

November 25, 1944

Derrick headquarters moves to Elsenborn

Upon completion of its motor march from Aubel the battalion headquarters and H/S Co. of the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion set up shop and housekeeping, using the existing and available buildings in the village of Butgenbach. It was soon apparent that it was too close to Division to be efficient. Security problems made it desirable to leave and seek protection of an engineer line company. Although engineer supply, maps, wire, mines and tracing tape were secured by Division, the battalion H/S Company was called on for guards and its share was about twenty percent of the company strength. In addition we had to protect ourselves.

Moving to Elsenborn was eventually approved by the Dauntless G-3 on November 25, 1944. By December 1, 1944, the battalion's headquarters and the H/S company, less its supply section which was to operate essentially as a map supply depot, in the Division Headquarters' supply area at Butgenbach were established in Elsenborn and enjoyed the inexpensive, built-in security provided by its A Co.

In a letter written by JRN to his younger sister, Maryanne - December 6, 1944:

The mail came today again and so there is joy all around. One lives from mail call to mail call with only a slight hesitation for chow calls.

By the bye, the food so far is all right. We get a good selection of food most of the time but for publication we have meatless meals here just as we did in the States. We haven't missed very many meals as yet but enough to appreciate the occasional meatless wonder.

My trip across France was so fast I didn't see a thing so will have to go back after this is all over and see it if I get the chance. Belgium is quite like the US except that most everyone still has cows and they are in barns on the side of the house. I assure you that a kennel has much better odors than this barn lot aroma. But they do have inside water, flush toilets, electric stoves, etc. Of course, about

1929 models of all. Well, good night, Sis. Love, Bud.

December 9, 1944

Col. Warren's visit and the Irish Coffee trip to Co.'s A & B

During the night of December 8, 1944, the first of many snow falls covered the countryside white. It was the first "boxing about" that the Belgium winter would deliver to the 99th. Later storms were much worse. On the morning of the 9th, the weather was clear for a change; crisp and only a little too cool for a wool shirt as an outer garment. It was a bit warm inside the mess hall, the living room and dining room of a farmer's home on the north edge of Elsenborn, so field jackets were being worn unzipped or unbuttoned depending on the age and model. The faint odors of the meal just eaten by the troops mingled with the still fainter odors of the gasoline-fueled field ranges on which the breakfast was prepared. All the weather signs and all of the Dauntless operational signs appeared favorable for a pleasant out-of-doors type of Saturday afternoon. The troops had not been overseas long enough to forget that the army always had Saturday morning inspections and the afternoons off. What better after a better than average Saturday morning meal?

Little was scheduled to happen before Monday. Derrick had not been included in any of the weekend patrols of Dauntless, even though the G-3 and his staff seldom ignored or overlooked an opportunity to include the sappers in their action plans. This apparent good fortune had to be the result of a G-3 oversight. Capt. Feeney believed that leaving the rest of the 9th and all of the 10th of December free indicated that G-3 was about to restore the days of the week. Since the arrival of the 99th in Aubel, Division Headquarters had pushed, shoved, and force fed all sorts of activity into the operation to the point where sleep at Derrick, if any, was as likely to happen during the day as at night. Someone, somewhere had directed intensive

training in the way of after dark, blackout operations. Capt. Feeney was certain that the pressure drill was more than just routine. There had to be something big about to happen, but his intelligence sources and resources had been unable to develop even a good rumor.

There undoubtedly would be patrols sent into the land of the Hun that day, for Gen. Lauer would not allow the enemy or his troops to relax, not even for a day, and certainly not on a weekend. There had been very few relaxed weekends since the 99th arrived at Camp Miles Standish in early September, and none since the 9th of November when the 395th R.C.T. moved out from the Aubel area to relieve elements of the 99th Infantry Division and others east and southeast of Kalterherberg.

