fire, Bollinger nonchalantly cleaned his carbine while waiting to fire again.”

Pfc. Duesman of Weapons Platoon, although not on the patrol, was wounded during the resulting barrage. He was on the outpost on top of the hill and was hit in the back. He was given first aid by Howard and evacuated to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital. He returned to the Company on Feb. 18. He was wounded again on March 15 at Saarbrucken.

On Jan. 10, Pfc. Lester A. Edwards was evacuated with trench foot.

January 11

S/Sgt. Arganbright, Weapons Platoon, was evacuated with arthritis. He went to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital and has not returned as yet.

Pvt. Payne was evacuated with pneumonia. He went to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital and returned to the Company on March 10. He was later captured around Forbach, escaped, and has been returned to the USA.

On this day, Pfc. Marshall went on a three-man patrol with Sgt. Wilkins and Pfc. Parry. Their mission was to contact “I” Co., who was supposed to be on our right flank. The positions were just roughly known. Marshall's story is as follows:

“We took off through deep snow. We found a place where a “C” Co. outpost had been wiped out the night before. We saw a helmet, a bloody blanket and sign of a struggle. We kept on. I was first, then Parry and then Wilkins last. We were going along a snow-covered road and off to the side in the woods about 10 yards I saw what I thought was a dead Jerry with white camouflage clothing. I thought he was dead, he was so still. I turned around and pointed him out to Parry. Parry waved me to look around again and the Jerry was moving his head. He was looking down the hill to our right and hadn't seen us. We looked to our left and there were two more about the same distance, talking. They had burp guns and didn't see us. We could have wiped them out but

didn't know how many more there were, and we were on a contact patrol with no orders to fight. We slumped down and backed off the road. They were between us and where we believed "I" Co. to be, so we went back. According to Sgt. Wilkins, who brought up the rear, they started running down the hill trying to cut us off, so we started running. After we got back, Wilkins said he saw three more. He was quite a ways behind and saw more. They were all in white camouflage suits and their helmets were hard to see."

After the German counter attack on Jan. 6 an outpost had been set up in front of our positions. From two to four men were put on at one time. They had a Jerry machine gun there. The men mostly came from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Weapons Platoons and some of the Hdqts men. It was quite a ways out and in danger of being cut off. It was right on the flat top of the hill, which gave little protection against mortar and artillery fire, and also it was much colder up there than down below. On black nights there are stories of Jerry patrols coming pretty close. In the morning the boys could see marks in the snow where they had crawled up pretty close. One night some of the Jerries were making quite a noise below. Pfc. Richardson threw a couple of grenades down which produced complete silence.

January 12

On the 11th of January the First Platoon was assigned to support Company C(?) and had to move quite a long way to get into position during the night. We spent until daybreak digging in. The ground was frozen for over a foot but was good sandy digging after that.

We were to support the Infantry Company while they attempted to take the next hill.

The attack started almost immediately and lasted all day and then the Germans mounted a heavy counterattack and drove the Infantry Company back to their original position. We had remained in our holes at the same position and fired cover for the riflemen. The snow that started coming down on the 12th was a very effective camouflage and we did not draw too much fire unless one of our men was seen outside during the daytime. The mortars would then lay into us and keep up an intermittent fire that seemed more to intimidate us than inflict serious harm. Two men from the 1st squad, Pvt.'s Raymond Chambers and Edgar Dodson, both from small towns in Tennessee were sharing the same foxhole in a position where they could watch our flanks. On the afternoon of the 12th Chambers was standing guard and Dodson was catching some sleep when a mortar shell landed nearby. Dodson groaned in his sleep and then was quiet and Chambers thinking that he had been startled did not disturb him. About an hour later when Chambers went to wake him he found that he had been killed.

"Doc" Grimes came over and confirmed the death and took his personal effects to be sent home.

Pfc. Andrews was evacuated with frozen feet. He went to the 46<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and returned to the Company on March 10. He was killed in action above Saarbrucken while helping a wounded comrade.

January 13

On this day there came two major German attacks. The first took place at about 1630 hours. It struck our right front, over running our outpost and striking our 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon position. The Weapons and part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and Company HQ moved up on the center and the left, and the 1<sup>st</sup> squad of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved around to the right again. The enemy was pushed back again. We lost one man killed, two men wounded and two men captured.

The second attack came about dusk. It was preceded by an extra heavy five-minute barrage. By the time the last round had hit, the Jerries were there. They hit more to the left front, striking the extreme left 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon position. They used machine guns, burp guns, hand grenades, bazookas and a flame

thrower. After the fierce fighting, some of our positions were overrun and, due to the dark, which made control difficult, our men withdrew from our forward position on top of the hill and took up a line farther down. This line was along a rock ledge that ran along the hill and was approximately on a line with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and Company CP. This line was held until the Company left the hill. We lost one killed, three missing and one wounded.

Pfc. Harris of Company HQ was probably the first one to see the Jerries that afternoon. He was stationed at the outpost and was relieved by Pvt. Holmes just before the attack commenced. Here is his story:

“Just before Holmes came to relieve me, I saw one Jerry about 50 yards away. He had no rifle and was wearing a wool cap. I fired at him and he disappeared. On my way down I passed T/Sgt. Kelsey’s hole and told him. He asked me who fired and I told him there were Jerries on top of the hill. I went on back to the CP and told Capt. DeCamp. Just as I finished telling him, the attack started. I went alone to the top of the hill near T/Sgt. Ignaszewski who was carrying a machine gun. I saw him kill one German who was lying on top of a flat rock. I kept firing at them. After the Germans had gone, I went around to Wentling’s hole, which was on the right flank to the right of the CP. I found Wentling dead and Parry hit in the right arm and both legs. I think that his knee caps were broken. Parry asked me to stay until aid came. He said that Wentling and he were outside the hole when the attack started. Wentling was killed by a rifle bullet through the head and then they threw a potato masher at him, which landed at the base of a tree right outside the hole. His legs were hit by shrapnel and he bounced around quite a bit. He then crawled into the hole. Pfc. Bollinger and someone else came up with a litter for Parry.”

Parry went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and has never returned to the Company.

It was pretty dark when the second attack started. It was hard to see the enemy. We were trying to fire at the flashes. Pfc. Collona and Harris were just above the Company CP. The Jerries were using bazookas. When a flamer thrower cut loose, everybody opened up on him. There was fighting until 8 o’clock.

The following account is given by Sgt. Chappell, now Lt. Chappell, who, from his position in the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon CP, probably saw more of the action than any other single man:

“During the afternoon we received a few occasional rounds of mortar and artillery fire. Just before the attack they laid in a few rounds in quick succession. When the attack actually started, I was at the bottom of the hill to get rations and trip flares. I was talking to S/Sgt. Inzer. When we heard the attack start, we ran up to the top of the hill and got into the fire fight. The Jerries set off a trip flare that had been set out the day before. Pfc. Hunt and Pvt. Holmes were apparently captured right in the beginning. They were out on the OP and I couldn’t see their positions. We heard no firing and they probably gave up. Another OP on the extreme right flank was about in line with the Company CP. The Jerries hit on their flank as they came right down the ridge line. I saw a Jerry get behind a big rock in front of them and above. He was firing a burp gun and throwing grenades. They got Wentling right through the head with a bullet. The Jerry threw a hand grenade that hit a rock and bounced right near their hole. This got Parry. After the Jerries were pushed off we got him out, both badly hurt.

“Then the Weapons Platoon came up with a light machine gun. Pfc. Grgurich and Pvt. Ruth had one. I couldn’t see the other. We all pushed on over the hill and drove them off. As we were

going up, Ruth, Asst. gunner, was hit. The enemy had a machine gun set up which was giving us hell! Ruth got hit right in the jaw. He hollered for a medic, moving back as he yelled. He went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and has never returned. The Jerries withdrew to the saddle between the two hills and set up their machine guns and sprayed hell out of the top of the hill.

“About 30 or 40 minutes later the Germans started laying an artillery barrage. It was pretty heavy and lasted about five minutes. Bu the time the last round hit, they were already launching a new attack. This time they arrived about dusk. The visibility was very poor, this being one reason they pushed us off. Pfc. Pitman, Applegate, Cernansky and Layton were in a forward hole, the way the Jerries hit. They held up the Germans a hell of a long time but the Jerries hit so quickly and it was so dark and they were laying down such heavy small arms and bazooka fir we weren’t able to get over to their aid. We heard one grenade after another going off. We could hear ours and then another of the Jerries’. Our boys had only a few as we, as usual, were short. Then everything was still and we knew they had either been wiped out or captured. Then we backed down slowly from rock to rock down the hill about 75 yards to a continuous ledge that ran around the hill, and took up new positions, which we held for the rest of the night. The Jerries were continually throwing grenades into our positions, which they could do by bouncing them off the rocks. While we were moving down, T/Sgt. Kelsey, Platoon Sgt of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, was hit in the arm by small arms fire. He refused to be evacuated that night and stayed on the hill until the following morning.

“During the attack I was made Platoon Leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. A bazooka round had just hit in a tree between Pfc. Simmons, a messenger, and myself. It knocked Simmons flat, not hurting him, however, and I was still addled when I heard Capt. DeCamp calling my name. He said, ‘Take over the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. You are in charge of this Platoon. How many men have you got left?’ I called back, ‘One man.’ One man was all I knew about at the time but I found out later that I had about six - Sgts. Wilkins and Driver, Pfc. Layton, Marshall, Mills and Beauchamp.

“Pfc. Layton was the only one to get back from the forward holes. The fate of the rest was unknown until recently. Pitman’s unburied body was found on top of the hill. A letter recently received stated that Cernansky, Poteat and Applegate were released from a prison camp.

“I want to say here that Pfc. Pitman did a damned good job. I hardly know what to say. He had plenty of guts - he and Cernansky. He could be depended upon to do just what he was supposed to do and to be in the right place at the right time. He was wide awake and alert. He probably lost his life because of his determination not to give in. He has been recommended for a citation, but as yet nothing has come of it.

“Pfc. Simmons and Collona, Company Messengers, did a good job, both in running around and fighting.

“The German use of the flame thrower was ineffective. As soon as he opened up, we must have cut him right in two. Everyone concentrated their fire on him. That flame thrower made a hell of a swoosh.

“We heard later that we had been attacked by German OCS candidates. The attack was part of their training. If they took the hill, they were to receive commissions. From interrogation of

German prisoners we learned that they suffered heavy casualties. About 10 or 12 in the first attack and about 40 men in all.”

T/Sgt. Kelsey went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and has never returned.

Here is Pfc. Layton’s story. Layton is the sole survivor from the left front holes which were hit during the attack:

“The first attack hit from the front. I only saw one German, and I saw him from Sgt. Kelsey’s hole. At dusk Poteat was on guard. There were four of us in the hole: Poteat, Cernansky, Applegate and myself. Pitman was in another hole to our left. Poteat said he thought he saw a Jerry. He was about to fire when I said, ‘Hold your fire. We have an OP out there.’ He said, ‘Not dressed in white,’ and opened up. Then all hell broke loose, burp guns all over the place. We threw our grenades and they tried to get grenades in on us. A Jerry grenade was thrown near Pitman’s hole and we never saw him again. Jerries were within 10 to 12 feet of us. We figured that the best thing to do was to get out. I was nearest to the best exit. Cernansky told me several times to get out and go back. When I finally tried, I had to make several attempts as the enemy fire was so heavy. Lt. Chappell had started down for my hole and saw me leave, although I did not see him. Cernansky and Poteat put up a terrific resistance. Applegate loaded their rifles. I went down and stopped at the place where the Platoon CP had been and called for Sgt. Kelsey. Somebody called to me from below to come on down. I went down to the Company CP. During the night I heard someone on top of the hill calling for a medic. I don’t know who he was. If we had had more grenades we could have held them off longer. The next morning I saw three or four Jerries on top of the hill and fired at them.”

Here follows some remarks by Lt. Ignaszewski, then Platoon Sgt of Weapons Platoon:

“In the first attack we brought two machine guns up. Pfc. Grgurich was gunner on one of them and the asst was Pvt. Ruth. After Ruth was wounded, Sgt. Crawley took the gun. I, with Sgt. Cosner as asst gunner, carried the other gun. I don’t think there were very many Germans in the first attack and we drove them off without too much trouble. After we had driven them off, T/Sgt. Kelsey and I went out to see how much damage we had done. We ran into three Jerries who threw two grenades at us. We had a grenade left and threw it behind the rock where they were. We got one and the other two got away. About that time we figured they might start throwing mortar and artillery, so we decided to go back to our holes.

“Then they opened up with a big artillery barrage. When the next attack came, I and Pvt. Harbold were carrying machine guns. When they started pushing us off the hill, we kept on firing. Everyone else was backing up, so we backed up too. As we were going back, they opened up with the flame thrower. Flames came to about four feet in front of me and were plenty hot. As soon as we recovered from the flame thrower, everyone opened up on him. He only got off two bursts.”

Pfc. Sunde, member of 1<sup>st</sup> squad, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, went with the squad around the right flank. He says: “I was near Lt. Ignaszewski during the first attack. During the second attack I was near the flame thrower, who fired two bursts before being cut down. After the fire fight stopped, we remained out on the right flank. S/Sgt. Inzer brought us out extra blankets. It was 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning before they told us we could go back to our holes. We smoothed off the snow and sat on the rocks.”

Pfc. Simmons states:

“In the first attack I went up on the top of the hill and picked out a hole. I saw a lot of Jerries running around up there and opened up on them. About an hour later they withdrew. I went on top of the hill and there were blood stains in the snow and Jerry packs, bazookas, panzerfausts and machine gun ammo lying around.

“The second attack hit us at dark and we couldn’t organize any counterattack. Krauts showed up with a flamer thrower. He let fly a burst and then another, which was his last, as everyone opened up on him. After we were pushed back and were near the Company CP, a grenade landed between Sgt. Wilkins’ legs. The concussion hurt his side and a piece of shrapnel cut through his trousers on his thigh but he was not hurt seriously and remained on the hill. That night, in one hole were myself, T/5 Carr, Medic, T/Sgt. Kelsey, Pfc. Collona, Layton and Gurien, and Sgt Wilkins. Next morning I looked up over the CP rock and there were a couple of Krauts walking around on top of the hill. Pfc. Layton fired a few shots and they disappeared.”

Pfcs. Bornkind and Francis were in the extreme left positions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. That night Pfc. Dourand heard noises and scuffling in this direction. The next morning they were gone. Pfc. Francis has lately been released from a POW camp.

A recent party that went to Phillipsbourg found Pitman’s unburied body on the crest of the hill. In a double grave were S/Sgt. Luther and Pfc. Lindenzweig. Pfc Wentling’s grave was also found. An unburied soldier from “C” Co. by the name of Helgerson was found with a toothbrush in his hand.

January 14

From this day on there were no serious attempts by the Germans to drive us off the hill but Baker Co. kept on being slowly whittled down by a process of attrition. Shell fire, sickness and frostbite were ever present.

On this day an under-strength platoon of about 28 men from Co. “C” was sent as reinforcements. It was commanded by Capt. Daley. They dug in to the right of the Company CP and became our right flank. Our men say they warned the “C” Co. boys to be careful but, in spite of this, some were wounded the first day by mortars and grenades while digging in. Capt. Daley moved into the “B” CP with Capt. DeCamp.

The Jerries were continually rolling grenades off the rocks into our position. One rolled near the CP and hit Pfc. Collona, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon messenger. It hit him in the face, head and leg. He went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and has never returned.

Our center was composed of a mixture of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Weapons, and HQ men. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon held the left flank. Men took turns going from the holes to the front line positions.

About noon Pfcs. Hammond and Halaszek of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon were ordered by Capt. DeCamp to go out around the left flank and see if there were any Jerries there and also if there was any trace of Francis or Bornkind. About two minutes later there came a big burst from a Jerry machine gun or burp gun. Then the two came running back around the hill. Hammond had received a small flesh wound on the chest.

He returned to the Company in a few days time. After being promoted to Sgt. he was transferred to the 45<sup>th</sup> Division as of Jan. 25.

Pfc. Mikelsavage of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon became shell shocked during a mortar barrage and had to be evacuated. He went to the 51<sup>st</sup> General Hospital and has never returned.

Sgt. Cosner of Weapons Platoon was sitting in his hole when a rifle grenade hit a tree nearby. Sgt. Cosner was hit in the back. He went to the 36<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and returned to the Company on March 4.

That afternoon about 1600 hours Pfc. Lindenzweig was killed. He was at the machine gun position at the old 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon CP. During the day the Jerries used to move around quite a bit up on the hill top and the men used to snipe at them. Lindenzweig thought he had got a couple that day. Pfc. Sunde describes his death as follows:

“He was up at the old 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon CP. Mills and Layton were to his right at the machine gun. He was telling the rest of the men to get set as Jerry might attack. He had his head slightly above the rock. I heard a shot, looked around, and he was falling.”

By this time the men of “B” Co. had decided that their positions were no good and were very dangerous. Almost all were convinced that if the Company had to remain on the hill, it would be better to counterattack and try to push the Germans off the top of the hill from which they could see all of our movements and drop all sorts of fire on our positions. Platoon Leader Chappell and Platoon Sgt. Ignaszewski had drawn up a plan of attack, to which Capt. DeCamp gave his approval. The proposed attack was to be under the able direction of Capt. DeCamp from his CP, as usual. Baker Co. was to hit the Germans frontally and they wanted to use “C” Co. on the enemy’s left flank. This plan of attack was never put into operation as Capt. Daley of “C” Co. refused to commit his men. He said his orders were to hold, not to attack. Among them was 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Pflagher. Lts. Chappell and Ignaszewski believe that the attack would have been successful.

On this day, about dawn, Pfc. Farley and Pvt. Depas of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon were on the machine gun at the old 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon CP. Suddenly Depas heard a loud crack from a rifle and saw Farley take off for the medic, saying he had been hit. He was hit in the left hand. He went to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Hospital and returned to the Company just recently.

This day our 4.2 mortars threw a heavy barrage on German positions. Some of our men credit the 4.2 barrage with restraining the Germans from further activity. After this barrage a lot of hammering and sawing was heard on top of the hill. An unfortunate part of this barrage was the short round that got three of “C” Co. men.

January 16

There were no casualties on this day. Most of the firing from this day on was at “C” Co. Early in the morning the Germans would open up with a machine gun and throw some grenades. Chow was fairly regular and the men ate back at the Weapons Platoon CP. Whenever they would go down the trail to get water the Germans would snipe at them.

One day during this period Sgt. Porter left his helmet on the top of his hole and went to sleep. When he awoke it was full of holes.

There was also a story that the Capt. was caught on one of these days with his pants down. He was sitting with his pants down and reflecting when a mortar shell hit nearby. Sgt. Mitchell, who was also reflecting in the neighborhood, hid behind a rock. When he looked around, the Capt. was gone and he thought sure he had been hit. Just then the Capt. stuck his head out of his hole. He had made the hole in one jump, a good 15 or 20 feet, with his pants down.

According to Sgt. Rostain, Comm. Sgt., most communication was done by radio. The telephone wires were always being cut by artillery and mortar fire. Wire repair crews were continually going out. The longest unbroken period of time for the telephone communications was four hours.

January 17

On this day, Lt. Thompson, Platoon Leader, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, was evacuated with frozen feet. For a long period of time Lt. Thompson refused to take shoe pacs, although needing them very badly. He wished his men to have them first. He almost lost some toes and finally wound up in England and returned to the Company on May 14.

January 18

Pfc. Sunde of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was evacuated with frozen feet. He was sent to the 46<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and returned to the Company on March 13.

January 19

Sgt. Driver of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and Pfc. Foulston of the Company HQ left to receive commissions as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts. Lt. Foulston is now with the 275<sup>th</sup> Infantry and Lt. Driver is with the Division HQ.

January 13

While the German attack was going on, Pfc. Strickland and Merriman, jeep drivers, trying to get to the Company, got stuck in the mud in the draw behind Baker Hill. While they were stuck in the mud the Jerries threw in a lot of stuff, which slowed up the extrication process considerably. They finally got out and then a "D" Co. jeep got stuck and they pulled it out.

Pfc. Merriman describes some of the troubles encountered in bringing up chow, etc., as follows:

"At 88 Corner we frequently had to bail out of the jeep and go to the cellar or the aid station. One time when a round came close, I jumped out and bowled over an A and P man who was eating in the doorway. He said later that he thought an 88 had hit him. We were sometimes pinned down for as long as 15 minutes at a time. We sometimes drew machine gun fire in the draw leading up to Baker Hill."

"When the attack was made at Phillipsbourg the kitchen was at Neuweiler. About Jan. 9 the Kitchen moved to Reichshoffen. According to S/Sgt. Athanasopoulos, Mess. Sgt., and T/5 Elsroth, mail orderly, about the night of Jan. 12 the Jerries threw in some big stuff. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was there at that time on MP Duty and Division HQ was also there. There was talk at the time that the Division MPs and Engineers were landing at Marseilles, France. The shelling started about 0300. It was their first taste of enemy fire. The MPs were firing at everything that looked like a shadow. About every 15 minutes some shells would come in. Pfc. Tippin ran out in his underwear and started out in the snow. He stayed until things calmed down a little, and then proceeded to the cellar. T/5 Elsroth had a narrow escape when a shell struck in the next building.

A piece of shrapnel came through the building, hit the ceiling then bounced off a stove onto his back. It was four inches long. Elstroth was convinced, so he left for the cellar.

“The next morning Lt. Lambert gave the order that the kitchen move back to Gundershoffen. The cooks and Service Company walked guard. Each day reports would come in that German patrols were out and the guards would have to be strengthened. A Security Platoon was formed to handle emergencies. Hot chow was prepared for the men at Phillipsbourg twice a day.”

Addendum to last report:

An inadvertent omission in the last report was that T/Sgt. Ignaszewski of Weapons Platoon received the Silver Star award for this part in beating back the Germans' counterattack against Baker Hill on the afternoon of Jan. 6. He carried his machine gun on his hip in the assault position and pressed forward without thought of danger to himself, over the brow of the hill, and played a large part in crushing the enemy.

Excerpts from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon while on MP duty, by Pfc. Haglund

“We were doing a lot of moving at that time. The Division was moving around quite a bit and we, as MPs, were doing our best to get them there. We were being used as road guides when the Division was moving. Sometimes the boys were out on the highways for quite a while waiting for convoys to come.

“During this time the Division had moved to St. Jean Rohrback, where the MPs had a very nice place to live. We had moved to an old concentration camp. We moved there about the middle of the afternoon and the rest of the afternoon, after the guards had been posted, was spent with the boys scouting around looking for stoves and everything else to make themselves comfortable. All the windows were knocked out from the intense bombings and that caused a lot more running trying to find something to keep old man winter out. But in a day or so most all were very well settled. Even though all the boys had enough stoves, they were always on the lookout for better ones, and ones that would put out more heat. Before we knew it, the halls were filled with the stoves and we had to start hauling them to the cellar.

“The boys were always rowdy and there was always some fighting or fooling around going on. There was one afternoon when the boys figured they would get S/Sgt. Rhine real good. It was some time after dinner and he walked into the 1<sup>st</sup> squad's room and Sgt. Hamilton and the boys were waiting for him. As I walked into the room about five o'clock that evening he was tied up in the most uncomfortable position. They had tied his hands and feet together behind his back and he was lying on the floor.

“While on duty with Division, the MPs were known as ‘Sgt. Hicks and the Forty Thieves’. It seems that there was always a lot of stuff missing from the kitchen. They were missing a lot of things and us being the bastard outfit we got blamed. For quite a while the cooks were putting sugar and cream on the tables, but toward the last they were nailing the sugar cans down to the table and pouring the cream in the coffee before bringing it out.

“It also seems that we had some chow hounds in the Platoon. For a while the boys got by with it okay. But when better known, it was not so easy. Pfc. Hartwright and Sgt. Hamilton were

always seeing who could eat the most. It was usually a pretty close contest. I remember one time when they both had gone through the chow line for flapjacks seven times and were still at it when I left. They had to change their appearance quite a few times to do it. Going in once with a jacket and once without; having a helmet once and once without. They tried about everything to get more chow. This also puzzled the cooks quite a bit and several times they asked if we had a Platoon or a Company on MP.

“Mainly while on MP duty we had two things to take care of. One was the regular posts and the Prisoner of War cage or civilian cage. This cage was taken care of by the able hands of Sgts. Hamilton, Hankins, McCaslin and McGinnis. Some of the boys learned quite a bit of French and German that came in handy as we entered Germany a little later.

“The CP hooked on to the General’s generator and had electric lights.”

January 19

This day “B” Co. left Baker Hill above Phillipsbourg. “B” Co. and the “C” Co. Platoon attached and were relieved by “E” Co.

Rumors about relief floated around among the men almost constantly while they were on the hill. It was a favorite theme and though after a while no one believed there was much truth in the reports, nevertheless, it was pleasant to even consider the subject. During the last few days the rumors flew thick and fast and then about 0300 hours on the 19<sup>th</sup> “E” Co. really arrived.

Pfc. Bollinger and his Weapons Squad met the “E” Co. vanguard at the foot of the hill on the trail. “B” Co. was relieved squad by squad as there could be no wholesale withdrawal. The night was pitch black and a misty rain was falling. It was very cold and damp. The snow was gone from the ground. The Germans were a short distance away on top of the hill. Due to these conditions and the difficult terrain the operations took quite a long while and the last “B” Co. man didn’t leave until about 0800 the next morning.

The Weapons Platoon got off without too much difficulty. They left one machine gun tripod in position and took the other. They carried three machine guns and 3000 rounds of ammo. They left the mortars and ammo to be picked up the next day. T/Sgt. Ignaszewski carried one machine gun, Sgt. Lindseth another and Pfc. Bollinger and Grgurich the third. On the way back some of the men lost contact at one point but finally found the rest again. Sgt. Gill did not leave the hill until daylight. He and Sgt. Bergstrom remained to orient “E” Co. as to their position and the location of the enemy.

The men gathered at the foot of the hill and then proceeded through the draw in the back of Baker Hill and followed a route which brought them out on the highway about a mile below Phillipsbourg. Here trucks picked them up and brought them to Neiderbronn.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had some difficulty in getting the “E” Co. men to come up into their positions. Pfc. Marshall had to go down after one squad. He found them sleeping in the lower holes. They claimed they didn’t know anything about coming up.

Pfc. Simmons tried to guide two squads up the hill but one disappeared on the way up. Each man was supposed to hold onto the man in front of him. Apparently the squad leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad decided

that the night was too dark. After the rest of "E" Co. was settled this squad was found to be missing. As they were to replace part of the "C" Co., two "C" Co. guides went down to look for them and became lost themselves. Then Pfc. Harris, messenger, went down and, after getting lost a couple of times himself, finally found the two missing "C" Co. men and the missing squad, who had settled down in some of the rear foxholes. Although they refused to budge until daylight, saying that it was too dark. Harris reported to Capt. DeCamp and then went to sleep for about an hour. At 0700 he had to guide an "E" Co. officer down, who was afraid of getting lost. They finally got the "E" Co. squad out. The last group of "B" Co. men left the hill about 0800. They were: Capt. DeCamp, Sgt. Rostain, Pfc. Harris and Simmons and the part of "C" Co. that was late in being relieved. There were no trucks at the main road so they had to walk almost all the way to Neiderbronn. "E" Co. only remained on Baker Hill a couple of days and then all Americans were withdrawn from the hill. It is rumored that the Germans also withdrew from the hill at the same time. "B" Co. drivers brought hot chow up to "E" Co. while they were on the hill.