After breakfast, most of the enlisted soldiers drifted out leaving the dining area to a few officers who were finishing their meals with a third or fourth last cup of coffee. Soon they too would drift out into the streets of Elsenborn to visit around. The more venturesome might travel to the south of the 99th Infantry Division's right boundary and visit stateside friends in the 2nd Infantry Division area. This boundary was between V and VIII Corps of the 1st Army, in the center of the American 12th Army Group. The 9th Army was to the north and the 3rd Army to the south.

At a bit past 1230 hrs. the coffee cups were empty and the mess hall was too, except for the 324th's CO, the ExO, the 2, the 3, and the H/S Co. commander. All of these were more or less young Americans. Some were not so young as others. Capt. Eble was past forty and Maj. Perrine was approaching it. Capt. Feeny was barely twenty-two. I'm twelve days past my thirtieth birthday.

T/5 Tosk, entered the mess hall. Tosk's home was "Lon'g Gi-land," His father was a naturalized Russian and his mother was Jewish, German but

American-born. He appeared very young, but was old enough to be deferred to study to become a Rabbi. But after two years he neglected to re-enroll. His draft board took a dim view of his oversight and ordered him to the Army. He could read, write and speak German, but his feet were too flat for walking. Therefore, he was utilized as as an S-2 assistant and as my orderly, even though a colonel could not have an orderly. Even in this difficult environment he was very clean and very neat. His M-1 was slung up-side down, sling forward, grasped in his left hand precisely below his right arm pit. His short stocky body was topped by a helmet that was too large and set very square and deep. His very short neck made it appear that the helmet's outside edges rested squarely upon his high muscled shoulders.

As he arrived at the table where the group was seated he started talking as he came to a stop at attention. "Col.-sir, Capt. Talbott is in your quarters with a white-haired colonel of Engineers. He sent me to get you."

"Oh, all right, I'll let you take me back, the coffee is gone, I won't resist. What's his name?"

"Don't know sir. Couldn't read his name tag. Officers don't usually introduce officers to soldiers."

"Anybody know a white-haired Colonel of Engineers who would be apt to be on the prowl on a beautiful Saturday?" As usual, my question was ignored by all present; no one answered.

Tosk found his voice again.

"Sir, the Captain seemed kinda jumpy, his every other word was 'Yes Sir'."

The short, block-long trip south on Kalterherberg Strasse took very little time and we barged into Derrick Six's operation room. Capt. Bill Talbott (ADE) was at the map where Derrick-Six often pondered his battalion's fate and what-if exercises, talking to a very white-haired Lt. Col. of Engineers.

The map covered all of the north wall of the dining room of the house. (A picture of the house is on page 56 of Battle Babies.) It presented the unclassified portion of the engineer picture of the Dauntless Division area. Near the ceiling, a heavy, nearly horizontal line with two X's indicated the 99th's north area boundary. Above the line, "38 Cav" identified our neighbors to the north around Monschau. Near the bottom of the map, about waist high above the floor was a second line, more or less parallel to the first, with three X's. Below the line was marked "VIII", for VIII Corps.

Other markings indicated that B Co. was at Honsfeld, C Co. in Kalterherberg, with A Co. and H/S Co. were in Elsenborn. The map gave no other divisional unit locations. There were additional markings but only I knew they represented the locations of the engineer troop projects.

Capt. Talbott was speaking as Tosk and I entered the map room. The first audible words were, "...There is no road net in this north area." He saw me and without so much as a vocal dash in the conversation switched tracks: "Col. Warren, Sir, my commanding officer, Col. Neale."

With that introduction I knew I was the junior and the Indian Head patch on his shoulder spoke loudly and clearly--2nd Division Engineer. My not so off-handed response to Capt. Talbott's formal introduction, as I remember it was, "For what purpose is the Engineer of the 2nd Division honoring our humble CP on this beautiful Saturday afternoon?"

"Just an informal look-see at your Dauntless area. We are going to take the dams and will start from south of the Hofen area, up north."

Capt. Talbott looked knowingly at me but said nothing. I said nothing.