In Phillipsbourg and its environs, Baker Co. received its baptism of fire. On the hill the orders were to hold and hold at all costs. And that they did, under extreme conditions and adversity. The bitter cold, the terrain, the snow, the constant artillery fire, the lurking foe, and the fallen comrades. All these were there, but even more was the feeling of loneliness, of remoteness, which all line men feel, but which was enhanced by the almost complete lack of information, the long black nights, the peculiar rock-stubbed hill. The hill was so steep, the rocks so large, that a man ten yards away; was in another world. Conditions of contact and control were at their worst. The hill was so strangely shaped that men would often get lost within 15 or 20 yards of their positions.

The German push was in full sway in Belgium. The Germans were slashing into Alsace and Lorraine. The men would hear stories that the Germans were in the towns of Bischweiler and Hagenau. One favorite story was that all our duffle bags were taken.

In contrast, there were no answers available to the question always being asked. Where is the other companies' fight around here? Who is going to help us if we need it? Are we stopping the Germans? Where's our relief? It's easy to forget on the line that your unit is just one of thousands similar, all linked together on a long front and that there are millions of Americans fighting with you. However, although the men faltered at times, they never gave in, and at their fortune's lowest ebb, after they had been pushed off the top of the hill they wanted to strike back at the enemy, against unknown odds.

Capt. DeCamp led an almost full Company minus the one Platoon on detached service onto the hill. With him were about 40 men. They were:

Hdqts: Capt. DeCamp, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Pflighar, Sgt. Rostain, Pfc. Simmons and Harris.

Medic: T/4 Howard. 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon: Sgt. Chappell, Sgt. Horner, Pfc. Layton, Mills, Wilkins, Marshall and Beauchamp.

3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon: S/Sgts. Inzer, Lenk, and Bergstrom, Sgt. Porter, Pfc. Smith, Piela, Anderson, Dourand, Dennison, Richardson, Halaszek, and Pvts. Traum, Depas, and Kluck.

Weapons Platoon: T/Sgt. Ignaszewski, Lt. Safford, S/Sgt. Hess, Sgts. Lindseth, Mitchell, Gill and Crawley, Pfc. Grgurich, Fuller, Bollinger, Dickens, Goska, Fisher, Pvts. Harbold, Bryan, Clark, Kubly, Gurien, and Saucedo.

While the men were on the hill, S/Sgt. Athanasopoulos and his cooks and assistants (T/4 Loucks, T/4 Wycoff, T/5 Nunez, T/5 Coontz, Pfc. Callonni and Tippin) did an excellent job in getting out hot

chow for the men. Hot chow was sent out twice a day. Drivers Merriman and Strickland, Thigpen and Valentine saw that it usually got there. Often seen up with the chow was S/Sgt. Colley, Supply Sgt., who came up to assist and to find out what the men needed. He was later wounded while similarly on the line.

When the men arrived at Neiderbronn they received some good hot chow which they remember to this day. They started off with hot cakes, jam and bread. During the day some of the men got sick because they were not used to so much to eat. Some of the men were able to take hot showers. Some got an exchange of clothing for damaged clothes. A day or so before, some cigarettes and clothes were left on the trail on the hill. Jerry had the trail well zeroed in and when he heard a jeep he would usually send over a few mortar rounds, and, as a result, there were cigarettes all over the hill and many men were wearing well perforated windbreakers. They also received PX rations and beer. They were told they were to stay back 48 hours so everyone felt pretty good for a change. Some of the men stayed in the factory building and some in a hotel. Major Durbin, Bn Executive Officer, gave up his bed to some of the men. The men were writing letters and starting to bed down for the night when word came that they were to load up in trucks and move out again.

Sgt. Lindseth, Weapons Platoon, didn't go with the others. He went on detached service to Saarburg and later went to division Hdqt at Morhange to look after the duffel bags which had not been captured.

The men left in trucks about 2100 hours. They were led by Lt. Bjork. The ride on the trucks proved to be quite short, about half an hour at the most. When they were dumped off they were told that they only had a short distance to go, about 2000 yards. However, there must have been some sort of miscalculation, as the hike proved to be a long and a most miserable one. Sgt. Rostain and Pfc. Simmons describe the walk as follows:

“The driver apparently was mistaken in his distance. It might have been 2000 yards up but it turned out to be four and one-half miles up and down. We first went to the peak of a hill where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Hdqt was located, and then had to wind down the hill on the other side into a valley. The snow had turned to ice, which made walking more precarious. Much of the trip was made on the men's rear end. Equipment and blankets were strewn all along the way. It was a series of one fall after another. As soon as one man would get up, another would fall and start cussing.”

Lt. Chappell recalls the journey as follows:

“We got on trucks about 9:00 PM and as usual no one knew what was up. We rode a short distance and then we de-trucked. We were told there was only a short distance to go, but we kept marching and marching. It was one of the most miserable, tiresome marches I ever made. Men kept falling down, cussing, dropping behind and trying to catch up.”

Weapons Platoon started to carry their machine guns but finally loaded them on a jeep to carry them to the top of the hill to 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn CP. However, they were told to take them out and leave them for “E” Co., as “E” Co. had left the ones they had in position. But after arriving at “E” Co. old positions only one gun was found that could be used. Weapons lost three good machine guns in the deal.

The men finally arrived at “E” Co.'s old positions at 0200 January 20, although they were due at midnight. These positions were located, as nearly as can be remembered on Lembach 69.5-24.3, overlooking a valley and a road. Some of the men now believe the Company could have been cut off easily. There were no communications. A wounded man would have been out of luck. Nothing much

happened during "B" Co.'s short stay there. The enemy threw in a couple of mortar rounds which landed about 700 yards away.

During the day on January 20, Pfc. Harris put in a lot of work on the CP. He chopped logs, dug it out, and sandbagged it up well. All was wasted, however, when the Company moved out that night.

January 21

In the early morning around 0300 the men left their positions and after the long hike back, they were picked up by trucks and taken to Heidersolzbach. They arrived about 1000 in the morning. The day was another miserable one and the truck was very cold.

The men were unloaded in the center of the town near a church. The day was bitter cold. The men stayed outside waiting for about two hours. After Capt. DeCamp had fortified himself with plenty of hot cakes and hot coffee, he came back to point out the billets to the men, which had been secured by a quartering party. After everyone got inside and warmed up a bit, their spirits rose a little. The cooks came to another rescue with a good hot meal. There was Virginia baked ham, raisins, potatoes, English peas and apricots for dessert. That afternoon the men went out and dug alternate positions for some outfit out in front in case they had to pull back. T/Sgt. Marshall reports that one of the favorite sports of the men at this time was making Tutti-Frutti ice cream. They used the K ration fruit bar, evaporated milk, sugar and snow.

January 22

The men stayed in town all day. Some equipment was issued to replace lost and damaged equipment. Everyone was issued gas masks again.

As of this day, S/Sgt. Lenk was promoted to T/Sgt and became Platoon Sgt of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. Sgts. Chappell, Porter and Horner were promoted to S/Sgt. Pfc. Dourand and Marshall and Wilkins were promoted to Sgt.

S/Sgt. Anderson of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was transferred to Hdqt Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, where he still remains.

The Company left Heidersolzbach about 1800 by truck and arrived at position in the vicinity of Kohlhutten about 2130. These positions were probably on Zabern 478-238.5. After leaving the trucks the men had a short walk to their positions where Capt. DeCamp said he would personally place each man in his hole. We were attached to the 100<sup>th</sup> Division.

It snowed hard all night and covered up all the equipment lying around outside. "B" Co. was in the Bn reserve. "A" Co. was on our right, and "C" Co. was to our left and in front. A few contact patrols were out to "A" and "C". S/Sgt. Chappell and Sgt. Porter reconnoitered the nearest route and determined the time it would take "B" Co. to assist either "A" or "C" Companies if they needed help. They discovered a mine field in the rear of "C" Co. between "A" and "B" Companies. It was an anti-personnel mine field and they turned in an overlay of its position. Next day it was heard that a Jerry patrol that night penetrated "C" Co.'s position and took one prisoner. On the way back they ran into their own booby traps and the "C" Co. man and one of their own were wounded. The "C" Co. man crawled back. By the time that man went out to get the Germans the Jerries had come after him.

January 23

The Company remained in position all day. Lt. Bjork received the men's pay but had to go to Bn Hdqt in order to count it.

T/Sgt. Marshall said that Sgt. Horner, Pfc. Mills and himself were in a hole together and almost smothered. When they awoke in the morning, the snow had covered the shelter half over the hole and Horner couldn't breathe. He lit a match and it went out. During the day S/Sgt. Chappell discovered about 10 or 12 American grenades, rigged up by the Jerries as booby traps. They were strung along for about 100 feet. The grenades were fastened to trees. A wire ran from the pin on the grenade to a stake nearby. Hence, when the wire was tripped, the pin would come out. S/Sgt Chappell disarmed them and Medic T/4 Howard assisted and carried the grenades.

January 24

About 2115 the Company en-trucked and went on a short ride to new positions near Wimmenau.

After de-trucking they walked down the main road about a mile until they hit a road with a tank destroyer. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, plus a few 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men, among them Pfc. Smith, remained there to man the road block. The rest of the Company moved off the road about 400 or 500 yards and dug new positions.

S/Sgt Weatherspoon, then Armorer-Artificer, tells how he and Capt. DeCamp previously reconnoitered these positions: "We were in the jeep making a reconnaissance. At the road block, as I was the only available man, Capt. DeCamp brought me along on a foot reconnaissance through the woods. We had no idea the enemy was near and it was very dark. About every 25 yards the Capt. would flash on his flashlight to check his men. I was glad when we finally got back."

Some of the men had difficulty in digging positions as entrenching tools were scarce and steel helmets had to be used in the icy ground.

The machine guns were given the wrong sector of fire as given by Capt. DeCamp. It was later discovered that they were pointing toward the Bn Aid Station.

January 25

This day was memorable for two reasons. The men were paid and the first replacements arrived. The replacements were: Pvts. Hoyer, Hyder, Howard, Hopkins, Raynor, Jannink, Ingrahan, Hubatch, Jeter, Kukens, and Houston.

Pvt. Hubatch, now a squad leader in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon states that they were brought up to the road block in a jeep. They were hungry, but didn't get anything to eat until the next day. He was taken to the right of the woods a short distance to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon position. Here he dug his hole while he heard our mortar fire overhead.

The only replacement the Weapons Platoon got was Pvt. Hoyer. He came in about noon with a big overcoat, big pack, and a rifle with no ammo. Capt DeCamp asked for his MOS number, which was that of a mortarman. The Capt. then said, "Put him in the machine gun section."

About 1900 the Company left their positions and walked to positions just outside of Wimmenau, where they went into the Regimental reserve.

During this time the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon remained in St. Jean Rohrbach, where the Division Forward CP was. Sgt Hamilton was one of the guards at the Civilian Detention Cage there. He tells the following story, “Hankins, McGinnis, McCaslin and I were pulling six on and six off at the Civilian Detention Cage. The people were brought there and only stayed about 24 to 48 hours at the most.

“On this day, a man and a woman proposing to be man and wife and French citizens were brought into the cage. We noticed nothing out of the ordinary except that the man was very willing to do anything that we wanted him to do. The next morning the CIC interrogated them, and everything was going smoothly and they probably would have gotten by but the man attempted to pass a large sum of money over to the woman during the interrogation. A close search disclosed that he had about 5,000 dollars in American money and a couple 1,000 Francs. The CIC gave orders to keep them separate and not allow them to talk to anyone. In spite of the fact that the large room was very poorly heated by one homemade stove, the man perspired profusely. The woman also looked quite down in the mouth. The CIC didn’t disclose the results of their further investigation. They said that unquestionably the pair was involved in either black market operations or espionage. They said the people would be turned over to the French government and if found guilty would be shot.”

January 26

This day the Company was in position just outside of Wimmenau. It was in Regimental reserve. The men had dug in very deep, about a foot at least. The Company stayed in these positions until Jan 29. There was little activity. Outgoing shells could be heard headed for Krautland.

The men covered their holes with shelter halves the first night to keep the snow out. The next day they cut logs all day to cover them. That morning, Capt. DeCamp had a brainstorm and decided he’d have two big rooms dug out. One of them was to be right next to his, and have a tunnel connecting the two. It was to be his workroom. The other hole was to be a washroom for the men. Details worked on these all day. However, the men were able to take showers in Wimmenau.

The showers were a bit on the chilly side. The water was taken out of an ice cold creek, the tent was well ventilated and there was ice and snow all over the shower room floor. The men received a complete change of clothes.

The men received two hot meals a day here. The third consisted of C rations.

One chicken dinner received here was particularly good. It was fried chicken and there was so much they had to force some on the men. S/Sgt. Chappell ate five drumsticks, two breasts and one pulley bone. Pfc. Layton ate two whole chickens, but Sgt. Marshall would only admit to one. Sgt Mitchell, Weapons Platoon, is ashamed to quote the number of pieces of chicken he ate and the quantity he consumed. So far as it is known it is the only time in Company history that Mitchell, the Company chowhound, was completely filled up and satisfied.

Another morning the cooks brought up a big box full of delicious chocolate covered doughnuts, about 500 of them. Pfc. Smith of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon didn’t do too bad that day, eating 11 doughnuts and five helpings of fruit cocktail.

The officers split their PX rations with the men. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon received a bottle of American whiskey from Capt. DeCamp.

Many of the men received packages from home, and this time there were quite a few Christmas packages.

The men had a chance to send money orders home.

Pfc. Thigpen turned his jeep over on an icy curve while bringing chow one morning. He was unhurt, however, and the jeep was put into condition again after a bit of straightening.

On Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>, S/Sgt. Inzer, of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, went back to attend OCS school and receive a commission.

January 29

A Break in Action for Company B

Left Wimmenau this day at 0800 and arrived at Lohr about 1115. It was a 15-mile ride.

When the convoy first arrived at Lohr it didn't stop but continued on through. The men saw the kitchen being set up and waved to the crew. They wondered why the convoy didn't stop. The trucks went through a couple more towns and then circled back to Lohr. No one today seems to be able to explain this maneuver. Apparently someone was lost. When the convoy finally arrived, the kitchen was all set up and the men were eating chow by 1200. They were served all the hot cakes they could eat. Many of them say those cakes tasted better than any they had ever eaten.

Pfc. Roberts, who had just transferred from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, broke all records for eating hotcakes, downing 23. He was still eating at three o'clock in the afternoon. The billets were private homes. That night they were given orders to move out about 1800. They got on the trucks, but the order was called off before the trucks were ever moved.

January 30

Sgt. Mills went back to Division Hdqts on Special MP duty. Pvt. Gurien went back to Regimental Hdqts Co. also on special duty.

That afternoon Lt. Safford went to Montbronn to make a reconnaissance for billets as the Co. was supposed to move there that night. He came back in the evening and reported to Capt. DeCamp, who had decided that he would go with half the Company early that night, and that the rest would follow next morning as they would have to look for more billets. Lt. Safford casually remarked that the quarters weren't much good and seemed to be mostly barns. After meditating on this for about 10 minutes he decided to send Lt. Bjork with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons that night and follow himself the next morning with the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon and kitchen. But after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons had left, orders were changed and the rest had to move that night. As a result, the men of the latter bunch found themselves sleeping on floors and in hay lofts.

The truck ride was about 14 miles and it was cold. The Weapons Platoon pulled out about midnight and arrived about 0200 the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup>. The wind was blowing a gale and the ground was covered with ice and snow. After leaving the trucks, they had to walk almost to the opposite side of the town to get to their billets. Pfc. "Tiny" Bollinger had his usual "Barracks Bag" pack and in the process

of walking and trying to adjust it at the same time knocked Pfc. Thigpen down, causing quite a commotion on the icy ground. Thigpen happened to be carrying a machine gun at the time. Incidentally, "Tiny" Bollinger's pack could hardly be lifted by most men, not to speak of carrying it. Ten pairs of socks, writing material, mortar cleaning equipment, oil, etc., raincoat, three spare K rations and one C ration, (once he packed 1/3 of a case of C rations). In luggage, one blanket, in horseshoe two blankets, shelter half and bed roll. Besides he carried a mortar all the time and never threw away his gas mask.

The Weapons Platoon billeted in a barn and slept on hay for two or three nights until Pfc. Fisher and Pvt. Bryan, Platoon interpreter, found two small rooms which were used for the remaining time.

The Company stayed in this town until Feb. 9. It rained almost every day and there was plenty of typical French mud. The men went every day just outside the town and dug positions for "B" Co. to occupy in case of a breakthrough. The thawing ground and snow and constant rain made the holes soon fill up. They had to cut poles to line the holes and cut logs for splinter tops.

On Feb. 4, a number of replacements were received. They were: Molnar, Montesano, James Moore, Joseph Moore, Morales, Morris, Muratori, Noef, Russell Miller, Thomas Miller, Mattox, Maurisse, Maxwell, McGeary, McLaughlin, McMahan, McMonagle, Mehle, Matzler, Melish and Millington.

The day they arrived, Capt. DeCamp had managed to get some steaks for the Company somewhere and they all enjoyed steak dinner. The replacements arrived about 1700 and were just in time to get steak.

The next day the new men went out and dug foxholes with the rest of the Company. Pvt. Mattox's first combat foxhole was not a 100 percent success as it caved in all over him.

There were two hot meals a day again and one ration. Almost everyone ate more than usual after getting used to hot meals again. Pfc. "Tiny" Bollinger and Sgt. Mitchell of the Weapons Platoon had a race to the seconds' line at every meal. Some of the men bought hamburger meat at a local butcher shop but shortly after they heard that the meat was likely to be diseased their appetites were suddenly gone.

The new men were given some training here. Sgt. Dennison gave BAR instructions and Sgt. Horner, compass reading.

On Feb. 4 there were a number of promotions. Chappell was promoted to T/Sgt. Dourand, Wilkins, Marshall and Nixon were made S/Sgt. Mills, Robert Anderson, Dennison, Hankins, McGinnis were made Sgt. Weatherspoon, armor-artificer, was made T/5. Also on this day, Coffey relieved Carr as 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Medic.

On Feb. 6, just as the men were eating breakfast and ready to fall out, the Jerries laid in two artillery rounds down the road. The Capt. was just telling some of the recruits about how tough it was on the front. Apparently Jerry was just zeroing in for that night he sent in about nine rounds of heavy stuff. All the civilians took off into the cellars for the night. An artillery Lt. went out in the middle of the barrage to examine the holes and determine the size of the rounds and the direction from which they came.

During the barrage, Coffey, the Medic, and Pvt. Hubatch of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon had to escort two women to another house. They were afraid of the 1000 rounds of 55-mm ammo in the barn attached to the house. Pvt.'s Mattox and Maurisse underwent their first shelling and were on guard at the time. Mattox dived into the house and Maurisse chose the mud.

As the Company was in France with no non-fraternization regulations, civilians lived right in the same house as the soldiers. Lt. Chappell tells a story about a Frenchman who owned the house in which he and some others had a room. They nicknamed him "Kaput" because his favorite expression was "Alles Kaput". His story follows:

"Layton, Mattox, Hopkins, McMonagle, Millington, Madaras, Raynot and myself had one room together. Old "Kaput" used to hang around our room a lot, bumming cigarettes or anything he could get. I had disarmed a hand grenade, emptying out the powder. We decided to play a trick on "Kaput". He came up and we had the grenade in a grenade case with the pin pulled. We showed it to him and explained how it worked. When the Frenchman picked the box up, the grenade fell out on the floor and the handle flew off. I yelled 'Grenade!' and everyone made a dive for the door. Our object was to crowd around the door and block "Kaput" from leaving the room. Suddenly the grenade went off with a terrific explosion and sprayed shrapnel all over the place. After the smoke cleared, it was observed that old "Kaput" had beat everybody out and was down at the bottom of the stairs. No one was hurt, although at least one man was in his sleeping bag. One window section was blown out and the walls and ceiling were literally sprayed with shrapnel. Apparently I had neglected to remove all the powder. The shrapnel was in rather large chunks as the grenade was not fully charged. "Kaput" called his Frau up and looked over the room. The Frenchman said, "Alles Kaput".

"Kaput" furnished the boys with a five gallon can to urinate in at night. He emptied it and washed it every morning. Everything was very satisfactory until one night Pfc. Layton, half asleep, went out and missed the can and instead of stopping he continued. The water went through the floor and ceiling and started pouring on "Kaput" who was sleeping below. He had to move his bed and put a tub there. He gave the boys quite a going over the next morning in French."

S/Sgt. Hubatch tells another about "Kaput". "Kaput" had a kid named Josef. He was a mean little brat and ran all over the house. If anyone said "Achtung" to him he would snap to and give the Nazi salute like a machine, saying, "Heil Hitler". This embarrassed his parents to no end and every time his mother caught him at it she would give him a good lambasting. A little later he would look around to see if the coast was clear and then say it again."

The locality was enjoying a pre-spring thaw and all the typical, earthy French smells were much in evidence. In French country villages, every house has a manure pile in the front yard and every manure pile has a rooster on it, surveying his domain.

Pvt. Hubatch, then a scout, asked Pvt. Traum where the Jerries were. Pvt. Traum said, "Oh, down the road about a mile and a half." Hubatch then said, "Well, what are we doing back here? Shouldn't we go down there and shoot them?"

S/Sgt. Bergstrom had had the GIs for 50 days and, by this time, was still going strong.

Coffey, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Medic, and Hubatch had it pretty nice. Madame Ernestine, in whose house they were staying, used to make coffee, give them jam and tuck them in bed at night.

Pvt. Depas, the Company's greatest lover, fell deeply in love here again. This time with a girl named Georgia, after stealing her away from T/Sgt Hicks. Hicks said to the girl, "Let's go." Depas, sitting nearby, gave his famous wink and nod, and she came over and sat by him. Hicks, a bit irritated, said he would have another girl before the night was gone, and it is said that he kept his word.

A range was set up and the men had rifle and machine gun practice.

The PX rations came. There weren't enough of some articles to go around so the four Platoons and Headquarters drew lots to see who would be first in line.

The barber shop was set up for the first time with "Pop" Calonni as barber.

One day the Red Cross girls showed up with coffee and doughnuts. The cooks heated the water and Capt. DeCamp put in the sugar and stirred. The girls handed it out. Several of the men, not used to having an American girl around, made several vocabulary slips. Capt. DeCamp told the girls, "We call this 'DeCamp's Coffee Shop'."

103<sup>rd</sup> Division Heavy Artillery had movies set up in town and some of the boys sneaked in.

Coffey, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Medic, says he saw an interesting sight in Montbronn. He observed a GI chasing a chicken and a Frenchwoman chasing the GI. They had quite a merry go round.

February 9

The Company was this day relieved of attachment to the 100<sup>th</sup> Division. The Company left Montbronn about 1445 and after walking two miles boarded trucks and rode 30 miles through misty showers to Seingbouse to join the rest of the 70<sup>th</sup> Division on line there. The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn went into regimental reserve.

The billets were houses and barns. The men received some training here and ran some problems.

On Feb 10 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon rejoined the Company after its long period of special duty which began Jan 1. Their last days with the Division Hdqts at St. Jean Rohrbach were quiet.

A few days before rejoining the Company about 20 men took some trucks back for Army use that had come up from Marseilles. They first went to Duse and then to the Division rest camp, where they ate. Then they went about 90 miles back to Army Hdqtr. At one point the lead truck and the remainder of the convoy were separated from traffic. They all became lost but finally arrived at their Division rest camp. They spent the night at the Division rest camp. It was a bit cold with no blankets and mattresses. Next morning after breakfast they left for Duse. After eating there, they returned to St. Jean Rohrbach. S/Sgt Cheney was in charge of the detail.

A section of the Division was supposed to move into their billets. There were signs plastered all over the place warning the men about taking property. The men had no particular desire to take anything as they knew they were going on the line.

The men were always thinking about what the rest of the Company was doing, how they were standing the cold, etc. Pfc. Cox and Pvt.'s Hartwright, Davis and Lawrence Hamilton were the Platoon chowhounds. They employed many methods in getting seconds, such as wearing a helmet one time and none another time. They managed to steal some steak one night and had it for breakfast. The rest of the Company had it for dinner.

S/Sgt. Nixon pulled the "disarmed" grenade trick. He took the powder out of the grenade, or rather thought he did, and put the cap back on. He then pulled the pin and rolled it out on the floor where everyone could see it and yelled "Grenade"! It exploded, needless to say, and the fragments knocked big chips off the wall, but no one was injured.

One day there was a bit of excitement overhead when four P-51s chased a Jerry plane. The men were alerted and the jeeps came out with the 50 caliber machine guns but didn't fire.

During their stay there the Platoon acted as a defense force to guard the Division CP in the event of a German breakthrough or patrol penetration. They went out and had positions all picked out. They went out one day and did some firing. Pvt. Fenton had a rusty BAR that he had picked up somewhere during the firing. He could not get it to function. However, immediately after the cease fire order was given, he set it down on the ground and it let off a big burst.

On Feb. 10 they threw everything in their packs and prepared to move. There was plenty of joking and everyone put on a cheerful front. In Seinghouse they were quartered in hay lofts. It was raining and the hay got wet. Two squads moved into houses the next day.

The Platoon received many morale building stories from the survivors of Phillipsbourg. However, they had known pretty much what the score was.

On Feb. 12, the Company received more replacements. They were: Pvts. Brown, William Brown, Bugbee, Burdine, McFadden, McMillen, McPherson, Meeks, Mevorah, Vernon Miller, Barney Morris, Nicokoris, Parker, Petrino and Burns.

These men arrived about 1100. They were met by T/Sgt. Chappell. The rest of the Company was out on a problem. It was raining and this didn't improve their spirits. After they had detrucked, he took them to Capt. DeCamp who asked them their preference as to their line of duty. He placed them in their Platoons as well as he could accordingly.

On the way up, the men were told that "B" Co. had good cooks and the drivers got the chow up to the men on the line if possible.

The Company ran some tank and infantry problems this day.

On Feb 13 the men went out and dug positions to be occupied in case of a Jerry breakthrough.

While the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was digging, some TD boys, practicing at destroying pillboxes, fired a HE Bazooka round at a pillbox about 50 yards away. The boys ducked as the round went off. Then they saw it come spinning towards them looking like a potato masher. Lt. Kubachko, T/Sgt. Hicks, S/Sgt.

Rhine and Pvt. Wolfram had been talking together. The spent round hit Pvt. Wolfram right on the front of the helmet, knocking him down. He wasn't hurt, but was jarred considerably.