"Air can't seem to get the job done and Corps can't move east with all the high-up water south of it. So V Corps has decided that the 2nd Division will do it

for them. We are, or will be in the woods west of here. We'll move on Route One from Butgenbach toward Bullingen, then to Wirtzfeld and north through Krinkelt."

"That's our MSR (main supply route). It's not really adequate for one let alone two divisions." My tone of voice must have transmitted a 'you can't do this to us' message.

"You will just have to find something else. Corps has given us priority on the Route One network." His eyes twinkled and a trace of a grin seemed to indicate his satisfaction with his position.

Already I didn't like the guy.

I continued, "Are you delivering a message? How come Dauntless-3 hasn't told me?" I looked straight at Bill and he was blank. "Will your people help us open a road to the north of Krinkelt from here?"

Col. Warren looked away and to the wall map calmly responded, "No to the first; no to the third, and I can't speak for your three. I'm just on a personal recce. I figured you would have all the scoop and poop by this time. We left the south of the south boundary over a week ago. Didn't you know?"

"I guess I'll have to remonstrate Walter and Leonard (CG 99thID and CG V Corps). They seem to be playing loose with the 101-FM or whatever the number of the operations manual is. It seems impossible, but they are not keeping the troops informed."

Capt. Talbott finally found his voice. "Col. Warren came into the ADE closet and asked for you, just after 1200 hrs. I guided him here. Nothing, absolutely nothing has been whispered about this in the Three Shop--yet."

Derrick-Six, "Tosk, Pop, come in here!" I spoke with my most military voice, reserved for expressing authority in the presence of ring knockers. There were two present.

"Here Sir," Tosk.

"Here," slow and low from the kitchen area. Pay grade "Pop" Simmons entered with three cups of coffee. He was a most unusual soldier. He remained in Germany after WWI in the Army of Occupation until 1923 when he returned to the United States and was stationed at Ft. Dix while awaiting discharge. The discharge was slow in coming, so Pop went AWOL and went home to his family in Alabama or Georgia. Being short of funding between WWI and WWII the Army made no effort to locate or apprehend Pop. On December 10, 1941, Pop turned himself in to the army authorities stating that he was ready to serve his country as an ordinary soldier. Pop arrived at the 99th Infantry Division, then training at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, as an Engineer Battalion filler. As the training progressed, he received less and less training, unless you count barracks guarding, latrine orderly kitchen training, and don't forget the sick book, he was an expert at riding it. By the time the 99th Infantry Division had participated in the 1943 Louisiana Maneuvers and closed into a new home, Camp Maxey, Texas, Pop was right at the top of the C Co. elimination list. The removal of Pop from the army was not to be. A medical discharge? No way. A medical board could find only good health. He passed the P.T. tests and his teeth were most acceptable.

Derrick-Six, "OK. So the first rumor of a rumor and both of your hearts get cut out. From now until I tell you differently, you have heard absolutely nothing, nothing of anything of this discussion or these conversations. You understand?"

"Yes, Sir," Tosk. "Y-E-S," Simmons.

"Carry on." Directing my attention to my guest, "Colonel, understand we'll do what we are told to do. We'll give you and your people all the help we can; we always have and always will. But, we'll do nothing with the troops until the three pushes the button. No road work or rear area work until all the troop shelters are

finished. Dauntless has stated too many times that the Old Man is determined to zero out trench foot."

Col. Warren's voice was low, slow, and serious. His eyes were fixed on mine. "Hell, I'm not trying to tell you what to do, now or ever. Just a bit of advice. You better be thinking about how you'll provide a MSR when you don't have the one you're now using and your Old Man says, 'Get me one, now!'"

"Colonel, what are your plans for the rest of this beautiful afternoon?" I hoped he was not going to suggest I travel with him, for I now wanted to get quickly on the road to Butgenbach.

"Oh, I'll just ride around a bit and look the country over, I'll not impose on you. I'll just look around, an informal bit of road and map reconnaissance."