On this day, Capt. DeCamp was relieved of command and Lt. Bjork assumed command. Capt. DeCamp went to Division Hdqtrs. Before he left he talked to each Platoon and gave out Christmas gifts. Pvc. Goska of Weapons Platoon received a "yo-yo", "Tiny" Bollinger received a pyramid puzzle, and the rest received a pencil or lifesavers, etc.

February 14

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon put on a demonstration for the Signal Corps, who took moving pictures of it. It was an Infantry Platoon in attack with two tanks in support. The Platoon was attacking a hill where the enemy was supposed to be dug in. The men advanced with the tanks under covering machine gun fire from the tanks. They also received supporting fire from machine guns and 60- and 81-mm mortars on the left flank. Halfway up the hill they came under a simulated artillery barrage and had to crawl under the tanks for protection. "A" Co. was running another problem, over behind the other hill to their left. One of their men was hit by a rocket. Also the ricochets were going into the town on the other side of the hill, so the next Platoon to run the problem was ordered to cease firing.

The men had pretty good billets in this town. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon used to have a little party every night. In one house an old lady would bring out wine and they danced to the strains of an accordion. There were plenty of pretty girls and most of the boys had one. However, Medic had the job of painting Madame Tilly's sore throat. This was not a distasteful job, however, as Madame Tilley baked plum, cherry and peach pies, which tasted very good washed down with cognac. Sgt. Hess and Pfc. Bollinger had some competition over the attention of Marie, a plump French girl. However, Pfc. Thigpen finally won out over both of them. The Weapons Platoon men managed to get eggs, potatoes, French bread, etc., for a nightly snack.

Church services were held there and almost everyone attended for the first time in quite awhile. There was one service conducted by an American Chaplain in memory of the "B" Co. dead. Many French civilians were present. There were French altar boys and a French choir sang.

The Regiment band came around in a truck and played. Also the Regiment showers got there and everyone had a change of clothing.

The men used to hear stories from the civilians about the German occupation. A couple of women had sons killed by the German Gestapo. One woman's husband was forced to go to Germany to work. After two years he was given a furlough and didn't return when his time was up. A couple of days later the Gestapo came. The woman had first looked out the window and saw who it was. The man ran out the back door and crawled in a little ditch and pulled manure over himself. The woman stalled around a few minutes and the Gestapo threatened to break down the door. When she opened up she said her husband had gone back as his furlough was over. They searched the house. When they got upstairs one said, "I knew you lied. Why do you sleep in this large bed alone, and the child in the small bed." She thought fast and said that the child was sick and she couldn't sleep with it. He husband remained in the ditch for two days and then made his way into the Allied lines. She hadn't heard from him since.

February 15

Walter Hamilton was promoted to Sgt. and Crawley and Dennison were promoted to S/Sgt. Four more replacements came and they were: T/5 Dunn, Pfc. Crowell, Crozier and Crociante.

Also, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Gross came and was made 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Leader. He made a speech that night and said that he wanted to remain with them a long time, at which everyone laughed. He told them that they were supposed to have a good deal as they were Regiment Bn and Company reserve. The forthcoming push to the heights of Saarbrucken was to only take seven days.

The next morning T/5 Dunn met an old friend of his, Pfc. Naef, who had been in his old outfit, the 60<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Bn. Naef had just recently arrived also.

On this day the men were issued new sleeping bags and other equipment. Their ammo was also replenished. Many of the men went out on road blocks and bridge guard positions. They took over positions of some Engineers who had furnished road blocks and bridge guards over a 30-mile radius. The bridges were all mined and ready to be blown at a moment's notice. Each man was instructed how to blow the bridge. If a jeep came and said, "Hospital", they were to blow the bridge at once and pull back. The bridge at which Pvt. Petrino was attacked had 532 lbs. of explosives attached to it. A house about 200 yards down from this bridge had tank tracks all around it. About two weeks before, a German tank had broken through and moved in during the night, pulling in behind a barn. The crew beat up an old woman and took over the house. At daylight, the tank got away and as far as anyone knows made its way safely back to the German lines.

Sgt. Grgurich's squad was put on a bridge and didn't rejoin the outfit until they moved to Buschbach.

That night the men that weren't on guard had a party. However, there wasn't anything there except three kegs of beer, and not too good at that. Capt. Mitchell, the new CO, stopped in for awhile.

At Seinghouse the first men went on pass to Paris. They were: S/Sgts. Marshall and Dennison, Pfc. Bruce Clarke and Harris, and Lt. Safford.

Seven more replacements arrived and they were: Pvts Kubiski, Long, Lovatro, Harry Luther, Gerald Marshall, and McKee.

That night the Company en-trucked at 1800 and went to Tetlingen, five miles away. There the Company was separated and placed in widely scattered positions. It was part of a Regiment holding force to hold the line while the rest pulled back to regroup for an attack. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon relieved "I" Co. on a hill outside and to the left to Buschbach. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon relieved "I" Co. on a hill outside and to the left to Buschbach. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon went over to another town to the left of Buschbach. The Weapons Platoon used three machine guns, one attached to each rifle platoon. No mortars were used, so the mortar men were divided up among the machine gun sections. The Company CP was in Bousbach.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was spread out over about 900 yards. There was about 200 yards distance between S/Sgt. Nixon's and S/Sgt. Cheney's squads. They received the same instructions as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They could hear Jerry burp guns and machine guns firing during the night.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon ran patrols between their inner and outer positions. On the road in one place was a mine field, the mines just laying on the surface. On their way to relieve "E" Co., part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had to pass through it. Pvt. Molnar had drunk too much schnapps and his buddies had a tough time trying to weave him in and out of the mines.

First Sgt. Pflagher and Sgt Rostain, with Pfc. Cordrey driving the jeep, had the job of stringing wire over to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon position. The night was black and foggy and they had no idea where the Krauts were. They had to go cross country most of the time, running in ditches, bogging down, altogether a very miserable trip. They finally found the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and got the wire in to it. On the way back they broke it about four times.

February 17

The Company was dug in around Bousbach and its vicinity. It was part of a Regiment holding force, holding the line while the other Battalions formed for the attack.

As stated in the last report, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions consisted of four OPs. OP 4 was quite near and overlooking the town of Kerbach. However, the day was very foggy and little could be seen of the action as "E" Co. attacked Kerbach. An "E" Co. patrol jumped off at 0100 to try and capture a few houses to establish a bridgehead for covering the rest of the Company when they attacked at dawn. The patrol was unable to get into the town, however, and "E" Co. fought all day and late into the afternoon. They secured the town and at late dusk were digging in on the high ground past the town.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon men on the road saw about 85 German prisoners during the day, a Capt. and two Lts. among them. The American wounded streamed back all day long. The men heard that a tank ran over a mine and had a bogie knocked off. They could hear the racket that it made coming back. They had a lot of trouble with communications because the tanks kept cutting the wires. They very seldom had contact between all the OPs. Some engineers went down the road to see about building a bridge and the Jerries started laying in artillery. One of them jumped in the creek on the right of the road which he thought he could wade and went in up to his neck. He came back half frozen. The men had him zeroed in, thinking he was a German.

About 1400 some Medics in a jeep started down the road toward the front and the Krauts opened up on them with a machine gun. They piled out of the jeep and hit the ditch. Then they crawled back down the ditch. Then OP 1 received a message from Sgt Horner, OP 1, saying that the medics were pinned down and the Germans were about 300 yards away. It was still very foggy when T/Sgt. Chappell received the message. He had the Platoon out of the house and in position in two minutes. They used houses, shell craters or anything which would afford cover. Then came a rumor that German armor had broken through, so they expected German tanks and infantry. However, nothing happened. The German machine gun would fire a burst down the road now and then but that was all.

There was a Negro artillery in Bousbach. Some of the men had occasion to go near their positions. They could hear one of them laugh loudly every time he pulled the lanyard and say, "Lord, Mr. Hitler, count yo' chillun now".

Also near Outpost 1 there was a house being used as an ammo dump. If the house had ever been hit, with all the ammo it had in it, it would have gone about 50 miles into the air. Negro truck drivers used to bring up the ammo. While they were unloading one truck some P-47s could be seen bombing and

strafing Behren. It was a pretty sight with the tracers streaking out and then, about half a mile later, came the rat-tat-tat of the gun. One of the Negroes started counting the planes. Another one said, "Never mind countin' them, boy. Is dey ders or is dey ours?" After watching awhile, one said to the driver, "Nigger, how much gas you got in dis tank?" He replied, "Bout half a tank." The other said, "Les burn it up gowine the other way."

These sayings were picked up by the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and became favorite foxhole quotations for a long time.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had positions on the hill to the left of Bousbach. It was foggy and rainy. They could see a tank way over to their left, near the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions, come out from behind some buildings, fire, and then return behind the building again.

Lt. Kubachko, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon Leader, S/Sgt. Cheney and Pvt. Alack went out quite a ways in front of the position to see if they could see what was going on. Machine gun fire and mortars laid in on them and they returned rather hurriedly. The mortar rounds followed them all the way in, dropping in the spots they had just left.

That evening, a detail set out to carry chow from the 1<sup>st</sup> squad to the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The carrying party consisted of Pfc. Harris, Ficeto and Slattery. They arrived at the 3<sup>rd</sup> squad's area just as it received a very heavy mortar barrage. They were pinned down for about half an hour with fragments lying all over. During the barrage, Slattery, the coolest of them all, said, "Do you think we ought to pray?" Pfc. Luukko had just returned from carrying water and jumped in S/Sgt. Nixon's hole. A mortar round landed just outside the hole and knocked off the hand guard of Nixon's rifle which was laying next to the hole. It riddled Pvt. Swanson's sleeping bag.

The night before, their hole being full of water, Sgt. Hamilton, Pfc. Ficeto and Harris slept on a wooden door. They didn't mind the hard surface but the knob was a bit unpleasant for the one who had it sticking in his ribs.

The next morning they started digging out their hole and fixing a drainage ditch. While so engaged they hit something hard. Having been warned about mines, they proceeded very carefully and probed with bayonets and dug around for about an hour before unearthing a large rock.

About 1900 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon left these positions and went into Bousbach. They stayed in town for about three hours and then were taken to a building on the edge of town. Two squads went to sleep and the other was used as a contact patrol between the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon's Outpost 3 and 4. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon supplied all patrols during the night. The 2<sup>nd</sup> squad went on the 1<sup>st</sup> patrol. Pfc. Huttenhower guided the first two patrols to go out. The night was pitch black. One of Huttenhower's patrols set off one of the trip flares that we had set out. About 10 minutes later OP 4 reported that American artillery was coming in on the spot where the flare went off.

S/Sgt. Cheney took out a patrol late at night. OP 4 allowed the whole eight men to pass within a few feet of them, counting them as they went, and challenging the last man. The positions were so well camouflaged and it was so dark that this was possible.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, in position in the town (the name of which no one can remember) to the left of Bousbach, observed the preparation for the day's attack. Infantry went out to the edge of the town about 0300 or 0400 to wait for dawn. Tanks moved up about 0600. A little later, about 0630, our artillery opened up with a terrific barrage. The positions were so close, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon could hear the fire orders, hear the breech close and the casings clank out. The barrage was the heaviest the men had ever heard. It lasted about 45 minutes and then stopped dead. The small arms opened up and tanks moved forward. They could see the tanks moving up the hill to the front. A little later the ambulance started rolling back. Reports came back that we were losing a lot of men from concertina wire and shoe mines. Then the prisoners started coming back.

About 2200 the Platoon moved and went into the outskirts of Brousbach into positions dug previously. They remained there all night.

The Weapons Platoon had a machine gun with each Platoon. The men were quartered with some civilians. They observed an "F" Co. patrol make its way along the ridge to the right of the town. They ran into trouble and were shelled with direct fire all the way back. The civilians lost no time in getting to the cellar. After it got closer, most of the men were down in the cellar too.

February 18

About 1500 the Company, led by Lt. Bjork, started the march from Bousbach to Behren. Capt. Mitchell and all Platoon Leaders and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Pflighar had left earlier to make a reconnaissance. Capt. Mitchell left Sgt. Pflighar in Behren to look for billets for the Company and with the Platoon Leaders went to the hill outside of Etzlingen for which "G" Co. fought the day before. They were here given a wonderful orientation by Major Boyd. While up there, they were shelled a couple of times. There were three 300 radios there which stood out like a sore thumb. One was Major Boyd's, one the artillery observer's, and one the Cannon Co. observer's. All artillery was directed at Etzlingen and the road from Etzlingen to Spicheren from this hill. The Germans were making continuous tank counter attacks along this road, which our artillery was beating back. The 275<sup>th</sup> was supposed to take Etzlingen, but time was passing without their accomplishing it. This left our right flank open and made it doubly hard for "G" Co. to take the woods to the left of Spicheren.

After this reconnaissance they returned to Behren and left on another. They went out on the road from Behren to Forbach. Just as they left, they saw T/5 Valentine and his jeep have a narrow escape. The Jerries started throwing some shells in just as Valentine parked his jeep by the house. A shell came in and it appeared to hit that house. They all thought that was the end of Valentine but the shell hit the next house and he was unharmed. He said afterwards that he took cover by the manure pile. The positions on the road to Forbach were old German positions already dug. The Company was to move there in case the Germans broke through from Forbach. While making this reconnaissance they were again shelled by the Germans. They must have been observed because the shells formed a pattern right around them. Capt. Mitchell, Lt. Kubachko and T/Sgt. Ignaszewski went off to the left side of the road and T/Sgt. Chappell went off to the right. None were hit but it was pretty close.

In the meantime, the Company was on the way to Behren. They marched in a single column on each side of the road. It was pretty quiet and they weren't shelled on the way over. It was here that many of the men saw their first dead G.I. He was pretty clean looking. The rain had washed him. He had a clean bullet hole through his head.

There were a lot of propaganda sheets along the road, "How America is Fighting England's War," etc.

Pfcs. Slattery and Harris, BAR men, carried a whole box of 30-caliber ammo between them as they did not want to get caught short.

When the Company arrived at Behren, Sgt. Pflighar had the billets picked out and the chow was there. The men immediately spread out to take what cover was available because Jerry had been shelling the town quite often. Some "C" Co. men had been killed as they were eating chow. Just as the men were going into the houses and shedding the equipment, Col. Willis rode up and told the Capt. to move out right away. We had been attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. and were committed.

The men ate chow, were issued ammo and prepared to move out. At dusk they pulled out on the road to Etzlingen. They were given a position on a map to take up and had had no chance to reconnoiter it. They went down the road about three quarters of the way to Etzlingen and then turned off the road into a draw. By this time, it was pitch black out. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons were to contact "G" Co. and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon to contact "E" Co. After going through the draw a short way, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon left the rest of the Company and turned to contact "E" Co. Lt. Gross did a good job in contacting them as it was pitch black and the ground was unfamiliar. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons continued on down the draw for about 100 yards until they hit barbed wire.

Capt. Mitchell decided to move up to the top of the draw. As they went up, they met part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon which was deploying along the ridge. Here they hit more barbed wire which S/Sgt. Rysso, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, and S/Sgt. Bergstrom of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon cut. The Company proceeded along the ridge for a few hundred yards and then it was thought advisable to go down into the draw again. They had to half slide down the hill as it was very steep.

On the way down, Lt. Kubachko saw his first dead American. At the bottom they ran into no more barbed wire. Capt. Mitchell and Lt. Kubachko got under their blanket and looked over their map. They weren't quite sure they were in the right place and it was thought best to send out a patrol. S/Sgt. Nixon, with Pfcs. Milam, Luukko and Kirpes formed the patrol. The patrol returned in about an hour.

They found the fire break which they had been looking for and determined that the woods were clear of Germans. Nixon then led the Company to where they had gone. They figured this was the right place and dug in along the edge of the woods and the firebreak.

The Company was between "C" and "G" Companies although no contact had been made with "G" Co. A ration train for "E" Co., about 10 men, had passed them loaded with the rations. The "H" Co. men were sent along with them to contact "E" Co. They returned later and said they had found them.

Then S/Sgt. Cheney was sent out with a patrol to see what he could discover and try and contact "G" Co. He took Sgt. Hamilton and Pfcs. Nearon, Kirpes and Slattery. They went along the woods a ways and then turned half right. Sgt. Hamilton was in the rear and described their movements as follows:

"We walked along in the pitch blackness for awhile and then I heard a sound which sounded like a dud hitting the mud. The patrol came to a stop. I walked up the line, counting until I got to Kirpes, who was second in line, and asked him where Cheney was. He said he didn't know that he had just disappeared. I felt out in front of my foot, figuring he might have fallen into a hole

and my foot felt nothing. There was a perfect vacuum ahead. I lay down and asked Cheney where he was as if it wasn't obvious. Cheney said, 'I think I've gone all the way to hell. It's wet.' Then Kirpes lay down, Nearon and I holding his legs. Cheney held his rifle up and Kirpes grabbed it. Then Cheney climbed up hand over hand. Next morning we saw he had fallen into a tank ditch about 20 feet deep with three feet of water in it. We could hear what sounded like Germans talking and as it was so dark we decided to return.

“While the men were working on their positions, they could hear tanks moving about in the direction of Etzlingen. Capt. Mitchell came around and checked up on the bazookas. This tank activity caused quite a bit of worryment. It wasn't until next morning when Lt. Kubachko met Lt. Cassidy of “G” Co. that it was learned that Etzlingen was in American hands and the noises were our tanks moving into the town.

“The men could not dig very deep before the holes filled with water. Some were placed along old Jerry trenches which were half full of water. Many of the men slept right on the open ground. The Germans shot off a lot of flares. There was also incoming artillery which didn't look particularly close.”

February 19

At daybreak somebody in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon yelled “Jerries!” and two were seen running along the edge of the woods. They were moving mighty fast and got away. They probably had been out patrolling.

About 0730 or 0800, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon sent a two man patrol out to contact “G” Co. They were not far away, and “B” Co. men had already seen them walking about. However, it was thought best to make sure. Pvts. McLaughlin and Mattox were sent. They made contact and found “G” Co. preparing to move forward in attack.

The men received no breakfast. Major Boyd came early and told Capt. Mitchell to move across the fire break and dig in. Immediately in front of the “B” Co. position was a clearing, or firebreak, with a road running through it. Beyond that were woods and then another field. Away off to the right was the town of Etzlingen. Over to the left was the long anti-tank ditch, about 20 feet deep, about at right angles with the firebreak. Beyond this ditch and across the firebreak was more woods. Lt Kubachko went across the firebreak to where “E” Co. was. They were supposed to be going to jump off. Harnet, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. lying on the ground, said that they were supposed to jump off but that there was a sniper in the woods and they were not going to. Lt. Kubachko went farther and crossed the anti-tank ditch and met some more “E” Co., men who didn't know what the score was. He then returned and told Capt. Mitchell what was going on.

Major Boyd wanted to have the engineers fill up the tank ditch. He told Capt. Mitchell he couldn't do anything until he knew the woods across were cleared and were outposted. Capt. Mitchell instructed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon to go over first. Lt. Kubachko sent a patrol out ahead. Instructions were to go into the woods about 200 yards and send a man back if anything happened. Then he would bring the rest of the Platoon across. The patrol consisted of S/Sgt. Cheney and his entire squad.

T/Sgt. Chappell recalls one incident that happened during this fight. He tells it as follows:

“I was behind a trench and near me Capt. Mitchell was behind another tree. I looked out and a shot hit the tree right beside my head. I looked again to see where the fire was coming from,

using field glasses, when another shot knocked a lot of bark off the tree and it hit Capt. Mitchell right in the mouth. The Capt thought that he had his face blown off. He was spitting bark out of his mouth and his helmet was knocked off.”

S/Sgts. Marshall and Dennison, who had been in Paris, returned to their platoons during the fight.

Before Lt. Kubachko was hit, he had sent Pvt. Millington over to “G” Co. for help. They told Millington to pull back and they would send in mortar fire. By the time Millington got back however Major Boyd had already given orders for “B” Co. to move back to the ditch and dig in. The mortar fire never came.

Besides the trenches the Germans had six pill boxes and sniper positions in trees.

The Weapons Platoon mortar sections were not committed and they remained in the woods on the other side of the firebreak most of the day. However, the machine gun sections were up with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons. T/Sgt. Ignaszewski could be heard all over the place up there. Casualties were pretty heavy. Pvt. Harbold was hit by a bullet as were Pvts. Virgil Brown and Lovetro. Pvt. Harbold returned to the Company April 16. The other two have never returned.

Capt. Mitchell received a cluster to the Bronze Star Medal for his performance on this day.

Col. Conley and Major Boyd, who were at the anti-tank ditch, had ordered “B” Co. to take up defensive positions along this trench. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, which had not been committed but held behind the tank barrier, was on the right. The 1<sup>st</sup> in the middle and the 2<sup>nd</sup> were on the left across the tank ditch. The machine guns were up with the rifle platoons and the mortars were in the woods to the rear.

There were two anti-tank guns to the rear of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Weapons Platoons S/Sgt. Dennison of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon saw them fire one round at a tank 700 yards away. It was a near miss, the rear end of the tank swinging around. He never could understand why they didn’t fire again.

The men started digging in about noon and dug all afternoon. While digging they saw three tanks move up on the left. The Engineers had filled in part of the anti-tank trap so they could cross. Then the tanks and “G” Co. made an attack on the trenches and pill boxes from the far left. They cleaned out the forward trenches and some of the pill boxes. “G” Co. took up positions in the trenches.

Shortly before dusk, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons moved over to their trenches and relieved “G” Co. There were a lot of prisoners there. One man counted about 40. There were two of our tanks. One of them was stuck in the mud and stayed there for three days.

While the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was moving into position, Col. Conley saw some Germans out ahead. He took out his 45-caliber pistol and started firing. Pvt. Morris, BAR man, had to hit the ground in a hurry or he might have stopped one of the bullets.

While the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was getting organized, and Coffey, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon medic, was patching up a German non-com PW, the Jerries started throwing in some 88s. Col. Conley and his bodyguard were standing nearby. A shell hit right among the group. Coffey was pitched right over a nearby fence. He heard the Colonel calling, “Where the hell is that medic?” When he at last dazedly clambered back

over the fence he found the bodyguard too far gone for help and the Colonel unharmed. The bodyguard was struck in the lung and was dead when Coffey got there. The shell also killed two German prisoners. They were all huddled in a group near one of the tanks. The Colonel had a P-38 he had taken from one of the Krauts.

That night the men received K rations for chow. Early in the evening, Pvt. Mevorah shot a German. The Jerry came walking along the trench. Mevorah called "Halt!" and the Jerry started laughing loudly. He shot him and the Jerry dropped in the trench moaning. Mevorah shot him three more times. Apparently the Jerry had thought he was in his own lines. There was a network of interweaving trenches, some of which ran right up into the German lines. The Jerry was a non-com and was carrying a box with ammo in one hand and a grenade in the other. S/Sgt. Dunn got a P-38 from him the next day.

Later in the night they moved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon back away as they were out too far in front. They stayed in the muddy ditch all night without any hot chow. Some of the men pulled guard as much as one hour on and one hour off. Coffey, the Medic, pulled guard along with the men, although it was a technical violation. There were no blankets. Medic Redfearn slept on top of the ground in spite of the prowling Jerries to keep from getting wet. Howard, Medic of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, also pulled guard in the hole with Chappell and Beauchamp.

A large detail of men went out and placed concertina wire in front of the trenches. They had it half up when the Jerries started shooting flares and grenades. The pillboxes were only about 50 yards away and the Jerries kept throwing grenades all night.

S/Sgt, Dourand, Pfc, Richardson, Coffey, Medic, and one other were in one hole together. Two stood guard at a time. They were just changing the guard one time when they saw a streak of fire come towards them through the air. A concussion type grenade hit in the hole right next to them. Coffey yelled, "Grab it!" but beat Dourand to it himself and threw it out where it went off with a terrific bang. Richardson and Dourand opened up with M-1s in the direction from whence it came. After the attack, made two days later, two dead Jerries were found there.

They were shelled by a German tank which was down on the main road. It laid in about three rounds of tracer shells.

"F" Co. was on the right but there was a big gap in between.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was also on a wire-laying detail. While they were laying the wire, a Jerry approached nearby. Pvt. Alack called out the name of one of his buddies. Pvt. Alack squeezed off eight rounds in quick succession but missed him.

Sgt. Hamilton had a close call that night. He told T/Sgt. Hicks that he was going back and get some bed rolls that were supposed to be left on the road. They had been following tank tracks back. S/Sgt. Rysso told Hamilton to follow a certain star. Apparently he followed the wrong star because he soon heard T/Sgt. Hicks call out, "Halt!" He stopped and then, believing that Hicks knew who he was and wasn't calling to him, took another step forward. Immediately he heard a fusillade of shots. He looked to see the direction and then the whole sky was red with flashes. He made a huge tree about 15 feet away in just about one jump, being fired at. Even then Hicks was pretty careful until he made certain.

Hamilton had gone off his course somewhat and had missed the opening in the barbed wire fence he was looking for. He wasn't touched by the fire.

February 20

One of our Companies attacked over on "B" Co.'s left that morning. The Jerries were using 20-mm guns, trying to stop the attack. They were firing up a draw to the left and were hitting "B" Co.'s left rear. This day the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon moved across the anti-tank trap and took up positions, just on the other side of it where they dug in. The mortars moved over to the left of the ditch and the machine guns stayed over on the right side.

At about 0730 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon received word to keep down, that our artillery was going to throw in a five-minute concentration barrage. The barrage came almost immediately but the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon area caught most of it instead of the Germans. Tree bursts and time fire had a lot to do with it. One tree burst hit Sgt. Anderson and Lt. Gross. Fouts, a "G" Co. Medic went to the aid of Anderson. Anderson was seriously hurt and died about a half hour later. Coffey, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Medic, went to the aid of Lt. Gross. His leg was blown off right below the knee, hanging on by a shred. Coffey couldn't put a good tourniquet on because he was thrashing around so he had to use manual pressure. Pfc. Witte went after a litter. As the litter bearers were afraid to come up, T/Sgt. Hicks, S/Sgt. Dennison, Pfc. Witte and Smith carried the litter back. Coffey rode to the collecting Company with the Lt. as he couldn't let go without him bleeding to death. He didn't let go until they got him on the table. Lt. Gross was crying like a baby and saying, "The damned fools. It was our own artillery. The damned fools. I just got here. My leg, my leg!" He lost his leg and Coffey was back in an hour.

T/Sgt. Lenk received severe burns about the face by the same shell, but he refused to be evacuated.

During the morning, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon started out to take two of the Jerry pillboxes. They had bazookas, rifle grenades, etc. Before they could get more than a couple of bazooka rounds off the Jerries opened up with everything they had and drove them back. The men went out in some of the trenches, leading to the Jerry positions. T/Sgt. Hicks took one group around to the left to cover the bazooka team. Capt. Mitchell was out with the assaulting team. For some reason, Hicks called him and the Capt. walked along the trench to him. As he proceeded, the spot where he had been was filled with concussion grenades as the Jerries opened up. He just missed it by a few seconds. S/Sgt. Rhine had gotten his bazooka in position and fired two rounds when they spotted him. He had a third in the bazooka and was ready to fire when either a mortar or a bazooka round landed in the trench right behind him. It tossed him into the air and right into the mud. He had the wind knocked out of him and caught a piece of shrapnel in his posterior. He made his way back through the deep mud as well as he could and returned from the aid station as soon as he was fixed up.

The fire was too heavy and we had to withdraw. The trench was so narrow and the mud was so deep, a couple of feet in places, that it was hard to move. The Jerries didn't help any with their grenade barrage. It was a mad scramble back. The men had to remove their rifle belts because they got stuck with them on. Sgt. Hamilton didn't get his back until a couple days later. S/Sgt. Rysso made his way back on his hands and knees because he could not pick his feet out of the mud. Many of the men lost their rifles. Pfc. Haglund was using his as a pole vault and it was oozing with mud when he got back.

It was noticed, when they got back and things had quieted down a bit that Pfc. Peterson was missing. Pvt. Wolfram went back to look for him but could not find him. Peterson didn't show up until about two hours later. He told the following story:

He said he had got stuck in the mud. He had been jarred considerably by the grenades and just didn't have strength enough to pull himself out of the mud. After about 10 minutes rest he started back along the trench. Near the American lines was a pillbox which had been cleared and which the attackers had moved past without investigating, believing it to be empty. As Peterson reached the breach in the trenches leading to this pillbox he heard Germans talking. He looked over at the pillbox and three Jerries came out of the door and motioned him to come over to them. He figured his goose was cooked so he laid down his rifle and walked over to them with his hands up. They brought him inside the pillbox and then debated among themselves for quite awhile in German, which he couldn't understand. Then they had him sit down and they tried to tell him something. He couldn't understand any of their German but when they mentioned "book" he remembered his language guide. They took the book and pointed to the phrase, "Can you get an interpreter?" He told them he could. Then they led him out the door. He picked up his rifle and proceeded back. During the time he had decided they wanted to surrender.

S/Sgt. Rysso volunteered to go back and see what they wanted. The only two men who spoke German in the Platoon were Sgt. Hamilton and Pvt. Ficeto. Rysso did not want Hamilton to go as he didn't want to risk two non-coms. However Ficeto would not go unless Hamilton went, so Sgt. Rysso and Hamilton went.

Here the rest of the story is told by Sgt Hamilton:

"When we got to the pillboxes, Rysso stayed outside to cover me as I went in. it was pitch black inside and I couldn't see anything. My knees were shaking. I called out in German, "Where are you?" A German came out of one of the rooms with a candle. He led me back into a large room where they had five or six candles burning. Inside the room were a Corporal and two Privates. They told me they wanted to surrender but wanted to wait until dark as their own men would shoot them. I told them that we could not wait as we were going to attack and that their men could not see them or they would have shot me when I came in. They decided that they wanted to surrender but wanted to know how much of their equipment they could bring along. I told them to bring anything they wanted. Rysso then came in behind me and told them to leave their steel helmets off and also any weapons they had. They turned over one burp gun and one pistol in a holster. Just at that moment, Capt. Mitchell and T/Sgt. Ignasewski came in. I turned the pistol over to Capt Mitchell. I told the Jerries to follow Rysso back to our lines. They said they had children and had families and they didn't like the Infantry, "Infantry nicht gute." All three were ex-air corpsmen and had arrived as replacements from Forbach the night before."

These men could have mowed down the attacking party earlier in the day if they had wanted to. Also the wire from the night before had been laid right in front of the pillbox and it had to be removed to get in.

About noontime the Germans threw in a heavy barrage. Pfc. Witte of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and a lot of "G" Co. men were hit. One round took a tree down near him and a piece hit him. He had previously been wounded at Phillipsbourg. He road back to the aid station with Chaplain Henderson. Witte returned to the Company again about April 5.

During the barrage, Pfc. Smith of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and Coffey, Medic, were lying under a bunch of logs. A shell came in and hit one end of a log, knocking it about 20 feet in the air. Pfc. Smith said, "That was pretty close, wasn't it?"

During the day, Major Boyd and all of the Company CO's had a meeting at the fire break. Word came from Hdqts to jump off in a midnight attack and take all the high ground overlooking Stiring-Wendel. Capt. Mitchell said that would be suicide as nothing was known of the ground and he was not taking his company on such a suicidal attack. The other CO's agreed with him. Major Boyd went back to Hdqts with this word. The Captain came back and said to the Platoon Sergeants, "Well, you boys may have to jump off in a midnight attack with a new CO." After hearing the story, the Platoon Sergeants said that the Colonel would jump off without any Platoon Sergeants so later the attack was called off.

The Company got hot chow that night, which helped a lot. The Weapons Platoon dug holes to stay in. They had quite a time finding something to cover them with. T/Sgt. Ignaszewski, Sgt. Mitchell, S/Sgt. Hess, and Pfc. Crawley dragged big logs from the ditch up the slippery bank. Sgt. Gill and Pfc. Fisher and Goska stayed in a hole that really wasn't big enough for one man. They got cramps every little while and had to crawl out to straighten out. Pfc. Bollinger and T/4 Howard, Medic, went back to the positions of the night before to keep from digging another hole. Everyone used shelter halves over the holes to keep the rain out.

All that night the Jerries moved a tank or a flak-wagon about down on the highway. They made such a racket that at the time the men thought a whole Battalion of them was down there. They expected the worst for the next day. They could also hear the Germans digging in.

That night, Sgt. Hamilton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, slept in a sleeping bag on top of a trench. He told the men with him to wake him when they heard the slightest sound. Pfc. Haglund woke him once and told him artillery was coming in. Haglund said that a round had just landed about 50 yards away. Hamilton said that was a fine time to wake him up. "Next time wake me up when you hear the damn thing coming, not after it has landed!"

That afternoon, Pvt. Fenton's brother, who had received a pass, came right up in the trenches looking for him. He was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. in the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry. They went back to the kitchen.

That night Pvt. Brock of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon went patrolling in his sleep. He wandered around awhile and finally wound up at the Platoon CP. When he came back, Pvt. Joseph asked him where he had been. He said he had been after some aspirin. Then he woke up.

Coffey, Medic, coming back along one of the trenches, saw a man lying there in an open trench. He tried to wake him up for about three minutes. He said, "You damn fool, wake up! The Jerries will throw a grenade in on you." Finally he said, "You sure are a sound sleeper," and walked off. He told S/Sgt. Dourand who said, "Come with me." After they both made a more thorough examination, they found it to be a dead German.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon section, Sgt. Wilkins was standing beside the anti-tank ditch when he heard someone slogging along. He called, "Halt!" The visitor threw down his rifle and started babbling something in German as if he was happy as a lark. He climbed up some steps out of the ditch and turned out to be just four feet tall. He told the men that he had fallen in the ditch and that his comrades had gone off

and would not help him out. T/Sgt. Chappell brought the prisoner back to the CP. It was funny to see him as Chappell had him by the back of the seat and practically lifted him along.

The Company CP was near the anti-tank ditch on the side away from the enemy. There was a ditch there that ran along the firebreak and they had part of it covered with rain coats. They couldn't dig it deeper and it filled with water. Everyone slept on top of the ground. They had a telephone line strung up which ran to the Bn. that worked intermittently.

February 21

In the morning the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon moved across the ditch and took positions in a ditch about 150 yards from the German positions. They were far to the right of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions. The mortar section moved up behind them and up near the road leading to the pillboxes. The Jerries started throwing in shells and they had no holes. They dug the mortars in and went to the ditch along the edge of the firebreak for protection. They couldn't dig much but managed to dig back into the bank and got a little protection. The 88s were zeroed in on the road in the center of the firebreak and were hitting supplies there. The Company was hit several times.

About 1100, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon tried to get up even with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons. However, the barrage became too hot and they had to remain where they were and dig in deeper. S/Sgt. Horner, S/Sgt. Hankins, T/4 Howard, Medic, Pvts. Millington, Maxwell and Molnar were in the ditch together. A shell struck on the edge of the ditch and caved it in all over them. Molnar and Maxwell had already been wounded and T/4 Howard was caring for them, although they were covered with dirt. No further casualties resulted from that shell. The area was quite heavily wooded and there were heavy tree bursts. Pvt. Jetter was also wounded this morning by shrapnel.

During the morning, T/Sgt. Chappell and S/Sgt. Marshall crawled out into a field to the front and to the right of their positions. They took a bazooka and all the ammo they could carry. Pfc. Millington and Huttenhower carried more for them. They went into another trench out there. With field glasses they could see the Germans plainly moving around in their trenches. Then they started lobbing in white phosphorus grenades at them. They also shot some HE rounds at the pillboxes with no apparent results. They also did some sniping with their M-1s. T/Sgt. Chappell was just getting ready to fire a bazooka round when a Jerry round hit the dirt right over his head. Then Chappell and Marshall fired the bazooka all up and down the trench that the Jerries were in. Millington and Huttenhower were kept busy carrying ammo. Then the Jerries started throwing in mortars and some of them got very close. It got so hot they had to finally retire. Going back, they had to go in the open a lot and in the trench the mud was a foot deep.

Col. Conley came about 1300. He wanted to bring up anti-tank guns to fire on the pillboxes. He was told that trucks could not get them up. He told the men to pull them up into position by hand and to even put boards on the wheels and slide them along if necessary.

Later Capt. Mitchell was down on the right flank with anti-tank with the Lt. showing him where to plant his guns to get the pill boxes. The Colonel wanted him, and T/Sgt. Chappell sent a runner for him. Chappell could see him running, his fur cap flapping. Then a shell burst and the Captain disappeared. Chappell said, "Hell, they've got the Captain." Then he saw the Captain come bouncing out of the bushes. The shell had hit a tree right over his head and knocked him about 20 feet without injuring him.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, in the morning, started out in an abortive attack which didn't get very far. They started about 0900. Sgt. Hamilton, Pfc. Harris and Pvts. Ficeta and Hartwright, before the attack, went out to secure the first pillbox in which the prisoners had been taken the day before. They found it empty and called T/Sgt. Hicks to come on down. The Platoon never did get there. Just then Jerry opened up with everything he had. The Platoon withdrew about 15 minutes later. Pvt. Swanson came out and called to the ones in the pill box to come on back. During this attempt, Pfc. Meidal and McCaslin were hit, Meidal only slightly. He returned to the Company in a few days. McCaslin returned to the Company about April 22.

That morning Sgt. Hamilton was standing in the ditch, head and shoulders above. There was a little sapling in back of him and a little to the left. There was a sharp "ping" and a limb dropped down a little. Hamilton said, "You get two shots in this army." Another shot came and cut the limb off so Hamilton got down as he didn't know just what the sniper might try next.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon also received their share of the morning barrage. S/Sgt. Bergstrom and Pvt. Depas were in a hole together. A shell burst nearby and hit Depas in the thigh. Pvt. Montesano, in a hole nearby, got hit with the same shell. His arms were broken and he had a piece of shrapnel in each leg. Altogether he had nine pieces in him, Medic Coffey came and gave him first aid. He said, "Boys, you think it is fun to get wounded and sent home but it isn't."

Col. Conley said they had to be on the road (the road behind the German positions) that night. He wanted to know just what they needed to get there. T/Sgt. Chappell said they needed tanks in support. Col. Conley said they'd get tanks. The tank commander was there. He said he only had two tanks with wide treads. He said one of his tanks that had narrow treads was already stuck in the mud. He knew if they got stuck the Jerries would knock them out. T/Sgt. Chappell went with the tank commander and they reconnoitered his route of approach. Chappell tried to show him where the bunkers were. After that he went back to get his tanks and T/Sgt. Chappell went to his squad leaders to tell them what he wanted them to do. They all got set and the tanks came up and moved down the previously reconnoitered route. The tank moved up fairly close and let loose with about three 76-mm rounds at the first bunker. Then all moved out, using marching fire. The men fired their weapons at anything they saw and if they saw no one they still fired in the direction in which they thought the enemy were. They moved up and once they got started it was like a steam roller moving. They took everything in their path.

All Germans were either killed or captured. Lt. Chappell says now it was the greatest piece of marching fire he has ever seen.

They had a little trouble in getting the tank to move up. They wanted it up there with them so it could give them machine gun support. The Jerries fired a couple of bazooka rounds at them but missed. The men had to make three trips back to get the tank to move up. They would look back and the tank would be stopped. The tanker was killed a couple of days later. He was outside his tank, reconnoitering when a mortar round got him.

Pvt. Metzler was the only 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon man hit in the attack. He was hit in the middle of the attack near the first bunker. He has never returned to the Company.

Our fire was so terrific that the Jerries didn't dare stick their heads up.

In the meantime, Capt. Mitchell and T/Sgt. Hicks had brought up the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons and all pivoted to the right and swept down on the other pillboxes. They hit them so fast they didn't know what it was all about.

The terrain they had to go over was very heavily wooded, mostly large beech with spots of underbrush here and there. They had to go up a slight grade, which dropped off sharply at the top. The pillboxes belonged to the old Maginot Line fortifications and had been converted by the Germans. The walls were about six feet thick, steel-reinforced concrete.

Once the men got behind them, the Germans were helpless. The men would toss grenades in and yell for them to come out. The Jerries would come piling out.

They took six bunkers in 20 minutes, killed about 30 Germans, and took about 72 walking prisoners and about 15 wounded. One of the pillboxes was used as an aid station and was crowded with wounded Jerries. One of them had been hit by one of our bazooka rounds that morning. Lt. Chappell said he killed at least three Germans during the attack. Lt. Chappell received a Cluster to the Silver Star for his actions during this attack.

They went across the road and took one of the pillboxes before they quit. In it was a soldier who claimed to be a priest although he had a Luger which Sgt. Horner gladly relieved him of. The few Jerries that got away set up a machine gun farther down the road. Pvt. Maurisso was standing on the pillbox covering the men who had gone in when the machine gun opened up and wounded him. Pvt. Fouts, "G" Co. aid man, went to his aid and the machine gun cut him down and killed him. They could not get to either one until after dark. As soon as it was dark they went up to them. They found the aid man dead but Maruisso was alive with a crease in his temple and shot through the hip into the stomach. They gave him first aid and put him on a litter and carried him back to where they could get a jeep to take him to the aid station. While looking for a jeep they met some men repairing a telephone line who carried him back to the aid station.

"G" Co. was on "B" Co.'s right flank during the attack, protecting it. Before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon pulled out the same group as before was supposed to secure the first pillbox. However, after starting they discovered that our tank was firing directly at it, so they didn't move out until the rest of the platoons did. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had only two squads left. S/Sgt. Rysso told Pfc. Luukko to take his squad over the top, right where the machine gun had been firing. Luukko said, "Right where the machine gun has been firing?" Rysso said, "Yes." So, they started off. S/Sgt. Rhine's squad left at the same time. S/Sgt. Rysso, Sgt. Hamilton and Pfc. Harris checked one of the empty pillboxes on the way out and Rysso left Harris there to guard it. By this time the tank had stopped firing. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was up and the Krauts were coming out of the pillbox with their hands over their heads yelling, "Kamerad!" Some were running away. One Jerry didn't seem to know whether to surrender or not. Someone decided for him by shooting him.

As they moved farther on they came to the pillbox being used as an aid station. A man came out and said, "Me Polish. Me Polish". Pfc. Luukko told him to go along with the rest.

Ryso called for someone to clear the woods (underbrush) to the left. Sgt. Hamilton, Pfc. Cox and Pvt. Lawrence Hamilton went into the woods and immediately saw that they were alone over there. As soon as they got into the woods, they spread out and started combing the woods as if looking for rabbits. Suddenly they saw five Jerries who were standing in a group. When they saw them, two fired, one with a burp gun and one with a rifle. The other three went off through the woods. Just then Cox yelled that his BAR would not work. Sgt. Hamilton had a can of oil and he poured the entire can in the receiver. After that it functioned beautifully. While they were stopped, the Jerries took the opportunity to escape. So scared that they could not run right, they would trip and roll. Sgt. Hamilton and Lawrence Hamilton went after them while Cox covered them with the BAR. They flushed the two, who raised up and fired. After they had fired a few shots, Cox cut them down. When they reached the direct road, Lt. Bjork was there and he said they were supposed to keep going but they were disorganized and it was too late. T/Sgt. Hicks told Sgt. Hamilton to organize the platoon in a defense against a counterattack. There were three men available at the time.

Pfc. Haglund was in charge of S/Sgt. Rhine's squad and moved it to the left to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. He had a hard time getting the men out of the trenches to start with. He and T/Sgt. Hicks took the lead and started off for the pillboxes. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was just getting there and the Jerries were piling out yelling and Haglund was yelling and throwing grenades and firing into every brush pile to get the Jerries out. They didn't stop until they got to the main road where they were told to stop as the Company had to reorganize.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon guarded the left flank and left front end and didn't see much action. Just before they moved out Pfc. Smith had just gone up the trench a little from the bridge which crossed it. He heard a mortar hit the top of a tree over the bridge and ducked. When he looked up he saw Pvt. McFadden, who was standing up beside the bridge, struck by a large limb from the tree. He thought he was ruptured and he couldn't move at all. Medic Coffey gave him first aid. They moved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon up to the new positions where they dug in. Pvt. McFadden has never returned to the Company.

As they were digging in at their new positions, the Jerries threw in a heavy barrage. Our tanks were moving around in the rear going back and the Jerries were after them. Pvt. Hubatch, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, was hit in the head by small pieces of shrapnel. He was hospitalized and returned to the Company on March 6.

Weapons Platoon had the machine guns up with the riflemen during the attack. Thigpen was seen to crawl up on one pillbox looking for a place to drop a grenade. Pvt. William Brown was wounded during the attack and has never returned.

They could have gone on to the Metz highway that day but they would have been hit by a counter attack as they had no one on the flanks to provide protection.

This day about three o'clock Medic Howard had a very close call. He was very busy all day and was in a trench just as the men were taking the first pillbox with tanks as support. A heavy 88 barrage came in trying to get the tank. The shell knocked Howard right out of the trench. Howard was in a shock condition for about two days, and then he returned to the Company. It was earlier this day that Howard had a little trouble with a 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. While Howard was fixing Molnar and Maxwell up and getting them evacuated he laid his medical packs down and put the two wounded men on a jeep. The Lt. came along and picked them up as he was a member of the salvage crew working right behind the men.

Howard became very worried when he tried to find his packs. One of the men from Weapons Platoon told him he saw some guy walk by with them. Howard saw a man up the hill and called, "Hey, you son of a bitch, where are my aid packs?" The Lt. replied, "You can't talk to me like that. I am an officer." Howard said, "I don't give a damn who you are. Suppose some fellow gets hit. What in the hell do you think I can do about it? If you don't know what you are doing up here you had better go back." The officer said he was sorry and returned the packs.

That night the men dug in on the hill, near the woods. One of the pillboxes was used as a Co. CP. The machine guns were up on line with the riflemen. The mortars were dug in just to the rear of the pillboxes.

The night was quiet. The Engineers tried to blow up some of the pillboxes but had little effect on them as they didn't use a large enough charge.

About sunset T/Sgt. Lenk was ordered to send a contact patrol to "E" Co., which was on "B" Co.'s left. He sent S/Sgt. Bergstrom and Pvt. James Moore. They found "E" Co. on the high ground overlooking Stiring-Wendel. There was about 500 yards distance between the two companies and "E" Co. was debating whether or not to move farther forward. They were going to send a man back with the "B" Co. patrol. They waited about half an hour and no one came, so they returned.

February 22

About 0830, another contact patrol left for "E" Co. It was composed of T/Sgt. Lenk, S/Sgt. Bergstrom, Pvt. Brock, James and Joseph Moore, and one other, all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. Pvt. James Moore was the get-away man. They came to a place they were in a little doubt about. They went through a thicket and came to a clearing. Pvt. Moore heard a German voice call out, "Halt!" He heard Lenk say, "Ja! Ja! Ja!" Then the Jerries opened up with automatic fire. There were bullets hitting all around. He heard Bergstrom say, "I'm hit." He could see a couple of the men helping him. The Germans were pursuing them. Bergstrom told them to leave him and get away themselves. Then Lenk came running and said, "Let's get out of here," and then Moore took off. Another Company picked up Bergstrom the next day. He had been hit in the leg and the Jerries patched him up and left him there. He was never returned to the Company.

To the left of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was a large cave with about 100 civilians in it. About noon a middle aged man with a small boy came walking up a small road right in front of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions. He was waving a white flag. Before they made out who he was, he was almost shot by some of the men. When he arrived at the line, they called up Pvt. Brock, who spoke French, to talk to him. He said he was going to the next town to get some food for the people in the cave. They let him go.

Later T/Sgt. Hicks took out a patrol to search out the woods into which the Company was to move. The patrol consisted of himself, Pfc. Dickens and Harris, and Pvts. Crozier, Peterson, Hartwright, and Wolfram. They went out about 300 yards and didn't see or hear anything.

It was a murky day, the sky gray and overcast. The Company moved out in the attack about 1500. The plan was for three Platoons to move out in line – 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon on the right, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon in the middle and 3<sup>rd</sup> on the left. There were two ridges putting out towards Saarbrucken from the "B" Company positions. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon went down the right hand one, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> down the left one. There was a

draw of considerable width between the two ridges, entailing quite a distance of separation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon from the remainder of the Company.

For the sake of convenience the action of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons will be first described. The men who had previously gone out on patrol with T/Sgt. Hicks acted as a point for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and in effect for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon also.

Due to the terrain, the 3<sup>rd</sup> slipped over and almost followed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon instead of moving on the flank. In the beginning contact was lost between the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and the rest of the Company. Finally, radio contact was established but still didn't locate them exactly.

After advancing a ways, the point of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was pinned down by rifle and machine gun fire. T/Sgt. Hicks ordered the rest of the Platoon to cross the road on the right to attempt to out flank the German positions. Then the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved up right behind the point. The men moving across the road were subjected to heavy machine gun fire from the nose of the hill.

Pfc. Harris, member of the point pinned down, said that there was a rifleman in a hole very close by. He was so close that the reports made his ears ring. He never did see the German.

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon came, the Germans ceased firing. S/Sgt. "Shorty" Dourand was the first man Pfc. Harris saw, bandoliers all over him. Harris thinks the Jerries ceased firing because they saw the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon coming up the ridge and figured they didn't have a chance. Harris asked Dourand where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was. He said they were off to the right and for them to join the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and after reaching the brow of the hill, were fired on again by rifle fire. No one knew where the shots came from but one just missed Dourand. Dourand started yelling, "Shoot all the dead bastards!" and they all started shooting the bodies to make sure they were dead.

The part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon that had crossed the road had orders to form a skirmish line from the top of the hill to the bottom and move out towards the nose of the hill. In crossing the road, a number of the men saw Germans changing their positions. As soon as they reached the ditch on the opposite side of the road, these men would fall into it and shoot at the moving Jerries. Quite a few Germans were accounted for by this action.

They had a little trouble in getting the skirmish line from the top of the hill to the bottom going. For some reason the line was echeloned to the rear instead of going straight down the side of the hill. It seemed impossible to get the men up into the right positions.

Sgt. Hamilton came from the top of the hill and rejoined the Platoon as it organized but Cox and Luukko stayed. T/Sgt. Hicks, trying to reorganize the Platoon, was standing in the middle of the road. He called to S/Sgt. Rysso, Sgt. Hamilton, Pfc. Harris and Pfc. Boiarski. They all gathered around Hicks in the road. A mortar shell burst a few feet away, just about three feet behind Rysso, who was flung down. Hamilton received a couple of pieces in his left hand. Harris received a piece of shrapnel in his left arm. Rysso got a couple of pieces in his back. Hicks and Boiarski was unharmed. Hamilton and Harris were later evacuated. Hamilton rejoined the Company on April 8 and Harris rejoined the Company on April 24. Sgt. Rysso went back to the aid station and had his back fixed and returned to the Company that night.

Just at this time orders came to pull back to the crest of the hill and prepare positions for the night. Confusion reigned. A number of wounded men, some from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, were lying in a shallow trench near the crest of the hill waiting for a medic to work on them. Redfearn was the only available medic and, though hard pressed and under fire, was working efficiently and trying to take care of the men in the order of the seriousness of their wounds. He had just finished dressing Sgt. Hamilton's wound when a mortar shell landed a few feet from the edge of the ditch. He said that he had been hit. He turned around to get his aid kit, which was behind him when another mortar shell landed near the same spot. He said he had been hit again in the other side. About this time, a flak-wagon, located in the valley, opened up on the hill and Sgt. Rostain, received a piece of shrapnel in the hand. Redfearn dressed him in spite of being wounded. Pfc. Haglund received a piece of shrapnel through the center of his helmet which raised a two-inch bump on his head. Redfearn treated him and he did not even go to the aid station. The second shell that hit Redfearn also got Sgt. Hamilton's helmet, just touching his head. It went through the helmet and helmet liner and knocked his helmet off.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon finally became reorganized and new orders were received to move across the draw onto the right hand ridge which had been cleared by the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon.

After they got there, they started to dig in on the slope near the bottom and while so engage, the flak-wagon opened up and the men went in every direction looking for cover. Later that night the enemy threw in some mortar and artillery fire.

As noted before, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon started out on the left of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon but pulled over more to the right due to the terrain. They moved out about 1500. Capt. Mitchell was with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. Pfc. Smith was his runner for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. Pvt. David, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon runner, carried the radio. Sgt. Rostain was carrying the 300 radio. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Inzer, who had just been commissioned a few days before, was in charge of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon.

They moved slowly and would go a little ways and stop for 15 minutes or so. When they arrived at the top of a small ridge, just in front of the road, they became pinned down as was the point of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. Lt. Inzer, T/Sgt. Lenk and S/Sgt. Dennison were to the right front on top of a knoll. Machine gun fire was coming very close to them from the left front. S/Sgt. Porter, Platoon guide, seeing that they were pinned down, ordered everyone to fire eight rounds in the air. Just before they fired, Dennison came running back, blood streaming down his face and shouting that he had got a couple and that there was still another one up there. Dennison was quite badly wounded and didn't return to the Company until April 8. While everyone was firing, Lt. Inzer jumped up and ran back. He got grenades and went forward and threw one. Then a couple of Jerries started running and everyone started yelling, "Get them!" and began firing at them. The grenade killed one, the small arms fire killed another and a third was captured. A few minutes later, word was given to move on. T/Sgt. Lenk had been hit in the back while they were pinned down. He was seen walking back. He has never returned to the Company. At the beginning of the fire fight, Pvt. Muratorie was shot through the heart and killed. He just gasped and died. The fire fight lasted about half an hour. S/Sgt. Porter took the place of T/Sgt. Lenk as Platoon Sgt.