The Colonel set his canteen cup of coffee on the window sill and grasped his walking stick with his right hand. Then, deliberately shifted it to his left hand and shook hands with Capt. Talbott and then with me. He thanked no one in particular for the coffee, transferred the walking stick back into his right hand and informally saluted the room in general as he moved to the door. I returned his salute, informally, and followed him out the door. Without a backward glance he moved quickly to his jeep, which was sitting in the shadow of the building across the street. The motor started; the vehicle moved out. The shiny black spare tire cover stated: "The Second, Indian Head, Division, The Engineer."

It had been an uncomfortable, edgy twenty five or thirty minutes. There was something about the white-haired Lt. Col. from the 2nd Division that this Reserve Lt. Colonel of the 99th Division just didn't care for, yet his presence demanded respect.

In a letter written by JRN to Tom Bishop - June 30, 1992:

Col. Robert Warren and I served together again in Germany. In 1958 and '59 he was NACOM Engineer and I was V Corps Deputy Engineer. The Farbin Building was big enough for both of us. I will state to his good name, he was a better man in '58 than he was in '44.

Returning to my operations room, I found young Capt. Talbott sprawled in a straight backed chair, his feet in their size twelve combat boots blocking whatever walking space there was left between the table and the wall.

"Bill, what do you know besides what we both know about the good Colonel?"

"Not much. He's Academy, as you already figured; he was in Africa and came to Europe on D+1 or so with the Indian Head. They say his hair turned white overnight in Africa."

"Well, what does he know about us besides what we told him?"

"Well, I told him our layout. Headquarters here with S-4 in Butgenbach. Art in Elsenborn with a platoon in Rocherath. Bill in Honsfeld and Charlie Company in Kalterherberg. When he came into the closet and asked how to find you I was about to leave for here so I offered to deliver him. I had a message from Tom (Asst. G-3, Capt. Tom Bishop) for you, so I volunteered to act as his guide."

Relieved that Lt. Col. Warren had at last departed, I wanted to get on the road. I wanted to see Art and then get on to Dauntless. No doubt, there I would see Capt. Bishop among others who were unfortunately on Saturday afternoon duty.

"By-the-bye, what's Tom's message?"

"Well," likewise drawled, "You are invited--"

"Invited?"

Capt. Talbott, "I use Capt. Tom's exact words--to a Commanders call at 1500 hrs. tomorrow."

"Sunday?"

"Yes--he said he thought Col. Miller (Division Surgeon) would present his third lecture on trench foot prevention. The old man is still most concerned about the incident rate of the division's trench foot and the 'Big Pill' keeps him stirred up. Now, paragraph 2, you will bring your S-3 with you. G-3 will have a separate party for him, or them."

"G-3's entertainment will no doubt include cookies and we commanders won't get any. What has happened to RHIP?"

Talbott overlooked my dig at tradition. "It and Lucky Strike Greens are in the same place, where ever. But I believe you better have an up to the minute report on your infantry troop shelter projects."

"Good, I'll have it. You get it ready for me this afternoon while you are resting."

Talbott, "Want to bet Sam has it all ready?"

"No bet. Our Derrick-3 will have it by the square feet, the number of logs, bull-dozer hours and/or gallons of diesel per cubic foot of safe space. But will you be able to tell me by tomorrow how many shelters are completed or will be completed by noon tomorrow?"

Talbott, "Only if you suggest it, Sir. Sam feels there will be no end to this project or to the building of the troop showers 'till this long, cruel war is over'."

He lifted himself from the chair and ambled into the kitchen. I followed, for a last word and found him looking out the east window.

"Bill?"

"Yes-Sir."

"It shouldn't be too big a job."

"Maybe."

"I'll see you later in the Three Shop. I'm going to spade Art's brain and plant some new ideas. You handle Sam."