They moved forward about 300 yards, crossing the road. Porter saw that the men were too bunched up. He sent some men over the side of the hill to the left. He said for some to watch out for "C" Co., which was supposed to be coming up on the left. The men were T/5 Dunn and Pvts. James and Joseph Moore, Brock, Miller, Morris and one other. They had only moved about 40 to 50 yards when the Jerries

opened up with a machine gun from a ditch on the side of the road. Also they threw in mortar, ack-ack, and bazooka fire. The men were pinned down. Joseph Moore, James Moore and one other jumped in a shell hole. Dunn fell behind a small tree, his feet up above his head due to the steep slope. The rest of the Platoon was in a little draw on the other side of the hill. Lt. Inzer called down to them to come back if they could make it. It took about 15 minutes before they all managed to make their way up the steep grade. Harris was wounded and could not make it. Lt. Inzer went down the side of the hill and helped him. The Jerries were throwing in a terrific mortar barrage. Pvt. Morris has never returned to the Company. Pvt. Joseph Moore caught a piece of shrapnel in his left knee. He wasn't evacuated until the next day, however, as men were needed so badly. He returned to the Company May 1. During the barrage the men kept digging in on the side of the cut. There were many tree bursts. Pvt. Morales was hit in the leg and later evacuated. He returned to the Company on May 1. An American L-5 Cub artillery observer was flying American troops. He was going to fire at it when T/5 Dunn stopped him. There was Jerry machine gun fire coming up the cut from the bottom of the hill. There was supposed to be a tank down there firing.

Word was received that the Company was too far to the left and was in "C" Co. territory. In fact, "B" Co. had taken part of their section. So they were moved back up the hill in better positions and better cover. They were afraid of a Jerry counter-attack. While improving some old trenches up there, our own artillery threw in a couple of short rounds. Pvt. Naef got hit in the leg by a tree burst. He has never returned to the Company.

"C" Co. arrived about dusk and relieved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon then moved across the meadow to the ridge on the right where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had previously gone. They went straight up to the top. When they were halfway up, the Jerries opened up with 20 mm anti-aircraft tracers. Everybody scattered, hit the ground, and got behind trees. The firing seemed to come out of a house in Stiring-Wendel. No one was hit. The men took up positions at the top of the hill. The entire Platoon was taken back by Lt. Inzer to get rations and blankets for the rest of the Company. Pfc. Richardson and Kachursky became squad leaders in place of Bergstrom and Dennison. The night was quiet. The men got clean socks that night and three "K" rations. There was supposed to be a Platoon of our own tanks on the right.

The Weapons Platoon, during the action had one machine gun squad with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, and one with the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. The mortar section went with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and acted as a flank guard on the left. When "C" Co. relieved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon after dark they crossed the draw too and joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and the other machine gun squad. The Weapons Platoon had a big load of weapons and ammo, as usual, and they climbed almost to the top of the hill by mistake and had to turn around and go right back down again. It was very dark that night and it was hard to keep contact with everyone spread out so far while crossing the open draw. They finally got straightened out and started to dig in for the night. The Jerries opened up with their 20 mm anti-aircraft guns and fired into the trees above their head. Flak really rained down in the woods for a few minutes, and after it stopped the men dug in a lot faster.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, as noted before, attacked the ridge on the right. They had a field day, capturing five pillboxes and about 21 prisoners without losing a man. Lt. Chappell said that they moved so fast and quiet that only seven or eight rifles were fired and only seven or eight grenades were thrown. They tossed the grenades in the doors of the pillboxes. Only one German, at the fourth pillbox, tried to escape. He ran with a machine gun across the field towards the Metz Highway. They fired about eight

shots at him and killed him. They could hear a lot of firing over on the left where the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons were. They had to move slower than they were supposed to to keep in line with the rest of the Company. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon dug in near the nose of the ridge. They had dug down about a foot when the ack-ack guns opened up from a house on the Metz Highway. The Germans also had a field piece set up in Hamsterdich. The gun, which looked like a 75-mm, was firing point blank at them. They could see the gun crew. The Company CP was located in a cave with built-in rooms near the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. "G" Co. was on the right.

February 23

About 0930 a patrol left the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon to reconnoiter all the ground the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had taken, including the pillboxes. Pfc. Kachursky led the patrol. In it were T/5 Dunn, Pfc. Richardson, Smith, Helaszek, Pvts. Kluck, Tom Miller, Burdne and Traum, and a few others. On their way over, they reconnoitered the pillbox and swept the woods. On their way back they checked the trenches and foxholes. The Engineers were cleaning the pillboxes and had quite a collection of blankets, bazookas, flamethrowers, pistols, ammo, etc. After the patrol had returned, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved back into the pillboxes for a rest. They didn't get much rest, however, as that night the Platoon was attached to "E" Co., supposedly in reserve. They ate chow and were brought to positions about 300 yards from the rear of "E" Co. "E" Co. was way over on the left above Stiring-Wendel. They dug positions and were told that a German counter-attack was expected. They got P.X. rations later that night and also hot chow and mail.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was attached to "G" Co., also supposedly in reserve. Just before dark, the Platoon moved around to the right of "G" Co., to plug in a gap between "G" and "H" Companies. A counter-attack was expected. Major Coles gave the order and said to get the men over right away. The Platoon was chased all the way down by 88s. S/Sgt. Marshall had taken a squad back for blankets and packs before the order was given to move. The Platoon moved so quickly that they were gone when the other squad got back. By that time it was dark. They had a hard time finding the rest of the Platoon. They wandered around in the dark for awhile, and were almost shot by some T.D. men. They had with them some big Jerry entrenching tools they had found. The men spent most of the night digging in.

February 24

About 0500 the Germans threw in a terrific barrage. Everybody who wasn't awake was awakened and told that a German counter-attack was expected. The Capt. From "E" Co. came back and said that the Germans were counter-attacking. The artillery observers were just coming up. They had a phone and the Captain tapped in and called for artillery fire.

The "E" Co. Capt. told Lt. Inzer to send his men to the left to wipe out a machine gun nest. Lt. Inzer himself took the 3<sup>rd</sup> squad. S/Sgt. Porter, Platoon Sgt., went also. Others were Pfc. Peila, S/Sgt. Dourand, Brock, Smith, Pfc. Richardson, Pvt. James Moore, T/5 Dunn, Parker, Traum, Tom Miller and Russell Miller. The squad went up the hill and came to a large knoll. They walked right up to it before the Jerries opened up with machine guns from it. Most of the squad was cut down. The rest tried to take cover, but there were only small trees and no good cover at all. T/5 Dunn was the last man. He said Brock and Richardson were wounded coming back. The two Millers were killed. Medic Coffey had one of the Millers in his arms attending to him and a Jerry shot Miller in the head. S/Sgt. Dourand was killed in the first burst, and Lt. Inzer was badly wounded, receiving three slugs. Porter and Peila were both captured. Pfc. Richardson and Lt. Inzer never returned to the Company. Pvt. Brock returned May 1. Porter is now known to be in the States.

When Dunn came back to where the rest of the Platoon had been left, he started calling for Porter, not knowing that Porter had gone along on the patrol. There was no reply and the only sign of life was one G.I. crawling along. He figured that something was wrong.

Pvt. Nicokoris was one of the men left in the position. He said, before they knew it, the Germans were all around. He could not see any 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men. The Germans were still throwing mortar in. Nicokoris, Mevorah, and Crociante were in the hole, and next to them was a hole occupied by Pfc. Kachursky, Pfc Helaszex and Pvt. Kluck. Nicokoris called to them over and over but no one answered. Finally he went over to see if they were there. They had left. The Jerries fired at Nicokoris with a burp gun and he went into the hole. Then they must have seen Mevorah and Crociante for they threw a grenade at their hole. Nicokoris called to them and no one answered. Then the Germans opened up with burp guns again. Nicokoris called again, without receiving a reply, and the Krauts kept on throwing at this hole. Nicokoris figured they were dead and he left for the rear. He later found out that Mevorah had been hit through the head and killed. Crociante was uninjured.

Of the three men who had been in the hole next to them, Kluck was killed after they left. Kachursky was wounded and Helaszek got back safely. The Germans gave Kachursky first aid and left him. He was picked up later by another Company. He has never returned to the outfit.

Shortly after daylight, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon positions heard firing in the direction of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions. T/Sgt. Hicks said to get ready to help the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They moved to the left and formed a skirmish line. The Jerries had good positions and couldn't be seen. It was heavily wooded and there was a lot of underbrush. They ran into such heavy fire that they were stopped.

Later "I" and "F" Companies were brought up. "I" Co. was to hit the German positions frontally and "F" Co. on the right flank. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, with the remnants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, was to attack on the left of "I" Co.

After "I" moved out, they didn't get very far before they were pinned down. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon also stopped as they were supposed to move in coordination with "I" Co. During this time, Pfc. Cox of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was wounded. He has never returned.

Then Lt. Bjork took over. He went down and brought a tank up. Then all moved forward again, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon on the left of the tank and "I" Co. on the right. All moved forward firing as they went. The 3<sup>rd</sup> squad of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was guarding the tank. Lt. Bjork and T/Sgt. Ignaszewski were right near the tank. Ignaszewski was carrying a machine gun in the assault position, a belt of ammo wrapped around him, and another man was carrying additional ammo. As they moved on they took a couple of prisoners. The tank was on a little road. It finally had to stop when it hit a fallen log across the road. Everyone stopped. Lt. Bjork gave the orders to move forward without the tank. They then continued forward, clearing the woods until they made contact with "E" Co., which had been completely cut off. The men left from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon went along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. They say that Capt. Mitchell was all over the place rounding them up. Some came drifting back to the C.P. saying the platoon was wiped out.

As the men went through the woods, they kept yelling, "Take no prisoners! Take no prisoners!" When

they got farther down, they were cautioned not to fire unless there was a target, as the "E" Co. positions were being approached.

Some men say another tank was on the right flank and gave supporting fire.

In the middle of the attack, Pvt. James Moore, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, saw Pvt. Traum, also in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, bend over a dead Jerry and he asked him what he was doing. Traum said he had needed a watch for a long time and now that he had the chance he was going to take it, bullets or no bullets.

"E" Co. was glad to see the men. They said they had virtually been cut off for a couple of days. They had to send men out at night for their rations.

After the attack, all "B" Co. men moved back to the original 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions. Then "I" and "F" Companies took new positions to protect the left flank and guard the approach the Germans had used to cut off the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon that morning.

During the attack the machine gun section supported the attackers. The mortar section was spread out around the C.P. (a pillbox back near the road) and to the front of it in case the Jerries broke through or tried a flanking operation. Late that afternoon Pfc. Harris of Co. Hdtqs was up on the hill where the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon had been that morning and found Lt. Inzer where he had been wounded. The Jerries had fixed up his wound and he had lain there all day. Only the mortar section was present when he was brought back, the rest were all up forward. The machine gun section came back and came across the road that went to Stiring-Wendel and almost walked into some of the machine gun men.

While the men were getting into positions for the night, some of them cleared the civilian cave nearby as per Capt. Mitchell's order. About 100 civilians came out with their belongings and went to Etzlingen. The Engineers blew up the cave that evening. There was a terrific explosion. T/5 Dunn, sitting in a ditch, was blown into the air. The cave was handmade out of solid rock.

The men remained in positions all night. They put out concertina wire and trip flares in front. They were expecting a counter-attack. The men were told a battalion of fanatical Nazis were going to attempt to retake the ground. Pvt. Moore heard Lt. Bjork ask Capt. Mitchell if it would be all right to have some hot chow. The Captain said it would be all right. Lt. Bjork said the men deserved it and if it took till midnight he was going to get it up to them. Pvt. Traum of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was appointed squad leader of the few men remaining by T/Sgt. Rysso, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. He was told he could have either Dunn or Halaszek as his assistant. Dunn became ass't squad leader. They remained attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon.

The chow arrived about midnight and the men went to eat it in groups of twos and threes.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon's experiences on this day can be best described in Lt Chappell's own words:

"As daylight came and everything was quiet, I figured nothing would happen. Right after 1300 a F.O. from an artillery outfit came up to our position accompanied by Cpl. with a 300 radio on his back and requested some help in picking up some probable targets and concentrations. This necessitated quite a bit of moving around in the open. He figured on coming every day to observe. I found him a good hole that he had been dug by the Germans down on the left flank. However, he liked my hole because it was in the center and had better observation, so we moved

back. He called in and gave locations of possible targets and asked them to fire. That went on for about an hour. They'd fire a few rounds at one target and then he'd adjust tec. By that time the Jerries were getting pretty disturbed and aggravated by the whole thing. They threw some artillery in first at the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions. After it had quieted down, the artillery observers figured he had done a good day's work and he left. Then they started another light barrage. During this barrage, Pvt. Mielish was hit by a tree burst. He returned June 9. Pvt. McPhearson was also hit but he never returned. Then they laid in a mortar barrage. They dropped a round in a dugout occupied by Pvts. Kuhl, McMillin, and McKee. The hole was right next to the Platoon C.P. It killed Kuhl and McMillin and McKee's left leg was practically blown off.

"Pfc. Layton was also wounded during this barrage. The Jerries were laying in ack-ack before the mortar barrage. Layton stuck his head up to see if he could locate the flak wagon and the same mortar round that hit Kuhl hit Layton in the back of his head. He returned to the Company on March 10.

"S/Sgt. Marshall and Snipers, a "D" Co. Medic, dragged McKee back off the skyline into a shell crater while the barrage was going on and McKee was screaming with pain. We were having a hell of a time getting a medic. The different Battalions were passing the buck to one another. I sent Sgt. down to Spichern to get help. No help came and he didn't come back. I learned later he had been sent back for a rest. I then went down myself. The medics wanted to know the location and what outfit we were in, who we were attached to, etc. When they learned it was "B" Co. they said they would have to contact the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. stationed in Etzlingen. They said they would call that station and get help up. I returned to the line. I waited but no aid man came and the man could not be moved without a litter.

"I went back to Spichern again. They said they couldn't furnish litter bearers and said some aid men had been sent out to look for us. They said they would send a truck if we could get the men to the road. While I was in town, I called Major Boyd and told him we couldn't get aid men, had no communications, and were getting hell knocked out of us. He said to hold on for dear life and that he would have a phone sent up as soon as possible. I met Shipers, who had come, and the two of us carried a litter back. When we got back, S/Sgt. Marshall, myself, Shipers, and one other man carried McKee to the road where we found the truck waiting. Mielish walked down. We went back and carried McPhearson down. S/Sgt. Horner went back with stomach cramps from the concussion. Pvt. Pate went back suffering from the shell shock. Later I saw that some of the holes didn't have enough dirt on them and I told the men to put more on after dark. While some of them were doing this, the Germans threw a few mortar rounds in. One hit about six inches in front of the hold occupied by Raynor, Hopkins and Gerald Marshall. Raynor was hit in the back, left side and leg. He has never returned. Pvt. Marshall was hit in the back. A piece of shrapnel went through Houston's helmet and liner and just scratched his head. He went to the aid station and returned the next day.

"That night they brought up a telephone and a map. We then had communications with the Company CP."

February 25

Things were very quiet in the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon sector. The men were told by T/Sgt. Chappell to stay in their holes and not leave them during daylight unless it was absolutely necessary. There was very little

incoming artillery. The artillery observer came back and Chappell told him he couldn't stay at his place and stir things up.

"H" Co. ran a contact patrol every night. Sometimes a Lt. came along. T/Sgt. Chappell asked him to get him some thermite grenades to take care of an 88 gun which was abandoned by the Jerries in their hasty flight. They only took the sights with them. They used it to fire point blank at "F" Co. when that Company attacked the hill. On the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>, the Lt. brought him the grenades.

During the previous night, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Weapons Platoons received some artillery and mortar fire. Trip flares had been set out in front and one went off during the night. Someone said a G.I. did it going after water.

Around noontime word came around from S-2 that a German had been captured and that he had reported that the Germans were going to attack around 1800. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was told to string concertina wire in front of the positions. The men were told that there were tanks in a town in back of them in the event they were needed. One light tank came up and went around the positions checking the terrain.

Around three o'clock in the afternoon reinforcements arrived with a 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. in charge. Approximately 24 of them in clean clothes and new rifles, all spic and span, formed a "J" Co. They took up positions on the left of "B" Co. near "I" Co. and "F" Co. They were quite a contrast to the men who were on the line at that time and couldn't help but wonder at the greasy, dirty, scratched faces of the old men. The only clean item the old men had were the dry socks that had been issued that day.

At 1800, men were tense and ready for the attack. It was a rather cloudy day with visibility fairly good. Artillery fire from the Germans began registering to the left flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. For most of the men that evening provided them with an opportunity to hear the screaming meemies for the first time. There were only a few sent over but nobody had to be told to get down or what they were. Sporadic artillery fire continued during the night but the 1800 attack failed to materialize and the tenseness began to wear off the men. By 2000 they figured the attack had been called off.

The men had a hot breakfast, followed by "K" rations at noon and a hot meal that night. Wolfram, Rhine, and Luukko had taken contact patrols to check the woods on their left flank and make contact with the Platoon of "I" Co. during the day. The night went by uneventfully.

In view of the expected counter-attack, the machine gun section was assigned to "F" Co. which had taken up the "E" Co. positions on high ground overlooking Stiring-Wendel. Dunn, Traum, James Moore and Parker were attached to the machine gun section. They arrived about 1400 and were told they had until 1600 to dig in as the counter-attack was expected. They had to dig in on the hillside. They were told to throw grenades down over the hill if they heard anything. They stood guard one hour on and one hour off. They could hear little handcars moving about below. This was probably the Jerries hauling chow. The machine guns were guarding the cut on which the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons had undergone the mortar barrage the day before. They received a heavy barrage about 1600 - 88s, etc. It lasted about an hour.

One mortar squad set up their mortar in front of a cave just behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon position. S/Sgt. Mitchell was Section Leader with Gill and Goska, Fisher, Denner and Luther. They zeroed in on the draw with white phosphorous and were to cover it in case the Jerries came up that way.

February 26

Just before dawn the German counter-attack, which had been expected the night before, began. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon positions, the first indication of impending action was the sound of rifle fire coming from the left flank. The firing was sporadic but apparently the Germans broke through somewhere on the left because Luukko could hear a German calling out orders to his men a hundred yards away in back of his position. They didn't reach the main road on the right flank however.

Chow was brought up to the pillboxes on the right flank by the main road for the platoons of "E" Co. and "F" Co. As the carrying parties were carrying the chow down the road in back of Luukko's position, they were fired upon by snipers. Later in the afternoon one man from these Companies was killed by a sniper's bullet as he walked along the road. Two men before had been injured on the road by machine gun fire. Artillery was also registering on the road once in a while.

Sgt. Rhine had a narrow escape when an artillery round landed a few feet from his foxhole. Crozier was caught with his pants down and a small piece of shrapnel nicked his knee.

About 1600 orders came down to pull out. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon followed "C" Co., which was on their right flank, and circled around and back of their positions. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was attached to the "C" Co. and took up positions to protect some heavy machine guns of "D" Co. Some machine gun fire was received in their new positions. Most of the men were in trenches except for a few who were out in the front of the heavy machine guns with part of the "C" Co. It began to drizzle and enough artillery came in to keep the men alert and uncomfortable. On top of this, they had pulled out without their blankets and it was not too warm.

Once during the night our own artillery was having trouble clearing the tree tops and still hitting the Jerries because they were too close to our positions. Rhine, Rysso and Redfearn felt that they were using their foxhole positions to register in on as three rounds landed practically in their holes. One of these showered all of them with shrapnel and dirt. A piece of shrapnel hit Rysso but not hard enough to injure him.

Some of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men were up with "F" Co., providing security for the machine gun. At daybreak the Jerries threw in a heavy barrage and then counter-attacked (as before noted), breaking through "F" Co. Before daylight they heard noises and Dunn threw a couple of grenades.

After the breakthrough they could see the Jerries running around the edge of the woods coming up through "F" Co.'s positions. Traum asked Dunn if he could fire left handed as that was the only way they could fire from the hole in the desired direction. Dunn fired for about ten minutes. They could hear the German non-coms yelling. Finally everything quieted down. At noon there was no meal and there had been no breakfast. Traum crawled out of this hole to find out about chow. He came back and said to Dunn, "Get your things together, we're pulling out."

Before they left, two G.I.'s came walking up the road. They were apparently "F" Co. replacements who didn't know what the score was. Dunn called to them to get down. They hit the ground immediately and reached the "F" Co. positions by crawling.

The withdrawal was part of a strategic withdrawal to straighten up the lines. All Companies moved back. They could see men from the other Companies moving back. The men from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon went back and rejoined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon which had moved out with "C" Co. They raided another Company's chocolate bars, which they found in a pillbox. The men were very hungry as they had gone quite a time without a thing to eat.

That night was the first night the search lights went on. The men weren't warned and were scared. They didn't know just what to expect. They had to keep good and low so as not to be silhouetted. They received machine gun firing with tracers off and on all night.

Here follows a couple of incidents that happened to the Weapons Platoon that day.

"Jerries infiltrated through during that night and opened up with burp guns before dawn. They were all over the woods behind our lines after daylight that morning. "F" Co. was in a pillbox off to the flank of one of our machine guns. They took a couple of prisoners that morning and started to take them into the pillbox. Grgurich and Cole, on our machine gun, saw them and now knowing that they were prisoners or that "F" Co. was over in that direction opened up on them and kept "F" Co. zeroed in until they got a patrol out and let the machine gunners know what they were doing.

"The patrol's mission was to wipe out the enemy machine gun and it was very easily done when they finally found out where the mistake was. T/Sgt. Ignaszewski came up and let the mortar squad know that they were almost surrounded by Jerries. They hid the mortar and ammo and went back to the pillbox where the Co. CP was by going down the draw that they were to cover to keep out of sight of Jerries' snipers in the woods. The mortar was later recovered when the Jerries were driven back. The whole line pulled back after the mortar squad left. During this time the Jerries were really throwing 88s in, getting direct hits on the pillbox CP and many nearby. The other mortar squads were spread out around the CP as a rear guard that morning and a tree burst from an 88 seriously wounded Pvt. Bugbee. We learned later that he died in the hospital."

S/Sgt. Broome, this day, came back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and became Platoon Guide. He had been wounded at Phillipsbourg. Another artillery observer came up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions, this time from the "Commanche" outfit. He did some observing and then gave T/Sgt. Chappell some coordinates on artillery concentrations he could have fired during the night if he needed them.

During the day the men noticed three Germans coming up on the right flank near a monument about 800 yards away. They apparently were going to set up an OP for artillery. Chappell sent a man back to an anti-tank gun, which was to the rear on the left flank. They started firing and they were a little low. As a consequence they knocked the dirt off one of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon foxholes. The men were in it at the time but were not injured. They were S/Sgt. Wilkins and Pvts. Mattox and McMonagle. The Jerries ran back and about 30 minutes later one came back. He crawled around the base of the statue. The anti-tank gun let him have an HE round and scored a direct hit on him. In about ten minutes, three German aid men came out with a big flag about the size of a bed sheet. Two of them bent over the casualty and took a look and then all three walked away.

During the day Chappell took the thermite grenade he had procured the day before and put it in the 88 gun, in the breech block. The thermite grenade burst the block and really made a mess of it. Apparently the Jerries didn't understand what was going on. They could see the 88 and about three minutes later they laid in several rounds of artillery on it. One shell punctured an 88 shell that was lying there and set it off like a rocket. It squealed and made a funny whistling sound. It scared hell out of all the men. They would stick their heads up and take one quick look and then duck back down again.

That night a German tank came up and shelled the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon position from a house on the highway to the left of the Platoon position. Chappell reported it although others probably did too. Our artillery zeroed in on the house. The next morning the tank was there, apparently knocked out, and they had more artillery laid on it. There might have been two tanks, because after the artillery started that night they thought that they heard a tank pull out.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon used to go to chow these days before daylight in the morning and just after dark at night. They had to go to a house near Spicheren for it. Every time they'd go to eat, the Jerries would lay in a few 88s. It got to be a race between the men and the 88s to see who would get to the house first. One time a part of them were sent down and then they would bring chow back for the rest.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, sector artillery had been coming in occasionally throughout the night and during the morning a stray piece hit Lawrence Hamilton in the leg. It was not serious and Hamilton seemed glad to be hit so that he could leave the line for awhile. He was hit in the right thigh. It just burned a little, he said.

“C” Co. fed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon hot chow and then a “K” ration for dinner. It began to rain intermittently.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon rejoined the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon that evening in Spicheren Heights. They marched through the town of Spicheren and reached the 1<sup>st</sup> about 0100 the next morning. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon walked through the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions without knowing it. They started crashing around and someone woke up. Most of the foxholes had roofs over them and were hard to locate. One man was lost during the march but he rejoined them later.

While in Spicheren the men picked up shovels, were oriented, and were told that during the day there was heavy mortar fire. They were told they would have to dig deep and put at least six inches of dirt on top before morning. Some men found some one-inch boards there which they used to cover the holes and support the dirt. They started digging in about midnight and got to sleep in the morning as they worked all night on their holes.

During the barrage that wounded Lawrence Hamilton, T/5 Dunn received a slight wound in the back. He went to the aid station and then to the Co. CP in Behren. While waiting for transportation, word was received that the Company was to move to Etzlingen. Lt. Bjork took Dunn and Sgt. Bostain to Etzlingen, picked out a CP, and left Dunn to guard it.

While he was waiting for the Company Hdqt. to arrive, the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Hdqt., which was having chow across the street at the time, invited Dunn over to eat. He traded a P-38 for a Tommy gun while there. He waited there from about 1400 to 2000 before the CP arrived. Sgt Rostain had some trouble selecting a CP as he spoke French and all the people there spoke German.

Pvts. Depas and Brooks, having been wounded, returned that night and stayed in the CP with Dunn. They were the latest in fur caps and jackets.

February 28

Dunn, Depas, and Brooks returned to the Platoons that morning with chow.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had received orders to dig and not sleep because the positions were under observation in daylight. The dawn came but there was a very heavy fog. Breakfast was a hot meal. After breakfast they strung concertina wire in a draw below them. Most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon positions were on the crest of the hill.

The fog lifted later in the morning and from their positions the men had a wonderful view of the countryside. Part of Saarbrucken was visible and a number of other small communities. Luukko, Meidal, Boiarski and Yadon were in a trench next to their foxhole and wondered who was going to have to take all the places they could see. Later they found out that most of the terrain they could see was, or soon would be, part of the Regimental objective.

After supper there were a number of contact patrols sent out to contact "A" Co. on the right flank. Because of the advantageous positions the men could see the flashes of the guns the Germans were firing. Only a few short rounds fell behind them and it was probably counter-battery fire.

During the day two small boys came right through the position with a white flag yelling, "Kamerad". T/Sgt Hicks sent them back to Company Hdqts. Later on, two civilians came up and were sent back to Capt. Mitchell. Their story was that 17 Jerries wanted to surrender but were afraid to come up. Nobody ever went after them. The two civilians later went back from where they had come.

In the afternoon a combat patrol of another Company was trapped out in the draw in front of them. One man got back.

There were American tanks in the woods to the right and behind the Platoon positions. A Panzer IV knocked out near the monuments to the right front.

On one day, Sgt. Rostain and Pfc. Simmons were out fixing wire near a pillbox where some tanks were parked. Some 88s started coming in. Some of the men lay down by the tanks. Rostain and Simmons took off. Rostain was in the lead and he took a low dive into a round Jerry foxhole. He found out then it was about four feet deep with about one foot of water. Simmons decided to jump under some corrugated iron which was nearby.

For a change it was warm and the view of the surrounding terrain helped morale considerably. The drawback was that when anyone would make themselves obvious by standing up, a barrage of mortar shells came in.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon sector during the morning, two Polish slave laborers in civilian clothes came up over the hill with their hands up. They said that the Germans had a mortar squad and two machine guns around a pillbox directly below the hill, and that they could hear everything that we did on the hill. Boiarski could speak Polish and translated for them.

T/Sgt. Hicks told S/Sgt. Rhine to take a patrol down the draw on their right front in an attempt to locate Jerry positions and strong points. Rhine started with three men down the draw. After approaching "A" Co., he approached the draw but immediately drew 88 fire. Apparently the enemy had done better observing than we had. In the meantime "G" Co. sent out a patrol from the left flank without contacting us. They got pinned down in the same draw that Rhine had started down and some of their men were injured. They were required to send a platoon to extricate their patrol from the draw. Rhine returned after talking with some of the men from "G" Co., a patrol who reported that the draw provided no cover or concealment from the enemy and they had a machine gun covering it.

As dusk fell, "I" Co. relieved "B" Co., and "B" Co. walked back to Spicheren. At 1800 they left for Kerbach by truck.

They spent the night at Kerbach in buildings. What was left of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon slept in one room. They slept on straw. It was heaven, though to be only of short duration. Each man only pulled one hour's guard.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had a hard time getting relieved. They were supposed to be relieved at dusk but it was pitch black before their relief came. T/Sgt. Chappell and the squad leaders had a tough time finding the holes themselves. Chappell ran into the 88 and skinned his leg. They had been trying to move out quietly but it ended up with everyone falling and cussing. Two Platoons relieved them and there naturally were not enough holes, so they started cussing because in Kerbach they slept in houses as did the rest of the Company.

#### March 2

The Company stayed in Kerbach all day and that night again. At breakfast the men noticed they had reinforcements. The men had been waiting in Kerbach to join them.

Among those received by the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon were Thurman, Richardson, Rone, Rusche, Seiderer, Sherburn, Willis, Smith, Sohn, Staak, Thompson, Viele, Walls, Young, Yoho, Monroe Anderson, Ball, Barge, Bean Brockett, Cochran, Tompkins.

Among those received by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon were Ledford, Duncan, Bair, Horvath, Hechrote, Oierzgalski, Louis Horner, Hosack, Althausen, D'Amato, Devitt and Leonard.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon received Goering, Pean, Dow, Deyo, Fontaine, Adams, Britt, Everett, DiFano, Bookover, Darling, Gomer, Elg, Frazier, Marcotte, Patterson, Rakowski.

Among those received by the Weapons Platoon were Peno, Simmons, Romano, Galbo, Mabry, Sanders, Caldwell.

The entire Company was reorganized, especially the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. S/Sgt. Rysso became Platoon Sgt. and also acting Platoon Leader. S/Sgt. Broome became Platoon Sgt. and also acting Platoon Guide. S/Sgt. Rysso made Traum, Dunn and Goering squad leaders.

They tried to give the new men an idea as to what was expected of them and what their job was in the platoon.

The men received PX rations with beer and also had a movie during the day. The 274<sup>th</sup> "Blues Chasers" band was there and played. The men were able to wash up, shave and get haircuts. They had hot chow.

Some of the men went to the Division rest camp at Morebach for showers and to get clean clothes. All the men got a pair of new socks, shoes were exchanged and some new equipment was issued.

After dark word came around that the men would move out in the morning and they had to get up about 0400.

Lawrence Hamilton returned to the Company from the Hospital. Also Hanson, Penland, Spieglan and Wellsant returned.

March 3

The Company got up at 0400 and had breakfast. They moved out of Kerbach at 0600 on foot and walked to Forbacher Ridge about 0700. They went into positions in defense. Most of the men had entrenchments which just needed improving. "C" Co. was out in front. "D" Co. moved in behind and set up their 81 mm mortars. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of "B" Co. was out in front. They had positions around the pillbox, which was the Company C.P. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was behind the Company C.P. The machine guns dug in along a trench near the rifle men and the mortars dug in behind the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. Some of the men went to the nearby town of Spicheren to get material to cover their holes with, and also brought straw for warmth and dryness.

During the day a little artillery and mortar fire came in. Many of the men heard their first screaming meemies. Four landed over to the left flank about dinner time.

Some outfit was apparently attacking Forbach and tanks could be heard in the direction of Stiring-Wendel.

The men were served a hot meal in the afternoon. They parked the jeep a couple of hundred yards from the pillbox and served chow under some trees. 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Pflagher, S/Sgt. Athanasopoulos, Mess Sgt., and S/Sgt. Colley, Supply Sgt., were giving the chow out. The men had to pass through an open place to get the chow. The Jerries must have seen the men cross the open field. 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Pflagher heard one mortar round hit in front, then another in back, and another near the road. He said, "Let's get out of here!" and all ran for a nearby pillbox. Pflagher and Athanasopoulos had just made it and Colley was back a little ways when a round hit nearby and wounded him in the thigh. Redfearn fixed him up and they took him back in the jeep. S/Sgt. Colley was very often up on the line helping out with the chow, and finding out what was needed by the men. He has never returned to the Company.

The men eating chow scattered during the barrage. There would have been more casualties except that about every other round was a dud.

In the last report, the new 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions were omitted. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon moved that night down across the open field and relieved "C" Co., taking up positions on the nose of the hill where they had been before overlooking the Metz-Saarbrücken Highway. While "G" Co. was there, they had planned to jump off. Two anti-tank guns were in support and a 50-caliber machine gun for supporting fire.

Trees were chopped down to give the guns a field of fire. After the anti-tank guns had fired a couple of rounds, the Jerries threw in a heavy concentration. One gun with its crew was knocked out.

March 4

With the exception of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon plus one machine gun squad, the Company remained in their positions all day. The only activity was enemy artillery and mortars. Many of our tanks were down the hill behind the Infantry positions. Every now and then they would go up and poke their noses over the ridge line. There Jerry would open up with a heavy barrage. Then they would withdraw, leaving the Infantry to sweat it out. When things quieted down again, they'd repeat the performance. The reason given for these maneuvers was that a counter-attack was expected.

Immediately after dawn, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon received word that they were going to move forward and help "C" Co. take the small town directly in front of them. "C" Co. was on the left flank and "I" Co. was on the right. They moved out of their positions and went down along the right edge of the hill with a machine gun from Weapons Platoon with them. They followed the edge of the woods and stopped at the bottom of the forward slope. Our artillery had been pounding the edge of the woods where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was supposed to go. Sgt. Luukko asked T/Sgt. Hicks, "Are they going to lift that fire?" Hicks replied, "How do I know? I don't have any radio." Luukko then told them that he wouldn't take his men down the hill until some arrangement had been made for lifting the artillery. However, he started on down. Before reaching the bottom, the artillery had ceased firing.

Pvt. Haglund, leading the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, took Pfc. Fenton, ass't squad leader, with him to search a house located 50 yards from the edge of the woods. Here is his story.

"The house that was our objective was in a clearing where observation by the enemy was perfect. We formed a skirmish line on the edge of the woods with the squad. After seeing that we were well covered, Fenton and I went toward the house. It had a large fence around it and we had to enter by the back way. We went from top to bottom and found nothing. Then we went outside again and had just started for the woods when the enemy started throwing everything but the kitchen sink. Luckily there were some trenches that we could get into as shrapnel was flying everywhere. A piece of it went through Pvt. Pitcock's BAR stock which he had in his arms. On our right flank was a valley in which there was a shack and a cave. Smoke was coming out of the chimney and people were walking around. We could not tell whether or not they were civilians, so we didn't fire. I believe there was an artillery observer down among them as was indicated by the accurate shelling we received."

In the meantime, Sgt. Luukko was leading his squad along an old shallow trench preparatory to investigating houses on their flank. The Germans had apparently observed them moving up and began shelling them with artillery and mortars. The men were caught without cover as the trench was too shallow to be of much help. Sgt. Luukko had the men spread out as much as possible. Tree bursts accounted for most of the casualties. Swanson lost his left hand at the wrist. L. Hamilton and D'Amato were hit and L. Horner was killed instantly. D'Amato later died in the hospital. L. Hamilton returned to the Company on June 9. The other squad was in support farther back in the woods and the barrage fell short of them.

The Platoon, unable to accomplish anything, pulled back to its original positions. When they reached their positions, Sgt. Luukko rechecked his men because most of them were new and he wasn't familiar with them all. He found out that two were missing in his squad so he and Meidal returned to the trench.

Meidal had seen Horner killed and that accounted for him. They found D'Amato trying to crawl back up the very steep hill, although he had been wounded in the back by a piece of shrapnel which had come out through his chest. Haglund went up to the CP and got Medic Redfearn. After examination, Redfearn said all was done that could be done and called for the litter bearers.

At 1400 orders came down for the Platoon to take the same houses that they had started for in the morning. This time they went down to the left side of the hill and up an anti-tank ditch until directly behind the houses. In the meantime "C" Co. had already advanced and was engaged in clearing some of the houses.

Pvt. Ledford was carrying an M-1 rifle, a bazooka, six rounds of ammo and Sgt. Luukko was told by Hicks to carry another BAR but, since they weren't any magazines for it, he left it for Sgt. Rysso's 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon.

Hicks entered the first house with Haglund but it was empty. He then went up the street and called for fire on a large three-story building which was directly across an open field from the last house.

On the way down, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon men observed one of our litters carrying a "C" Co. man with the help of a German medic.

Hicks and Wolfram entered the building under the protecting fire of the rest of the Platoon. However, the building was empty. He called for the men to come across the open field between the two houses. About eight men crossed the field without mishap. Pvt. Ledford was the ninth man followed by Edwards and then Ficeto. Suddenly he heard a loud explosion. At first he thought that the loaded bazooka in his hand fired. He turned around and saw Edwards falling to the ground. As he looked down he saw that Edwards' right foot had been blown off above the ankle. Ledford had just started running on across the field because of the continued calling for the bazooka when he heard another explosion behind him. This time, Pfc. Ficeto was the victim. Sgt. Luukko had already crossed the field and he was facing that direction. He said the explosion threw Ficeto into the air. T/5 Redfearn, Medic, went out into the field and gave them first aid and morphine. Redfearn left them where they were and went after a litter team.

Although no one had suspected the field as having mines in it, the men saw the poorly camouflaged shoe mines after they knew they were there.

Someone called for a bazooka into another building across the street and Ledford fired once, scoring a good hit right through the window. The explosion created quite an uproar in the building. Investigation disclosed that five young girls, one woman, one man and a couple of children had taken refuge in the cellar. They were entertained by T/Sgt. Hicks who later gave them K rations. The next day they were sent back to the DPCP (Displaced Persons Collecting Point).

The men were deployed into the various buildings and guards set. Pvt. Ledford and Pvt. Pierzgalski at 2100 went back to the C.P. in the rain to get some food as the men hadn't eaten anything except one K ration since noon. When they reached the CP they were expecting a hot meal to come up at any time. However there was not enough coming up for all the men, so they picked up a box of K rations for each man plus a couple of extras for good measure. On the way back over the very rough terrain the search lights were on and that helped them considerably. The night passed uneventfully.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was told during the day that it was going to move to positions near the Company CP to replace the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. As before noted, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was completely reorganized with S/Sgt. Rysso acting as Platoon Leader, S/Sgt. Broome as Platoon Sgt. and Penland as Platoon Guide.

After dark, Cpl. Penland took two men, Pvt. Deyo and one other man, and went down to the road where ammo and hot chow was supposed to be left. When they got there, there was nothing to be found so they started back to try and find the Platoon positions. The ground was slippery and muddy and they had a hard time picking their way around shell holes full of water. Suddenly and simultaneously the search lights went on and the Jerries laid in about eight rounds of artillery right up the road, one right after the other. This was the first time the men had seen the search lights lit, Penland just having returned from the hospital and all this happening at once scared the devil out of them. They had been going up the hill and the search lights came on at their backs. They tried to find some cover and slipped and slithered and finally lay in the mud. They lay there for about five minutes and then took advantage of the lights and moved out. Penland had not located the hot chow but did notice some K rations which he had told the 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt about. When the men got back, part of the platoon had moved down to new positions. Penland brought up the rear with the remainder of the platoon. Then he sent some men back for the K rations that he had seen. Pvts. Deyo, Difano and Nicokoris went and were shelled while so engaged.

March 5

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was still attached to "C" Co. The rest of the Company was oriented by the Captain for an attack. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was to clear Habsterdick and occupy a row of houses along the border. The Platoon was broken up into teams. The men knew exactly what they were going to do and what houses they were going to take.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was to act as flank security for the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. They were going to move along the railroad embankment between it and Habsterdick and clean out the woods. The Company was to jump off from Stiring-Wendel.

T/5 Dunn was sent out to reconnoiter a route from the positions they were then occupying to Stiring-Wendel. He took Pvt. Deyo with him. Other units had attacked Stiring-Wendel that day and the tanks had just moved into it. There was still quite a bit of firing going on. Dunn and Deyo went right into the edge of town. After they had looked around awhile and sized up the situation, they saw a battalion aid jeep come tearing along. The driver said the artillery was so hot he was going to get out. They rode out with him to a cave where the aid station was. The trip back to the Company position from the aid station was made under heavy artillery fire, a lot of it probably drawn by the tanks. A dud landed 30 feet in front of them.

The attack never came off as planned. The attack was to have commenced when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn moved up on the left across the railroad track. However, they hit some mine shafts and a factory which gave them a lot of trouble and they were delayed considerably.

It was still cloudy in the morning but the rain had stopped when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon moved out to clear more houses. They found one civilian and beaucoup equipment abandoned by the Germans. "C" Co. was also clearing houses on the opposite side of the street. The boys say that Pvt. Crozier, acting squad leader, was having a field day collecting souvenirs. He had a whole bag full of assorted items.

From almost nowhere the civilians began to show up. Here began the tirade that they were all to hear so often, “Amerikaniache soldaten gute. Deutsches soldaten nicht gute,” and, “Ich nicht Nazi”. They were all sent back to DPCP.

During that morning, a “C” Co. Commo Sgt was stringing wire between some of the houses. He decided to take a short cut across the field. Meidal, acting assistant squad leader of the 3<sup>rd</sup> squad, heard an explosion and figured that someone had stepped on the mine. By the time he reached the mine field, the Commo Sgt, who had stepped on the mine and had one foot blown off, had crawled off the field and was calling loudly for help. Although there were some “C” Co. men closer to him than Meidal was they were apathetic apparently as they made no effort to go to his assistance. Meidal made the man as comfortable as possible and went for a medic. He obtained a “C” Co. medic who took care of the Sgt.

Around 1100 all the houses were cleared but no German soldiers had been discovered so positions in town were picked out in the houses. A carrying party was sent back and brought up “K” rations for dinner and supper at about 1400.

Everything was peaceful and the men made themselves at home. They wrote letters or just lolled around the rest of the day. The lucky ones slept in beds that night. Some started fires in stoves in their houses at dark.

Hunger was a dominating thought and the ambitious GIs caught chicken and cooked potatoes or whatever other food they could lay their hands on. The night was uneventful.

March 6

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon stayed in positions for most of the day. They had K rations for breakfast and Crations for dinner.

In the afternoon they received orders to fall back and rejoin the rest of the Company going into some trenches near their original positions up on the hill.

When the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon moved in, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon left their positions around the CP and moved back to their original positions.

During the day a call was made for volunteers to act as litter bearers in Stiring-Wendel. There were heavy casualties and not enough men to care for them. Pvts. Rakowski, Parker, James Moore, Jannick, DeFrancisco, and Newsome volunteered.

They went down into Stiring-Wendel and there they met one aid man. He said he was going forward to see if it was possible to get two wounded men out. When he returned he said the place where they were was under heavy artillery fire and they couldn't be gotten out. They all went back to the aid station where they were asked if they wanted to act as litter bearers for awhile. Parker, James Moore, and Jannick went back to the Company. Later in the day, Rakowski, Pean, DeFrancisco, and Newsome went into town again. This time they succeeded in getting the wounded men out. While they took them out of one house, fighting was going on in the other. The road was under artillery fire and small arms fire, but they had to use it as the sides were mined. Rakowski and Pean helped the medics about five days before they rejoined their outfit. DeFrancisco and Newsome joined the medics.

There was a Russian POW cage in Stiring-Wendel which, at that time, had about 900 men in it. It was in sort of "no man's land". A patrol was formed with automatic weapons to try and get some food and medicine out to it. Some of the inmates were said to be in bad condition. A priest was going to go out with the patrol. For some reason the patrol was called off.

That night the men had hot chow for supper but it was drizzling so they weren't very comfortable. There was a small amount of artillery.

Later T/5 Dunn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was sent out on a contact patrol to "I" Co. on the right flank about 1000 yards. Pvts. Fontaine and Depas went with him. They left the Company at 2400. It was very dark and they had a hard time finding it. They ran into long stretches of low barbed wire. At 0300 the same patrol went out again. This time they had a picked route and also had discovered an opening in the barbed wire. They made much better time.

March 7

At 0100 three K rations were issued to the 1<sup>st</sup> Squad and half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad. Also some of the Weapons Platoon joined them. They were issued ammo, hand grenades and rifle grenades. Sgt. Wolfram led the men back through the towns, took a left turn on the outskirts of the town and entered a cemetery.

The men didn't know why they were brought to the cemetery but soon orders were given for some of the men to reconnoiter to the left of the graveyard, some to the right, and others were to go to the front and reconnoiter. Orders were then given to dig in. They dug in on a line on both sides of a road that ran through the cemetery. OPs were set up about 100 yards in front of the positions. Some of the men dug in the wrong places and ran into caskets before they had their holes very deep. It is believed this detachment served as an advance OP for Co. "C" as they were attached to "C" at the time.

In the afternoon the Company moved from Forbach Ridge to the heights of Stiring-Wendel. They marched about a mile. When they arrived, some moved into the pillboxes and some into trenches. The men took turns sleeping in the pillboxes. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons had their C.P.'s in one pillbox. There had been a lot of rain and the mud was thick. Everyone was warned about shoe mines.

Later Sgt. Goering's squad was sent to Forbach to act as a contact patrol between "I" and "E" Companies of the 276<sup>th</sup> Regiment. "E" Co. was on the left and "I" Co. on the right. There was a big gap in front of them and up forward was a large factory still held by the enemy. When they weren't patrolling they stayed in a house on the side of the railroad next to the enemy. They were on the top floor and the Weapons Platoon of "I" Co. was underneath. Mortars came over frequently along the railroad tracks and every round seemed to go right through the roof. During their patrolling they encountered no enemy although the first night they caught a lot of artillery. They ran a patrol every three hours using half the squad at a time. On the second day our tanks opened up on the factory again to knock out an O.P. there. This brought about heavy counter-battery fire from the Jerries.

March 8

In the morning they went out looking over their new locale. There were mine fields about, which had been taped off. The pillbox where the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons had their CP had mine fields around and on top of it. S/Sgt. Broome and Cpl. Penland of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon went out and located some mine fields and

shoe mines. It looked as though a medic had been killed because a medic's helmet was lying on the ground. They could see a dead GI lying in the field but could not tell whether it was a medic or not. They located several dead Jerry machine gunners in their foxholes. Some looked like they had been hit by artillery because their legs and arms were broken off. Later on they took out the men in groups and showed them the shoe mines which were painted orange. Later on still T/Sgt. Chappell, Broome and Penland and Medic Howard, and three or four others went out into the edge of a mine field to a dead Jerry machine gunner. Chappell got a burp gun and a light machine gun. They also saw a small 6.35 automatic pistol on the Jerry's belt but were afraid to get it because there were several grenades tied onto the belt and they didn't know whether or not it was booby-trapped. Later one of the men came over, took the belt and got the pistol. He was lucky, T/5 Dunn picked up a machine pistol this day.

The pillbox, which was the Platoon CP's, had large quantities of acetate in it. All day long various units would come and carry it off. It was used for map overlays, photograph frames, etc.

During the day, Brigadier General Herren and Colonel Conley inspected the positions and all the CP's were given a good cleaning.

### March 9

In the evening, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved to positions on the forward slope of the ridge just to the right of Stiring-Wendel overlooking the Metz-Saarbrücken-Forbach Highway. They moved out at dusk, just after chow. They moved off in squad column on the road leading into Stiring-Wendel and had to turn off it on a curve and proceed out onto the ridge through the woods. It got pretty dark and in the last squad one man, because of a bad foot, lost contact with the men in front and kept on going down the road. Cpl. Penland was bringing up the rear. They kept going until they reached the last curve in the road before Stiring-Wendel. They could see the town. Penland knew something was wrong because, as far as he knew, the town wasn't completely cleared as yet. He went up ahead and seeing what had happened stopped the men and dispersed them along the road. He knew they would be missed and figured that a guide would be sent up for them.

In the meantime, T/5 Dunn was at the top of the ridge and just before they went down noticed most of the men were missing. He sent Pvts. Burdine and Nicokoris back to look for them. While this was taking place, S/Sgt. Rysso was placing the men who were there.

Nicokoris and Burdine found the missing men and led the way back to the rest of the Platoon. It was very dark and they had to feel their way around. After they had left the road and entered the woods, Penland heard a commotion – loud talking and arguing at the head of the column. As the men had been cautioned to be very quiet because the positions of the Germans were not known he immediately went up to investigate. He found Nicokoris sitting on the ground and refusing to move, maintaining that he was tangled in a booby trap. Penland got down on his hands and knees and traced the wire each way. He found it to be a communications line. However, he couldn't convince Nicokoris of this even after making him feel it. He still refused to move and made such a commotion that Dunn came up the hill all the way from the bottom. Penland and Dunn gave him a direct order to move. They found that the wire was entangled in his horseshoe and rifle belt and they made him take it off. His rifle belt was so entangled they couldn't get it loose in the dark and sent him back to retrieve it the next day.

While they were placing the men, Dunn told Moore and DeFano to take a certain position in an old German trench, which wound around the nose of the hill. Moore jumped in the trench to take a look

and landed on something soft which didn't feel like dirt. Moore told DeFano he thought there was a pile of garbage or trash in the trench. He ventured to feel around and caught hold of a foot, and then seeing what it was hastily dropped it. He came up and told DeFano that they had better move away a little as there was a dead soldier there. The next day they saw it was a "C" Co. man.

On the day before, March 9, T/Sgt. Hicks went back to division and got his battlefield commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. S/Sgt. Broome took over the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon as Platoon Sgt. and Cpl. Penland was made Platoon Sgt. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon.

The men were cautioned that the Germans were within hearing distance.

S/Sgt. Goering's men also took these positions as his squad had returned from Forbach that day.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon also moved this day. They went into houses on the outskirts of Stiring-Wendel. They provided flank protection along the highway for "A" Co., who were on their left, and filled in a gap between "A" and "C" Companies. Men from another Bn were being evacuated by vehicle along the road (Metz Highway). Every time vehicles moved along the road they were shelled. The Jerries had a machine gun in the vicinity of the school house in Habsterdick which every now and then sprayed the area.

In the afternoon, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon moved back to Etzlingen, into houses without beds or windows. However, it was a relief to get out of the mud.

One little incident occurred soon after arriving in Etzlingen. A soldier called "Pop", whose name cannot be recalled, was playing with a hand grenade. The pin must have come out unnoticed while he was fooling with it for when he laid it down on a table the fuse exploded. "Pop" took one look at the grenade and saw it was smoking. He yelled "Grenade!" and threw it out the window. When it went off, the boys said that beaucoup chicken feathers flew past the windows. Somebody had chicken that night but everyone denies that the grenade was tossed on purpose. Except for pulling guard the night passed pleasantly.

March 11

The Bn. Commander visited the front lines. He told S/Sgt. Rysso and the squad leaders of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon that he knew for a fact that there were Germans in the school house in Habsterdick.

Later in the day we threw in heavy artillery barrage on the school house. "C" Co. set up an OP in the houses on the Metz Highway to the right front of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions. The fields around these houses were full of mines.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men had to walk back up to the top of the hill to get their twice daily hot chow. It was unusually very dark as the lights went out before dawn and didn't come on until an hour or so after dark. The squad leader had a hard time making the men carry their chow back to the holes to eat so someone else could go back to eat. They all wanted to hang around the chow cans for seconds.

The men were scared by a commotion that night out in the open field to the right flank. However, there was so much noise they figured it couldn't be the Jerries. It was a couple of horses and a few cows that were running wild in the neighborhood.

On this day, Lt. Chappell received his Silver Star for gallantry in the battle of Phillipsbourg.

March 12

In Habsterdick with Saarbrucken in their sites

One of the horses running around stepped on a shoe mine and had to be shot. Mortar rounds frequently burst near the group of animals but none were hit.

Habsterdick lay directly in front of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions across the open field. During the day civilians could be seen walking around in the street and children playing. It seemed queer and incongruous for them to be out there in the middle of a battlefield between two lines.

The trees in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon sector were mostly large beeches. The trail just below the trenches must have been a lover's lane because the trees were well carved into. To the right of the positions was a draw, before mentioned, which at this end had an open field with a brook running through it. Across the draw was the steep ridge on which the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had captured a lot of pillboxes and where they and "G" Co. had been stationed at various times. To the right front in front of this ridge and the draw were a number of houses on the Metz Highway. This highway turned left here and ran directly to Saarbrucken.

Houses on the outskirts of Saarbrucken could be seen far off to the right front. Nearer to the right front, to the right of Habsterdick, was a heavy pine woods. Immediately in front of the positions ran the Metz Highway and about 800 yards across a flat open field from it lay Habsterdick. To the left was Stiring-Wendel and far off, blocking the view of the further terrain, was a very high railroad embankment with a couple of coal cars standing on top of it. In the center of the positions, a few yards in front, was a small cemetery with monuments commemorating the fallen of the Franco-Prussian War. The area was liberally sprinkled with the salmon-colored Safe Conduct Passes dropped by our planes and artillery. During the hours of darkness a bird continually called with a loud, weird cry. At first the men thought the cries were German signals.

After a hot breakfast, Capt. Mitchell called for S/Sgt. Broome of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon to go to the Bn Commander about a raid that was planned. When Sgt. Broome returned he informed the squad leaders that they were going to go down through the positions that they had been in before and reconnoiter the terrain between the edge of the woods by the graveyard and the first few houses in Habsterdick. The plan was to attach the first two houses with the whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and then shoot up the place under cover of machine gun and artillery fire. The orders were to take no prisoners and ten minutes were considered time enough to complete the mission. None of the men knew or could find out what the reason for this was. They planned on starting soon after dark. They also were supposed to find out from Co. "C" what their patrols had located or discovered in the area. The men figured the patrol had been organized because "C" Co. had been receiving some small arms fire from houses in Habsterdick.