At some time during these few minutes of small talk it came to me that Talbott was a messenger for a reason, some one didn't want talk on the wire. Tomorrow's meeting would sanitize Lt. Col. Warren's visit of today. I rethought my plans. I should stay out of Butgenbach this Saturday afternoon, relax and apparently be innocently surprised come 1500 hrs tomorrow. I would invite Capt. Harverstick to spend the afternoon south of the border, down VIII Corps way, to see what was being done down there. However, the information that the 2nd Infantry Division had moved out of the VIII Corps area to the south of us disturbed me. This area was worse than ours to control defensively and the three or four miles of front just south of us had not been occupied by the 2nd but only patrolled by the 14th Cavalry Squadron. What unit had replaced the 2nd? General Lauer had the 3rd battalion of the 394th Infantry pulled back, more or less behind its 2nd battalion along the boundary line between the Vth and the VIII Corps. Wasko was in Honsfeld, south and west of Hunningen where the 394th regiment was headquartered.

My uneasiness quickly caused a decision. I'd take Art and we would visit Wasko by way of the VIII Corps rear area. "Do it right. Do it once. Do it now." There wasn't a better time to find out just what was on the south flank than that afternoon. We'd spend the night in Honsfeld, and be home in Elsenborn in time to go to the meeting the next day.

"Tosk, call Able and see if Capt. Harverstick is there. If so, tell the CQ to not let him leave. Tell him I'm on the way. Get Botti out of his sack. I may have a use for wheels before evening."

Pop Simmon's from the kitchen, "Can I ride shotgun?"

"Got any chickens located?" from Tosk as he cranked the double E-8.

"Might as well tell Commo to take the afternoon off. You can be radio operator." Pop stuck his head into the kitchen doorway. His grin expressed his pleasure.

A short time later the departure was organized and executed.

When we arrived at the A Company CP, the officers were drinking coffee. I suspected Art's mug had a spiked content. His left hand was holding a red-labeled Johnny Walker bottle securely to the table top. Planting seeds in his head this afternoon might be difficult.

"Capt. Art, have you visited our new neighbors to the South?"

"Which ones? The Black Horses or the Golden Lions." Art was still in good shape. Probably still on the first cup of Irish coffee made with Scotch from the NAFFE.

"Is there any reason we shouldn't or can't visit that area this afternoon and see Wasko on the way back, a sort of loop south, northeast, and then back northwest?"

"None that I can think of. We'll probably need an appointment with Wasko though. He hangs around Danzig, checking rations most of his spare time. Col. Riley is always finding something for him to do or that he can help with."

Art's first Sergeant entered and announced that Capt. Wasko wouldn't be back at his CP until 1530 or 1600 hrs. If we spent the night with Art we could eat hamburgers.

Quickly I said, "I can't spend the night. I need to be clear and headed back to Elsenborn by 0700 to talk with Sam." He was the best excuse I could think of in an instant. "But I love hamburgers."

The convoy was quickly organized with Art and I and his driver in the lead

jeep. Art's radio operator, Botti, and Pop Simmons were in my jeep. Art's Browning automatic rifle (BAR) was placed in the second vehicle with his radio operator. Combat Engineers don't generally have BAR's but we had accumulated several during the first month and somehow each company commander except Capt. Eble had one and it was motorized. Though strictly not authorized, they were not stolen.

Butgenbach, Dem Butgenbach, and Honsfeld were reached quickly. Then south to Holzheim. Just before reaching Holzheim we cross the invisible line that separated responsibility. To the north was V Corps and the 99th Division, to the south was VIII Corps and the 106th Infantry Division. There was not a sign of any kind of the presence of the Golden Lion.

About two miles south, it seemed like ten, we spotted an outpost, an armored car with its 37mm cannon pointed east. It was brush covered but we picked it up by the faint black smoke rising just to its rear.

"Art, they haven't seen us, or if they have they don't want us to know."

"Col., we're friendly. They can tell, so they're going on about their business."

"Who are they?"

"Probably the contact point. Most likely 18th Cav. Squadron. It's attached to the 106th."

December 10, 1944

Back to the 324th Bn Headquarters and on to Division Headquarters

0700 hrs. at Honsfeld--An early morning breakfast at B Co. was not an unusual occurrence, particularly since its arrival on the European continent. Sunday was just another work day. Chaplain Kirby Webster would squeeze in a religious service for all who desired to participate. By night fall he and his

driver/assistant would have covered the locations of all of the units of the Battalion.