Sgt. Broome, Luukko, Wolfram and Crozier examined the proposed terrain but were not particularly pleased about the prospects for success of the mission. Sgt. Broome notified Capt. Mitchell. He was told to await further instructions.

At 1700 replacements were received. What a shock to see so much clean and complete equipment. The blankets came in for special admiration. Among the replacements received by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon were Sgt. Bettencourt, Pvts. Bunce, Carney, Gray, Ferracane, and Hammond.

The night went by without incident.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was still located in houses on the outskirts of Stiring-Wendel. Information was received that a German contact patrol came through Habsterdick at midnight. It was believed the Germans had an outpost in the school house and the patrol contacted it. It was determined to send a 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon patrol out to ambush them. Capt. Mitchell and T/Sgt. Chappell wanted to go on the patrol but Col. Conley refused to give them permission. The patrol was timed. It was to leave at 2300 and lay in wait between 2400 and 0100. If the Germans hadn't come at 0105, they were to return to the Company. There were pre-arranged signals with the artillery. If any firing started, the artillery was going to lay in a concentration on the far side of Habsterdick. They were going to give the patrol time enough to withdraw and then bring the fire down into Habsterdick. Civilians in Stiring-Wendel were questioned about Habsterdick. They said there weren't any fences between houses.

The patrol went out as scheduled. S/Sgt. Horner was in charge. With him were S/Sgt. Marshall, Houston, Petrino, Wellsandt, Mattox, Millington, Smith, Hyder, Morris, Huttenhower and Agsanian. Each man had either a Thompson sub-machine gun or a grease gun. Horner was to fire first if the enemy approached. They all were to fire practically all of their ammo and then withdraw.

The patrol went out along the road between Stiring-Wendel and Habsterdick and Alt Stiringen. When they reached Habsterdick, they turned right, leaving Huttenhower and Agsanian at the bridge over the anti-tank ditch to prevent them from being cut off. As they went along, they found that there were many fences and had to cut them. After lying in wait the prescribed time without the Germans making an appearance, the patrol withdrew safely.

They received information later that "C" Co. got the German patrol that night. The German patrol took a different route. They had orders to see if the Americans were bridging the anti-tank ditch. The "C" Co. had an OP at the bridge and fired on the Germans when they came up. One German called up to the "C" Co. men and told them the rest of the patrol would surrender if they would fire in the air so that their comrades in Habsterdick would think they had put up a fight.

During the day they did a lot of artillery observing from the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions. They could see smoke puffs with the field glasses where the Germans had dug in on the side of the railroad embankment. One time they saw about 20 Jerries parked in a yard from Alt Stiringen to Schonecken just about the edge of Alt Stiringen. An artillery barrage was laid on them.

March 13

The day before, T/Sgt. Chappell of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and T/Sgt. Ignaszewski of the Weapons Platoon went back to receive a field commission for valor and leadership on the field of battle.

The Colonel received word from Bn S2 that they thought there might be German tanks in the town of Habsterdick. Orders were given to search out the houses and barns and look for tanks and Germans. It was decided to send a daylight patrol from the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. S/Sgt. Horner, Platoon Sgt., was in command, and with him were S/Sgt. Marshall, Pvts Mattox, Petrino, Millington, Rusche, Hyder,

Hopkins, Bean, Morris and Sgt. Huttenhower. Horner carried a 536 radio and Morris had a bazooka. It was left to their own judgment what to do if they met any enemy.

The patrol left about 1200. When they arrived at the town, after meeting no opposition, they split into two groups. They had been given an overlay and had certain areas in town to clear. One group went up one block and the other the next. They kept visual contact between the groups. There were civilians all over the place and, as they proceeded, each group had a troop of curious women and children at their heels. They found some German ammunition in one of the first houses they entered. They found nothing whatsoever in the rest of the town. The civilians let the men in the cellars, unlocked doors, etc.

After they had searched the designated area, S/Sgt. Horner called back and reported that the area was clear. Then they were given additional areas to clear, practically the entire town. After clearing this, they were told to go to the end of town nearest Germany and occupy the last row of houses. They called back and said there were too many houses for them to occupy all of them. They just occupied three. After that, a messenger, Pvt. Houston, arrived and told them the rest of the Company was moving up. After this, Sgts. Horner and Marshall went into the woods just outside of the town to reconnoiter. They met the lead scouts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon which was moving into these woods. They told them that they had seen a five-man Jerry patrol so the two returned. Just about dusk the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Weapons Platoons arrived. About midnight S/Sgt. Hankins took a reconnaissance patrol out into the wooded area to the front. They encountered no enemy.

That morning the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was still in the town of Spichern. After a hot breakfast, the men were notified that they were moving out. They were told that the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon had sent patrols into Habsterdick and that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was going to clear the woods to the right of that town. They moved out about 1100 to the Co. CP to pick up ammo and rations. At 1300 they moved through the "C" Co.'s positions. Two heavy machine guns from "D" Co. were attached. The Platoons formed into a skirmish line in a draw located just beyond "C" Co.'s OP. Moving out through the woods with about three to five paces between men they covered a large area. After they had gone about 400 to 600 yards, they reached a swampy area and were given order to dig in in defensive positions. No opposition had been encountered. Their positions were in the heavy woods to the right of Habsterdick.

Each squad leader was told to take out a patrol that night to maintain contact with the two heavy machine guns which were located approximately 75 yards out on the right flank and also to reconnoiter the woods through which they had come during the day. The patrols were to consist of three men each.

Pvts. Fenton, Crozier and Seiderer got lost on one patrol and came out near a small town. They heard Jerries talking so they decided to duck back into the woods in a hurry. After some wandering around, they found their way back to their positions. These houses were probably part of the small settlement, northeast of Habsterdick, the name of which was not known.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon received word in the early afternoon that they were going to move out. A couple of hours later they started out. Part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon that had been left in Stiring-Wendel went with them. They were followed by the Weapons Platoon and mortar section. They crossed the draw onto the ridge overlooking the Co. "C" positions, crossed the Metz Highway and continued on a small wagon road which skirted the woods to the right of Habsterdick. This road was the boundary between France and Germany.

At the Metz Highway they picked up the Weapons Platoon machine gun section which had been quartered in some houses in the little town there. About dusk they arrived in Habsterdick and were quartered in houses. Most of the houses weren't lived in above the basements. Most civilians said the Germans had been gone for about four days. They said they had been awaiting the Americans for about four months. Many houses had been smashed by aerial and artillery bombardment but quite a few remained. There was a large Polish settlement in the town. Many of the men worked in nearby mines. They said that they had been having a hard time and had to go all the way to Forbach for food. They told of three young girls who had recently been killed in a cellar by an American shell. One old man volunteered the information that every morning three Germans came to the house of a "good" Nazi woman. One carried a pistol and field glasses and the other larger weapons. They went upstairs in the house and observed the American lines until dark, when they returned. One Polish woman said to Pfc. Goska of the Weapons Platoon, who speaks Polish, "Why do you Americans keep on fighting? You are not getting anywhere." Goska blew his top, probably using untranslated Polish. Some of the boys found better welcomes than this. One man for instance took Pvts. James Moore and Everett to his cellar and entertained them with a hot meal consisting of one egg, potatoes, soup and coffee. Other men had to wait for hot chow to come up.

Pfc. Hiley and Pvts. Palmer and Jones of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon took a patrol to Alt Stiringen to contact "A" Co. With him went Pvts. Dow, Nicokoris and Crozier. On their way over they met a jeep wandering around, also looking for "A" Co. It had hot chow. The patrol ran into some Engineers clearing mines on the road from Stiring-Wendel to Alt Stiringen. They warned them to stay away from the right side of the road as there were mines believed to be there. They knew nothing about the road beyond a nearby point. The road was found to be bombed out in a couple of places and the railroad overpass on the edge of Alt Stiringen was choked with high piles of rock and debris. They climbed over this and after searching about the town for a half hour or so, found "A" Co. which had just taken the town. The "A" Co. CO said they were jumping off early on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. They didn't know what they were going to run into. They were going to keep to the left of the high railroad and the lakes and "B" Co. was going to move out from Habsterdick on the right. The patrol made their way back to Habsterdick without incident. They wondered whether "A" Co. ever got its hot chow as the jeep would have to go back quite a ways to find a road to get them across the railroad.

#### March 14

About 0800 the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon left Habsterdick and moved through the woods toward Saarbrucken. They were in Germany as soon as they left the town. They crossed a one-track railroad, went over a ridge, down into a draw with a half drained pond in it and out onto a hill directly overlooking the houses of Saarbrucken. Here they were stopped by intense machine gun fire from a series of pillboxes and emplacements on the edge of Saarbrucken. These were the main Siegfried Line fortifications. There were dragon's teeth in front. The pillboxes had interlocking fire and each weapon was covered by fire from another.

About 0900 the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon passed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon positions and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon pulled out in open squad columns behind them. After 300 yards or so the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon came up on the left of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon which had stopped at the edge of the woods. To the front was a hill with woods on the left slope and a road running in front of it. On the left were some houses and behind the houses a road and then a railroad track.

The 1<sup>st</sup> squad was sent to clear the houses while the rest of the Platoon waited. The 1<sup>st</sup> squad consisted of the following: Pfc. Hartwright, acting squad leader, Pvts. Bargy, Gurley, Greco, Ledford, Cosgrove, DeFrancisco, Hammond, Bone, Goldsmith and Calabrese. They searched the houses and found them empty. Pvt. Devitt reported to T/Sgt. Broome that the houses were clear. However, Sgt. Broome wanted to be absolutely sure so the houses were checked again. The men were told to dig in but orders came down again almost immediately to move forward again. Just before the order came down, Pvts. Devitt, Bunce, Gurley, DeFrancisco, Greco and Pfc. Hartwright were sent out to the direct front to clear the houses on the far side of the road. They were empty also.

The 1<sup>st</sup> squad was sent on the left side of a brook. Rone and Goldsmith went up the road on the left flank of the road. The rest of the squad moved along the brook until they had started around a lake or backwaters. Pfc. Hartwright observed a Jerry up the trench on a hill. He fired at him and gave orders for the other men to do likewise. Another Kraut came out of a bunker and when fired at followed the other up the trench. No sooner had the men opened fire when the Jerries returned fire with machine guns. The men took cover behind what trees were available.

Pvt. Greco was hit first and hollered for a medic. However, the medics were unable to come up because of the intense machine gunfire. Pvt. Bargy half carried and half dragged Greco up a bank and across the road on the left where the medic could get to him. Pvt. Greco died before the medic could reach him. Pvt. Bargy saw the medic start along the edge of the road so he returned back up the creek to the squad.

Pfc. Hartwright started calling for a medic and Pvt. Bargy told him to crawl up to the road and he could be helped across. Hartwright reached the road and was hit again at least once while crossing. Pvt. Bargy ran to him, picked him up, and carried him down the road on his back, in spite of the heavy machine gun fire. Pvt. Bargy returned to his squad but on the way back he met the two men who had been on the road when the firing started and were joined in the ditch on the far side by Hammond and DeFrancisco. When Pvt. Bargy reached them, after leaving Hartwright with the medic and Pfc. Simmons, they told him they were taking off so that they wouldn't get hit. Pvt. Hammond joined the rest of the Company later. Pvt. Bargy went across the ridge and up on the hill. He saw Capt. Mitchell and told the Captain what had happened to the 1<sup>st</sup> squad and was told to report to Sgt. Luukko. Pfc. Hartwright has not returned to the Company and, although he had no less than three wounds, he was later accused of have self-inflicted them.

In the meantime, Pvt. Devitt, behind a tree, was talking to Pvt. Gurley, who was hit in the shoulder attempting to convince him that he ought to cross the road and get back to the medic. When he was unsuccessful, he told Gurley he was going for help. He found the medic in a building by the bridge and the medic told him he couldn't leave the wounded man he had there. Mortar fire was being received and everybody was inside except the wounded man, Hartwright, who was lying in the bushes along the side of the road. When everything quieted down, they carried Hartwright back farther where some of the litter bearers took over and carried him back to the aid station. Pvt. Devitt had a bullet hole through the sleeve of his jacket and another through his helmet as a reminder of heavy fire. He met T/5 Redfearn, Medic, and was pointing out Gurley's position to him when they saw Gurley coming down the road under his own power. By this time it was almost dark. Redfearn treated Gurley and he and Devitt reported to the C.P.

The rest of the men, Pvts. Ledford, Cosgrove and Calabrese, were thought to be dead. Pvt. Gurley has never returned to the Company.

While the 1<sup>st</sup> squad had been so involved, the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad reached point "A" on hill "A" on the left of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. When the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad reached point "A" on hill "A", they observed Jerries on the side of the hill to their front. They opened fire almost simultaneously with the 1<sup>st</sup> squad and received machine gun fire in return.

Four Jerries were caught without cover and raised their hands in a sign of surrender. They started walking towards our line. For some reason, Pvt. Sherburn opened fire on them with a BAR. He missed and they ran under the crest of the hill and were not seen again.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> squad was pinned down temporarily by machine gun fire and Pvt. Crozier was hit by machine gun bullets in his left shoulder. He returned to the Company on June 8. He was acting squad leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad.

Pfc. Fenton was also hit by ricocheting machine gun bullets which grazed the right side of his neck. He returned to the Company April 10. He was acting assistant leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad.

HE rifle grenades were fired at the far hillside. Some Germans were observed moving about. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon dug into positions at the top of the hill. Sgt Bettencourt and Pvt. Staak were told by Capt. Mitchell to get in a trench. Bettencourt and Staak were kept in the trench for two hours by the Kraut machine gun. The Jerries finally ceased firing and they then pulled out.

Later in the afternoon, Pvt. Sherburn was hit in the elbow by a piece of shrapnel and he has never returned to the Company.

Pvt. Bary was observing towards the front when a sniper's bullet pierced the left side of his helmet, broke his left cheekbone and lodged in his left shoulder. He returned to the Company on June 10.

Pvt. Leonard was sent three times for litter bearers. Apparently they were becoming lost on the way. He finally found them around 2330 and they carried Gurley and Bary back to the aid station.

Pvts. Leonard, Devitt, Alack and Pitcock were selected to stand guard at the Platoon CP. The one on guard was required to listen continuously to the SCR300 radio in case any message should come in. There was a light machine gun in front of the house that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon CP was in. Until 0200 at least the night was very quiet with only an occasional artillery or mortar shell coming in.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon squad leaders were called together by Sgt. Rysso at about 0300 and he told them the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was jumping off at 0600 and we were to occupy their positions in the houses at the edge of town. However, they didn't move out until almost 0800. When they moved out, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon took over their positions for a couple of hours but the remainder of the Company moved about 1100. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was in the lead, followed by a section of heavy machine guns from "D" Co. and the Weapons Platoon.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved out with two squads forward and one in the rear. The Company CO and Lt. Bjork were with the Platoon. When they reached the vicinity of the one track railroad, they stopped for about an hour while the Captain made contact with the forward Platoons.

Capt. Mitchell ordered S/Sgt. Dunn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon to make contact either with the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. He wasn't certain of the exact positions of either. He figured we would run into the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon but at that time we hadn't hit them. Dunn was to get their position and find out if they had met any opposition. Dunn took with him Pvts. Deyo, James Moore and Nicokoris. They went ahead about three quarters of a mile to the left front where they found the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon in a village. Some of the men were digging in. At that time they had met no opposition. Dunn then went back and notified Capt. Mitchell.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved forward again. There were parts of a shot-down old P-47 all over the place. After a short while they met the rear of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. They hit an open field in front and went around to the right to skirt it. Here, the heavy machine gun section was sent to cover the right flank which was exposed. Next, they went down into the small draw, crossed the half-drained pond and joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon on a small dirt road leading out onto the bare hill overlooking Saarbrucken. There were a few houses to the right and left. The forward elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon were stopped by machine gun fire from the aforementioned Siegfried Line pillboxes.

Capt. Mitchell and Sgt. Rysso went ahead to look over the situation. While they waited there, one of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon bazooka teams was pulled out to help the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon.

Late in the afternoon the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved back into a long winding trench slightly to the rear. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was in the woods over to the left. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons' CPs were in a house about 50 yards behind the trench. The Company of heavy machine guns was set up behind the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon positions covering the right flank. Another section of heavy machine guns was over with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. The light machine gun and mortar sections were also with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon.

They had considered using the houses on the right flank but decided not to. It probably was just as well because the Jerries consistently threw quite a bit of artillery and mortar fire over there.

The Weapons Platoon mortars were set up in a little draw behind the house occupied by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. There were enemy snipers, some with burp guns over to the right. They fired about 85 rounds that afternoon, trying to route them out.

March 15

One of the Weapons Platoon light machine guns was placed near the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon CP. It wasn't a trench. On the left was a blind side. There was a high rock fence there and above a large bush. The machine gun squad consisted of Payne, Grgurich, Cole, Brown, Gurien and Burns. It was pitch dark in the early morning hours. Gurien and Burns had just come off guard. They woke up Grgurich and Cole and went over to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon CP to take a smoke. A German patrol slipped up on the blind side and the first thing the men knew, there was a burp gun staring them in the face. The Jerries made them wake the two sleeping men and told them to get out. Spieglan, on the other gun nearby, later claimed he heard them say, "Heraus. Heraus".

Pvt. Pitcock of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had seen the Germans taking our men away. He came running back looking for T/Sgt. Broome. In his haste he missed the CP and landed back in the mortar positions. He

told Pvt. Bollinger that there were Jerries all over the place up there. In the meantime, Burns and Grgurich had gone back to their positions and found it empty. Burns came back and said, "We're being attacked!" The Germans took the machine gun along as well as the men. Burns and Gurien stayed with the mortar section. Burns went into a shell hole. A little later he heard the whistle of an incoming 88 shell and then a thud in his hole. An 88 dud landed right in the hole.

All four of the captured men are now in the United States. Payne escaped after a couple of days and made his way back into American lines. The other three were all wounded as they were being marched back by a grenade thrown by a German civilian. Two German guards were killed.

At dawn there was such a heavy smoke screen that it was possible to see only a few feet ahead. At first the men thought it was fog and then thought it was a Jerry smoke screen and expected an attack. Capt. Mitchell gave orders to hold positions at all costs. Later it was learned that the smoke had been laid down by our own artillery or 4.2 mortars and that Co. "C" was to attack across the open field to our left. However this attack did not materialize.

Lt. Ignaszewski returned to the Company this day after receiving his field commission.

Later in the day a jeep was bringing up mortar ammo and hit a mine. It was said at the time that three men were hurt. The jeep was trying to get around a tree which was down across the road which ran on the left of "B" Co.

Pfc. Simmons of Weapons Platoon took a squad down and picked up the ammo. The mortar section used up almost all of the mortar ammunition they had that morning, firing into the woods on the hill across from them.

Pfcs. Fisher and Mabry were the first casualties suffered by the Weapons Platoon that day. They had gone down that day to an artesian well on the path near the brook and the bridge near it which the Jerries shelled every day. A mortar shell got both of them. Fisher was hit in the leg and his left arm was broken. Mabry was hit in the left leg and left hand. They had all the canteens with them that they could carry and these were all cut up too. Neither of them has ever returned to the Company.

In the early afternoon, about 1430, everything was pretty quiet. Everybody was sunning and dozing. Sgt. Crawley was at Pfc. Bollinger's hole. Up forward further, Bryan, Romano, Duesman, and Sgt. Gill were around another hole. Romano and Duesman were asleep. Suddenly an 88 burst in the trees overhead and shrapnel kicked up dirt all around the hole. Duesman was hit in the heel. It cut Bryan's jacket, hit his magazine pouch and tore one up, and several rounds exploded but he was not wounded. He didn't even know he was hit until someone told him. Romano was stung with a piece on the shoulder, enough to feel the pain. They dragged him into the hole half asleep. When he awoke completely, he thought he had been hit bad and there was only a black and blue place where the shell had hit him. Sgt. Crawley was hit with the same shell. He was hit in the leg and side and his intestines were hanging out. Pfc. Simmons was hit in the left leg. Medic Howard patched him up there and he was evacuated.

This shell was just the opening of the barrage. They laid an 88 and mortars for awhile. T/Sgt. Hess went down after litters and Sgt. Crawley was carried back. Sgt. Gill and Romano helped Duesman back and neither ever came back.

Late in the afternoon the Weapons and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons received orders that they were to move back and "C" Co. was to take over their positions. Pfc. Bryan, the mortar section messenger, was sent around to tell the men to get ready to move out. He had just started when a mortar round hit within a few feet of him. In fact, he fell back into the hole it made. He had shrapnel in both feet with none above the ankles. At first he thought he had stepped on a shoe mine. Bryan had already been hit quite a few times and his clothes were all cut up. He said he knew his luck couldn't last forever.

Right after this, the Weapons and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons moved back. The Weapons Platoon used the same CP as the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon CP. The machine gun sections moved out to the end of the trench on the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon positions near a row of little trees. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon has just moved there. The mortars set up on the edge of the woods composed of small pines immediately next to the Platoon C.P.

Around 0600 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon heard a lot of firing along their left flank. Sgt. Luukko, Squad Leader of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, was told by T/Sgt. Broome that the Germans were counter attacking. However, he couldn't see the Jerries. The firing was spasmodic but at times was very heavy.

After an hour or so the Germans sent in smoke shells. This naturally made everyone very tense. The light machine gun men near Sgt. Luukko's positions would fire into the woods to the right front. The Germans would return the fire but were very high. A heavy machine gun behind them would open up occasionally. T/Sgt. Broome called for a 60 and 81 mm mortar barrage in the area the Germans would have to cross and it was given a real pasting.

Around 1100 the firing had just about ceased. Artillery, mortar and machine gun fire came in intermittently all day. Sniper fire continued to harass them and caused a few casualties.

Pvts. Blair, Bunce and Althausen were in a foxhole together. Bunce was hit during the morning in the right shoulder by a sniper's bullet. He was evacuated and has never returned. Later Blair was shot through the head, probably by the same sniper. He didn't die immediately although he was unconscious. A new medic had just replaced T/5 Redfearn a half hour before he went to the aid of Blair. Pvt. Walker, the new medic, started to lift Blair out of his hole when the sniper killed him instantly with a bullet through the head. The hole looked as if the sniper had used the red cross on his helmet to sight on. Since it would be impossible for a litter team to get to Blair, Althausen stayed with him until after dark when a litter team came and took him out. Blair later died in the hospital.

Pvts. Heckroth and Carney and Pfc. Yadon and Ebersbach were all in a foxhole together. A German artillery shell hit the top of the foxhole and penetrated it. Heckroth was killed outright by shrapnel in his head. Ebersbach was seen coming out of the hole and running back with Carney for a medic. Sgt. Luukko ran to the hole, saw that Heckroth was dead and Yadon partially covered with dirt. Lt. Ignaszewski and a medic, Howard, came up and helped lift Yadon out. Yadon was pretty seriously wounded and Medic Howard gave him morphine to ease his pain. Yadon later received ten pints of whole blood and five pints of blood plasma and went to Barnes General Hospital at Vancouver, Washington. Carney was uninjured. Ebersbach had numerous pieces of shrapnel in his body and was evacuated to the States. One German artillery shell landed so close to the hole occupied by Cochran and Hasack that it blew the top off of it. They decided they would be more comfortable, if not safer, in another hole, so they changed their residence.

Later in the day an artillery round landed in a house occupied by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and killed Pvt. Davis outright.

Sometime around 1700 part of "C" Co. took over the positions occupied by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and they pulled back to the trench on the right reverse slope of the hill. They reached the trench about the time the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon started sending back its casualties. One man was seen hopping back on one leg.

The night was spent in trenches and passed quietly except for a few light barrages from artillery and mortars.

Lt. Chappell returned that day after receiving his battlefield commission.

That day orders were received that the Company would attack the Siegfried Line. Capt. Mitchell called the Platoon Leaders together and discussed the possibilities and probabilities of the attack. They had aerial photos and topographic maps. The first was a row of houses on the edge of Saarbrucken. It was decided to move out directly to the front rather than on the left. The left had already been found to be well fortified and defended. Also the Germans might not expect an attack to come right over the bare hill. The attack was to be preceded by an intense artillery barrage. Eight-inch artillery rifles were going to be used. The positions of known pillboxes were shown to the artillery observers.

Information was obtained from prisoners that each pillbox had 17 men, mostly ex-Luftwaffe men, manning the pillboxes. It was also said that our artillery hadn't done much damage to the pillboxes and all the pillboxes covered one another. Also, they had flares and mines with trip wires placed out in front.

That afternoon it was definitely decided that they were going to jump off. Capt. Mitchell gave the order of attack, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and then the 1<sup>st</sup>. We could use unlimited artillery and there were to be tanks.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was to jump off at 1515 after the artillery barrage was lifted. However, at that time it was decided to throw in another barrage and it was almost 1600 when the Platoon jumped off. As they moved out, Lt. Chappell brought his 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon into position in back of them on the reverse slope of the hill.

Col. Cantrell, Capt. Murphy, Capt. Mitchell and Lt. Bjork observed the operation from the house in which the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon CP was located.

The shells from the 8-inch guns made direct hits on some of the pillboxes. They could see the concrete fly but the shell did not knock the pillboxes out.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved out with two squads forward and one back. The 1<sup>st</sup> squad was on the left. About 75 yards to the right was the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad. The 3<sup>rd</sup> squad was in the rear. S/Sgt. Rysso was with the 1<sup>st</sup> squad on the left. He carried a 536 radio and was in contact with the Co. Hdqt. Sgt. Penland went with the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad on the right. Sgt. Mann was with the 3<sup>rd</sup> squad in the rear.

The 1<sup>st</sup> squad consisted of Pfc. Traum, acting squad leader, Condict and Casto, scouts, Hahn, Darling, Cuervo, Brookover, Crociante, Adams, Jannick, Britt, Helaszek, and Ingrahm, assistant squad leader.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> squad consisted of T/5 Dunn, acting squad leader, Nicokoris and Hanson, scouts, Dow with bazooka, James Moore, Deyo, Everett, Depas, Burdine, Andrews, Parker, and Fontaine, assistant squad leader.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> squad consisted of Sgt. Goering, squad leader, Palmer and Jones, scouts, Frazier, Hiley, Rakowski, Pean, Patterson, Smith, Hubatch, and Brooks, assistant squad leader.

While the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was waiting on the slope of the hill, the Germans were laying artillery. Most of it landed over to the right and no one was hurt. As they moved out, Sgt. Rysso sent Condict, 1<sup>st</sup> scout of the 1<sup>st</sup> squad, over the brow of the hill and to the left where there were a few small trees. He came back and said it was going to be rough.

The 1<sup>st</sup> squad was the base squad. Both squads started moving up to the brow of the hill. Penland and Dunn were trying to get scouts and told Hanson to move out faster so they would reach the brow of the hill well before the rest of the squad. Nicokoris reached the brow of the hill and started down the other side. Pean, at that time from where he was, could see the dragoon teeth, dug outs and trenches across the valley. He wondered why it was so quiet and why they were letting us walk across the top. The hill was entirely bare and we stood out like sore thumbs and they couldn't help but see us.

The majority of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> squads had reached the brow of the hill and went on past where it leveled out into a level slope on the other side when all hell broke loose.

Nicokoris hit the ground and then got up and ran back to some barbed wire and hit the ground again. Penland ran up as close as he could get to him and fell behind a little potato mound. He was trying to see what had happened to Nicokoris and try to locate where the fire was coming from. Hanson, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, was about 25 feet to the left rear of Nicokoris and about 15 feet to Penland's left front. Penland called to Nicokoris and asked him if he had been hit. He didn't answer and probably couldn't hear because of the noise. Penland asked Hanson to see if he could call to him. Hanson called back that Nicokoris had been hit but didn't know how bad. Penland told Hanson to tell him to lie perfectly still. In the meantime, squad leader Dunn had joined Penland behind the potato mound. Every time they tried to get around the mound to contact Nicokoris and Hanson, and try to locate the source of fire, the Germans started cutting off the top of the mound with machine gun fire. They were afraid they would cut channels through it. Every time they moved, the enemy seemed to be able to see them.

Nicokoris had been hit in the right chest but didn't know it until after he hit the ground. When Dunn came up, he told him to lay low for awhile but the Germans kept firing at him and he started to crawl back. He was hit again in the left upper chest as he crossed the fence. Dunn told him to lay low as tanks were supposed to be coming.

The rest of the squad had flattened out on the ground, taking advantage of every little depression in the ground. The Jerries mistook numerous small piles of manure for men and lambasted them. The manure flew everywhere. The squad was completely pinned down.

Over on the left the 1<sup>st</sup> squad was fired upon at about the same time. Squad Leader Traum went out to see Condict, the 1<sup>st</sup> scout, who was pinned down right behind the fence. Traum came back and Sgt. Rysso got the coordinates of two machine gun positions. From where he was, he could see one but not the other. He called back and had artillery laid in on them. On the way back from Condict, Traum was

hit in the foot by a machine gun bullet. He crawled back about 50 yards to the large shell hole, half full of water behind a row of small trees and brush which extended from the left almost all the way across the hill to the right. Lt. Chappell was in this hole observing and preparing to bring this Platoon up if the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was able to move forward. They called for a Medic and Pvt. Newton came up to the hole.

Medic Newton was new and this was his first action. He was one of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men that had volunteered for the Medics back on Forbach Ridge. He was nervous and sweating all over. Chappell told him to take it easy and helped him with Traum. Newton, although plenty scared, remained on the battlefield during the entire fire fight and did all he could for the numerous wounded. He was one of the last men to withdraw. Traum has never returned to the Company.

While the tanks were coming up, Ingraham, who had taken over the 1<sup>st</sup> squad after Traum was hit, was hit in the shoulder and collarbone by machine gun fire. Nicokoris was hit again, this time by shrapnel, in the back and legs.

In the attempt to get behind the tanks from the right, many men were hurt.

Palmer, Frazier and one other man were running towards the tank when a shell burst nearby, hitting all three. Frazier was dazed for a minute or so. He found that he was hit in the hand and right shoulder. He made his way back to the aid station and discovered when he got there that he also had a machine gun bullet in his leg. Frazier returned to the Company on May 13. Pean saw Palmer lying in the open field and told him to get up and behind the tank. Palmer said he couldn't that he was hit. Pean then had to move on up. Palmer was found dead later by the fence, killed by machine gun bullets.

Rakowski was hit in the arm. Sgt. Mann and Sgt. Goering called to him to get up. He said that he was hit but he got up any way and in spite of his injury fired his weapon from behind the tank.

Condict was hit in the thigh by shrapnel but proceeded to the tank anyway. He asked Pean to look at his leg while he was behind the tank.

Casto was knocked over by a shell and received a broken leg. Jannink, the bazooka man, was hit in the head and face. Cuervo was badly wounded.

Parker received two bullets in the ankle. He managed to crawl back to the large shell crater where the medic was. Crocianta was hit by machine gun bullets and apparently made his own way back to the aid station. Hahn was wounded in the leg by shrapnel. He was able to get back by himself. He returned to the Company on May 9.

Most of the men who weren't wounded got behind the two right tanks. From there they fired at the enemy positions. They could see the pillboxes and the dragon teeth down below.

Behind the left hand tank was Sgt. Goering, Pean, Rakowski, Adams, Condict, and Sgt. Mann.

Behind the right hand tanks were S/Sgt. Rysso, Penland, Dunn, Hubatch, Depas, Helaszek, Brookoever, Gomer, Hanson and Dow.

After 15 minutes, the tanks decided to withdraw. They claimed that the ground was too soft that they could not cross the obstacles below anyway.

When the tanks started back, the remaining infantrymen were ordered to draw back to the line of bushes and small trees previously mentioned. On the way back, Brookover was hit in the left foot by shrapnel. He returned to the Company on May 1. Also Condict was hit by a shell that hit only a few feet from him.

When all the men that could be found were back along the row of bushes, Sgt. Rysso checked to see how many men were left. During this entire operation, under terrific fire of all kinds, Sgt. Rysso was as cool as if he had been running a field problem back in the States. With him were his messenger, Gomer, who in his first action showed no fear whatsoever. Sgt. Rysso later received a battlefield commission and is now a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.

Dunn made two attempts to get to the wounded men in the field but each time he drew enemy fire.

When the tanks started to leave, Nicokoris, who was still out in the open, took off for the rear. On the way back he met Ingraham. They both had shoulder wounds. When they reached the trenches from which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon had originally jumped off, they took shelter in them from some artillery the enemy was throwing in. However, when they tried to get out, neither of them could use their arms to push themselves out of the hole. Nicokoris finally scrambled out somehow but he couldn't help Ingraham. Then Howard came along and helped him out. Nicokoris returned to the Company on June 8 and Ingraham has never returned.

When Rakowski withdrew, he found Hess still lying in the field and helped him back. Hess has never returned. Rakowski returned to the Company on April 10.

At this time, our artillery threw in a covering barrage.

Then Penland, Dunn, Goering, Mann and Newton, the medic, walked out onto the top of the hill to try and help the wounded lying there. Strange to say, they drew no fire although they were plainly visible to the enemy. Perhaps the Germans thought all were medics though they all carried weapons except the medic.

They found Palmer dead at the fence. Casto had a broken leg. Sgts. Mann and Goering tried to carry him off but found that a litter was necessary. Jannink who had been hit in the forehead, was unconscious, and was spasmodically kicking with his leg. He was still wearing a packboard with four bazooka rounds on it, which Penland removed by cutting the straps. Cuervo and Condict were also lying there badly wounded. Penland at first thought Condict was dead because his eyes seemed to be turned up. However, he was merely following the men around with his eyes as he lay there. Penland put a sweater under his leg and straightened.

Newton did what he could for the men and gave them all a shot of morphine. Then the men went back as there were no litters and they could do no more.

In the large shell hole before mentioned were S/Sgt. Rysso, Sgt. Penland, Sgt. Dunn, Sgt. Mann, Medic Newton, and Parker, who was wounded in the leg. Rysso ordered the Platoon to draw back to trenches

the men had started from before. After they had gone, he asked Penland if all had gone back. They told him everyone as far as they knew except the occupants of that hole. He left Penland there to help the medic with the wounded men. He, Dunn and Mann started back.

When they were about 20 yards from the hole, two short rounds of American artillery appeared to fall right in the midst of our wounded lying on top of the hill. Penland shouted back, "Tell them to lift that artillery! It is falling among the wounded." Rysso was shouting for the same thing into the radio. Just then were seen for the first time three men who apparently came out of the shrubs in front of the shell hole. It was learned later that they were Andrews, Ledford and Halaszek. Halaszek and Andrews were supporting Ledford who had been wounded. They must have been in the bushes and not noticed when the men withdrew. They were right near the shell hole when one more very short round appeared to make a direct hit on them. The story can best be told by Sgt. Penland:

"Two artillery shells whistled across the top of the hole, coming from behind our lines and almost knocking me flat. They landed in the general vicinity of our wounded out on the field. I called back to Sgt. Rysso to have the fire lifted because it appeared to be landing among our wounded men. I was on the forward slope of the crater near the top, trying to see where the shells were landing. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see, coming from my left, two men supporting another, coming towards the shell hole. I glanced around and recognized Andrews on the right, supporting a wounded man and Halaszek on the right. I did not have time to recognize the third man who I was told later was Ledford. I just got out the first word of "Get down!" when a large caliber shell made a direct hit on the three men who were at that time approximately six yards from the hole. I saw a tremendous flash of fire and black smoke and pieces of the men's bodies flying through the air. The concussion from the shell blew my steel helmet off and threw me into the bottom of the crater which was filled with water and mud. One man's body flew over me and hit the water beside me. One of the men's legs hit on the right of me in the water. The medic, who was on the near side of the crater, was rolling down the side of the water. I threw out my hand and stopped him before he rolled into the water. He was covered with blood from the men who had been hit by the shell. I asked him if he was hit and he said he didn't know. He crawled over to help another man who was pushing himself toward the water with only his legs. This was probably Ledford who was later found dead in the hole.

"I looked around and saw a man's chest and hands sticking out of the water. I grabbed him to pull him out, thinking that possibly he was still alive and would drown. I saw that he was mangled and dead and let him slip back into the water.

"I then told Parker, the wounded man in the crater, to crawl back to our lines because shells were liable to start landing in the crater. That proved to be the last shell. However Parker had wanted to leave just before the last shell fell. I probably saved his life by telling him to wait a little while. After Parker left, the medic was working on the wounded man. I withdrew back to where the rest of the Platoon was and started counting the men. I couldn't find but ten men. I went back to the Platoon CP and reported the fact.

"I spent a miserable night in wet clothes so filled with mud and sand that they felt like wallpaper."

Besides the casualties already mentioned, Pvt. Deyo received a piece of shrapnel in the leg and Pvt. Fontaine was wounded in the right arm and under the chin. Both went to the aid station and returned in several hours, missing chow in the process. Two days later Fontaine was evacuated. Fontaine later returned to the Company.

The total 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon casualties were four killed and 17 wounded badly enough to be evacuated.

When the tanks pulled back, they paused a little while by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon trench. The tankers gave a case of "C" rations to Hanson and Everett. The men were cold and hungry and received no hot chow that night.

Just as Parker came crawling back, some litter bearers came up the small dirt road and immediately brought a hail of fire from the Germans. They remained lying in the road until the fire stopped and then went hastily to the rear.

Dow, the bazooka man in Dunn's squad, had a round all loaded in his gun and had had no opportunity to fire it. There was no way to unload it. The next day he went up and fired it at the Jerry positions plus two more.

About fifty yards in front of the trenches was a high mesh wire fence and chicken houses. When the tanks pulled through there moving up the wire pulled a case of C rations off the tank. Dunn and Depas went out the next day and got it.

By the time a check of the men had been made it was dark. The men took up defense against a possible counter attack. They were told to dig in deeper.

Lt. Tillman arrived as a replacement in the afternoon while the attack was on and Capt. Mitchell told him he was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They were observing the fight from the top of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons' CP. Lt. Tillman asked where his Platoon was. The Capt. said, "Out there, behind the tanks." The Captain then said there was no use going out there right away.

Before dark, Lt. Tillman and Sgt. Rysso went out to the shell hole to identify the dead men.

In the afternoon, the CP, where the officers were observing, suffered three direct hits. They had to take refuge in the cellar when it got too hot. The artillery OP was there too. One dud, a 105-mm, went right through the house and landed in the back yard. T/Sgt. Penland, now Platoon Sgt. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, received a personal commendation from Major General Barnett for this actions and leadership during the attack.

S/Sgt. Mann has a memento of the action. It is a long piece of shrapnel which went through three books in his combat jacket pocket and lodged in the fourth. Junk collecting at times has its advantages.

After dark, S/Sgt. Mann guided four litter teams out on the hill and they carried back four known wounded men out there. All were still alive. Jannink was out of his head and muttering. All of them lived. They looked around the rest of the hill but could find no more wounded.

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon returned, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon moved up and took positions in the trench to the left of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. The remainder of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon moved into the same trench on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon's right. There was a section of heavy machine guns with them. The other section remained in the same position behind the trench. As noted before, the section of light machine guns moved out on the left of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon.

It was later determined that the artillery came from the 275<sup>th</sup> artillery.

The night passed without further event.

March 16

Lt. Marcil arrived as a replacement on this day. He was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon where he spend most of the day asking questions, looking over the Company's position, etc. During the day, he and Lt. Chappell went down to the old 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon positions to check on a story that "C" Co. had found Pfc. Davis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon alive and had been evacuated. They found Davis' body in the house where he had been killed. They also found that "C" Co. had not taken over these positions which they were supposed to have done. Lt. Chappell and Marcil were about 600 yards out in front of any positions. There was a big gap in the American lines and it afforded the Germans a good way to approach. Lt. Chappell notified Bn Hdqt and "C" Co. later moved into the positions.

In the morning Lt. Chappell went out to the shell crater where the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon men had been hit the day before to identify the bodies. He identified Halaszek by his dog tags. While he was in the hole he heard the crack of a bullet as it hit the ground just outside the hole. He didn't exactly know what it was and kept on working in the hole. He then realized it was a sniper. He tried to see where it was coming from as another bullet came in. His carbine was a little ways outside the hole. He ran for it and back as another round came in. There was a water tower over on the right and from the angle he figured the shots were coming from there. He then made a break back to the trenches and warned the men.

As soon as he got back to his CP he showed the artillery FO where he thought the sniper was. They threw a few rounds in and after they got it zeroed in they threw some time fire in. After the second barrage of this, a man piled out of the tower and started to run. Just as he started to run another barrage of time fire came in. They could see the dust puffing all around him. He hit the ground and didn't get up. They figured they got him as they weren't troubled with snipers anymore.

The men were warned about an artillery barrage of big stuff – 155's – to be thrown over that day. They were told to stay in their holes and dig deeper.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Lt. Tillman was now Platoon Leader, S/Sgt. Rysso, Platoon Sgt., and Sgt. Penland, Platoon guide, and Sgt. Mann was given the first squad, consisting of two men, Adams and Britt. Later Pfc. Sunde arrived back from the hospital and there were three men.

The men got hot chow morning and night. They were fed in the draw to the left rear. The Jerries entertained them with mortars and artillery at every chow time. The Company CP had moved to a cave that was situated in the side of this draw. Near it was an artesian well where the men used to go for water. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon CP moved to the shed where the Company CP had been. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon moved there too.

P.X. rations were received – candy, cigarettes, etc.

The Jerries got frequent direct hits with their mortars on the communication lines from the CP to the forward Platoon CPs.

It was a warm sunny day and many of the men took off their shoes and dried their feet. Just as they would get comfortable, the Jerries would toss over a few mortar rounds.

Pvt. Deyo had three K rations stored up and that night some good Samaritan relieved him of the candy from all three. Deyo was not appreciative the next day. While on guard these nights, some staunch believers in the “Help your Buddy” system use to turn their watches forward.

After dark that evening, some men from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons claimed they heard suspicious noises in the buildings on the hill across the draw on the right flank. About 2100 S/Sgt. Rysso led a 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon patrol over to investigate. With him went T/5 Dunn, Pfc. Hubatch and Sgt. Mann. All carried automatic weapons. The men in the lines were warned about the patrol being out. They crossed the draw and onto the small hill on which the houses were situated. S/Sgt. Rysso took the lead and reconnoitered each building while the rest of the men covered him. There were four houses widely separated over there. Nothing was found and the patrol returned without running into any trouble.

March 17

The men spent the day, which was again warm and sunny, cleaning weapons and ammo, and remaking foxholes. Some were real classic examples of how a well built foxhole should be made. Incidentally, they weren't real foxholes. The men were in one of the usual German communication trenches, dug only about waist deep. At intervals, the men deepened it and put a covering over their section, consisting of boards or logs with dirt over it for protection against artillery and mortar fire. T/5 Dunn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon left to go to Paris on pass this day. Of course, he was very sorry to leave the front lines.

As before mentioned, the house where the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and Weapons Platoon had their CPs was being used as a forward artillery OP. The day before we had received quite a lot of sniper fire from the right flank and they were laying in some artillery over there. That morning the Forward Observers for the artillery and 81 mm mortars had been up. They had located a target over the hill which couldn't be seen from the house but could be seen from some of the Weapons Platoon positions. They were going to fire the target and the Weapons Platoon was going to adjust. Lt. Chappell went down to the Company CP to see the Captain.

While he was there a call came in saying that they were going to use the sound power between the 1<sup>st</sup> and Weapons Platoons to adjust the artillery fire. Apparently they were going to move the sound power from the cellar upstairs. S/Sgt. Horner and the medic were handing it from the top of the cellar steps into the kitchen window. Lt. Marcil and the artillery observer, another Lt., were inside the window taking it. A shell hit on the side of the house and came through the window and killed the two Lieutenants outright. They just slumped over the sill. Sgt. Horner and the aid man were badly hit in the leg. Horner later lost his leg. In the Company CP they heard the crash over the phone. It sounded like a pistol shot. They could get no answer over the phone. “I believe your CP got a direct hit.” Lt. Chappell told Hess to go over and see what he could do. Sgt. Mitchell came over and said two men were hit and

he thought that the two Lieutenants were dead. He said they had better send up four litters. This was Lt. Marcil's second day on the line.

Next to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon CP was a long barn with pens in it where pigs had been kept. The whole area here had apparently been a pig farm. That afternoon Lt. Chappell went to the barn in answer to a call of nature. He had just got set comfortably at one end when a shell hit there. He started toward the other end and another shell hit there. He started for another part in the middle and another shell hit there and another in the back of the barn. Finally it quieted down and he was able to proceed with his business.

March 18

The 18<sup>th</sup> was Sunday and another warm day. In the morning there was a lot of activity way over on the right flank. It sounded like an attack. There was machine gun fire and plenty of artillery. It turned out later that it was all indirect fire.

The Jerries threw some screaming meemies into the draw which made thundering noise.

About 0400 Pvt. Leonard thought he heard Germans digging in about 200 yards on the right flank. He woke up Pvt. Ferracane, who was in the hole with him, and he told him he heard someone digging in and he was going out to find out what it was. Pvt. Ferracane asked him if he had permission. He said he had but he actually had not. Then Ferracane went on guarding his place and Leonard started off wearing a wool knit cap.

About 0600 Haglund came down and asked where Leonard was. Ferracane told him the story and Haglund went up and told S/Sgt. Broome, Platoon Sgt., about it. Broome called up Ferracane who told the story to him.

Then Broome sent squad leader Wolfram, Haglund and Ferracane out to search for him. The patrol looked through all the houses on the right flank where they thought he might have gone. They returned without finding him.

Leonard finally returned about 0800 and said he had gone way over on the right flank until he ran into another Company of Americans. He said he had found no enemy. This Company is believed to have been "I" Co., which was known to be a great distance over to our right flank. Leonard was given a thorough dressing down by Sgt. Broome.

The Jerries that morning also threw in some mortar fire near the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon CP. One landed right between the bombed out house and the shed where the CP was located. There were two doors to the shed and Gomer, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon messenger, used to hang around one of them. The round hit right by the door, and although Gomer had taken refuge in the shed, a piece of shrapnel hit him. It just brushed him however. His heavy coat which he had left hanging outside was riddled. Penland was keeping Dunn's tommy gun for him and had left it outside. He started to go out after it but luckily changed his mind as the stock was all cut up. The mortars seemed to be about 80 mm.

Capt. Mitchell left to go to Paris this day. He had refused to go until he was sure his Company was going off the line and into reserve.

About 4130 Pfc. Luther and Bollinger of the Weapons Platoon were reading comics in the sun near their hole. A mortar round came in behind them and another in front of them. Bollinger stayed where he was but Luther took off for his hole. He was hit in the right shoulder just as he was getting in the hole. He was the last "B" Co. casualty. Bollinger was not hit. Luther returned to the Company on April 24.

March 19

The Jerries kept throwing mortars in. One round hit a light machine gun direct, tearing it all up. No one was near enough to get hurt except for their feelings. They didn't know the gun was damaged until they picked it up to move out. They got a new gun after arriving in the reserve position.

That evening about dark, "B" Co. was relieved by "C" Co. and went into reserve. As "C" Co. came up in groups, groups of "B" Co. men went down into the draw in back of the hill and formed. When "C" Co. men came they were warned but some started to dig right in on the bare hill. Soon, whooom, whooom, whooom came in the mortar rounds and they had several casualties.

After dark, the entire Company crossed the road on the left, went up the hill on the other side, turned left and followed the railroad tracks to where a branch turned to the right. Here they went to the right along a branch for a ways and then turned right into the woods until they hit another railroad on a very high embankment. They went over this and proceeded until they reached a road. Most of the positions were on or near this road. They were in the vicinity of Schonecken and the road came from that town. The terrain was heavily wooded and hilly. Lt. Bjork was in charge of the Company.

The Weapons and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons relieved "F" Co. The machine guns were right on the road on the left flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. The mortars were back about 100 yards in a clearing.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon ran contact patrols to "A" Co. They had some trouble in locating "A" Co. One patrol found them but the next couldn't.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was to run patrols to "L" Co. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon section was in the wooded section, mostly large beech trees overlooking a deep draw. They were about 75 to 100 yards on the other side of the road. The next morning the terrain was seen to be park-like with numerous winding lanes and many neat piles of logs. Across the draw were benches and seats. There were numerous parks in the vicinity.

Sgt. Goering was told to take the patrol to contact "L" Co. He was called to the Platoon CP. The CO of "E" Co., which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon relieved, was there. He said the patrol had to be run and we had to make two contact patrols with "L" Co., one at 2400 and the other at 0500. A guide from "E" Co. was left to go with the patrol.

Sgt. Goering took Pvts. Pean and Hiley with him. They started out and walked about two miles through the woods. They arrived at a park on top of a hill about one-half mile from Saarbrucken. There were several trails leading out of the park on the other side and the guide had forgotten which one to take. After wandering around for about an hour, he told Sgt. Goering about a large mine field in the area. Sgt. Goering talked it over with his men and they decided they had better go back and wait until morning. After daylight in the morning, they tried again and this time they found "L" Co. Lt. Tillman

went along. They found they had been close to the mine field and it was full of trip wires, etc. They also had been within a few hundred yards of German positions.

Pfc. Thigpen went to the hospital this day with pneumonia. He returned to the Company when it was in Wiesbaden.

March 20

The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and Weapons Platoons remained in their positions. Lt. Bjork led the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon back into Habsterdick. They left about 0900 in the morning. In Habsterdick they were quartered in a row of houses on the edge of town next to the German border. Each squad ran patrols that night and afternoon.

Sgt. Goering ran patrols to some Company in Alt Stieringen.

Sgt. Mann ran patrols up to "C" Co. with the aid of Hubatch and a couple of others. They reported to the Company CO in a cave which they were using for a CP, the same as "B" Co. formerly did. The patrols went through the woods to the railroad tracks, turned right and went down the tracks a ways, turned right again by some huge water-filled bomb craters and hit a trail which ran by a brook and lake and led right to the cave.

The men had been warned that German patrols had been coming through the day before some "D" Co. men had been captured. Also there were snipers that fired at men going down to the spring on the outskirts of town.

It was pitch dark and the patrols had a little trouble finding their way through the dense woods. About 2000 or 2100 the men were warned to watch out for a large German patrol reported heading in the direction of the American lines. However, when the next contact patrol got to "C" Co., they were told that "C" Co. had dispersed this German patrol with mortar fire.

Sgt Dunn's squad ran patrols over to "I" Co., which was entrenched in a large cemetery to the right of Habsterdick. They had to pass the spring where the snipers operated. A French civilian told him that the snipers fired at the civilians too and that they always went for water in groups.

March 21

The Germans Withdraw from the Siegfried Line

Sgt Mann led an early morning patrol over to "C" Co. and was told that they believed the Germans had left their fortifications. This was the first news that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon received about the Germans' withdrawal. There had been plenty of rumors about the 70<sup>th</sup> Division breaking through the line somewhere and also the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division cutting the Germans off in the rear.

Later in the morning the men were informed that the Germans had withdrawn and that the front had moved back many miles. We were told we were going across the Saar River and we were going in the reserve. Many of the men were still doubtful and found it hard to believe, especially some who had seen Ducks driving about.

About dark, the Company reformed and started off marching to a new location. When they got about half way there they were picked up by truck. They were taken to a large apartment house in

Rockershoffen, another suburb of Saarbrücken. It was in fairly good shape considering that it was practically in the Siegfried Line. Large pillboxes and trenches were in the back yard.

The men found lots of German chocolate, canned fruit, crackers, etc., which was quickly appropriated. Also, the blankets and pillows and mattresses were brought into the apartment house. The former foxhole residents were making hay while the sun shone. There was a large factory and railroad nearby. All the surrounding buildings were pretty well destroyed. There were very few civilians here also, although by the next day some began to return.

There was no running water of course but the men found a well nearby. Candles were used for light and the men slept well that night. They were fed hot chow that night as well.

March 22

The Company received 45 replacements. The platoons began to look normal again. S/Sgts. Rysso, Brooms and Hess were promoted to T/Sgts. Sgt Mann was promoted to S/Sgt. T/5 Dunn and Cpl. Penland were promoted to Sergeant.

March 23

The Company left Rockershoffen at 1000 and went by truck to Friedrichsthal, where they were billeted in houses. They arrived there about 1100.

They did a bit of patrolling about the town, looking for Germans of military age, searching for weapons, etc.

When civilians were evicted from the "B" Co. sector, one woman was given permission to remain. She had just given birth to a baby boy a day or two before. The men saw a movie that night, the first in a long time.

March 24

Remained in the same place. Had hot chow three times a day.

March 25

Left Friedrichsthal by truck at 0630. Arrived at Otterbach about 1030 and were quartered in houses. At this place the Platoons were given outpost positions in small nearby towns. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was at Erlenbach. There we stayed for about nine days.

After leaving Erlenbach we were put on trucks and went to Mainz. The Company remained in Mainz and the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon went over to Kastel. This place was right across the river from Mainz. We were guarding two military bridges there. The two bridges were the longest tactical bridges ever built under combat conditions.

Lt. Chappell was the town commander and the people never let us alone. The Russians, who had been slave laborers, were being released and as they came into the town there was a cognac factory on its outskirts. The Russians would get drunk, therefore giving all the soldiers lots of extra work. Also, Medic Howard, for the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, had his part to play when the Russians would come through town. They tried to cut on the Germans and Howard would have to sew them up.

After being in Kastel for a few days, an accident happened. There was an old man who everyone said was crazy. He hung around the soldiers' billets for a day or two and then one afternoon he gave a small boy a bottle of nitroglycerine. The boy dropped the bottle and it blew up, killing him instantly and injuring many others by the flying bits of glass from the bottle. It was believed that the boy was told to give the bottle to a soldier but he didn't get to us. The old man was found to have maps and sketches of a factory that had been booby trapped. He also had more nitroglycerine, stored, which was found.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon stayed in Kastel for about three weeks and then the entire Company went to Wiesbaden, where they were all billeted in a large apartment house.

# End of the Official B Company History #