The only difference this Sunday, as far as the mess sergeant was concerned was that he had twelve more mouths to feed; no problem.

The aroma of fresh made coffee greeted all comers as they entered the mess area. Sugar and reconstituted milk were available by choice. Pancakes about ten inches in diameter were the principle item of this breakfast menu. They could be dressed with syrup, embalmed butter, or sugar. The only problem, they had to be cut in half to get them into the mess kit. The ingredients usually used were dried eggs, dried milk, and all-purpose flour plus a bit of this and that. If time permitted, a B Co. soldier could eat four or five with no ill effects.

As for the Headquarters' group this Sunday morning it would be only a one-pancake meal. The breakfast today could not be leisurely. I had things to do in Elsenborn to prepare myself for the Dauntless encounter now rescheduled for 1400 hrs in Butgenbach.

Capt. Bill Wasko, good host and good company commander that he was, was up and supervising the breakfast preparation when I entered the mess hall area. He did not appear to be unhappy. He was apparently "at peace" with the instructions I had given him privately the evening before. He and Art Harverstick were to find a location in the Elsenborn area for all of his company, except the first platoon that was in direct support of the 394th Infantry Regiment. It would remain in Honsfeld. The company was to be out of Honsfeld and into the Elsenborn area by 0600 on the 16th of December, 1944. Yesterday had ended with "Good night, Bill." "Good night, Colonel."

I had no doubt that later in the day Bill would be at A Co. in Elsenborn and that he and Capt. Art Harverstick would check out the village for areas suitable for

troop billets.

B Co. would never get to move to the Elsenborn area but as our reconnaissance party left Honsfeld both Capt. Wasko and I were of one mind. We both thought that B company would complete the move, but we were not privy to the planning of either the American First Army or of Hitler.

The jeeps were ready to travel by 0830 hrs. and the route through Bullingen and Butgenbach took us less than an hour. As we crossed the main intersection of Elsenborn, Capt. Harverstick and his party turned right to the east toward his headquarters, arriving about 0930 hrs. The lead vehicles continued north on Kalterherberg Strasse to the H/S Co.'s area and Capt. Eble's kitchen.

The kitchen occupied all of the downstairs of a typical Belgian farm house, except that part occupied by three large milk cows and the three mature Belgium women who were responsible for the animals' well being. They lived with the three cows and were out of sight most of the time. Tosk conversed with them frequently in his United States' synagogue learned German. On the small door, opposite the three Army gasoline kitchen ranges was a small sign. It warned, "Cows, do not open."

The dining room and the parlor served as the mess hall but this limited area forced most of the company to eat where they worked or where they slept and return to the kitchen to wash their mess gear after each meal.

Maj. Perrine and Capt. Feeney had assembled along with Capt. Eble to greet the returning travelers. Word of Lt. Col. Warren's visit had somehow spread and they were most interested in learning of the VIII Corps' conditions. I reported my general impressions of the area to the south. Sam stated that nothing had happened during the time we were gone and then he pulled a sheaf of papers from within his shirt that contained the troop shelter figures that he had prepared while we were

gone. He reported that most of the effort was in the 1st Bn 393rd and the 2nd Bn 394th. The 2nd Bn 393rd in Division Reserve worked in support of both projects. He considered the area of the 1st Bn 394th complete, as complete as we'd ever be able to get it. The Battalion's fall back position at Murringen was under way and Col. Riley was using mostly 1st Bn troops. Sam's opinion was that Lt. Col. Moore's 3rd Bn 394th should be digging in south and west of Bullingen, but G-3 did not seem to agree.

Capt. Feeney had learned through S-2 channels that the General had instructed Lt. Col. Jean Scott (CO, 393rd Infantry) to develop plans for the defense of Elsenborn on the ridge to the east of the village.

1300hrs. at Butgenbach--I checked into Division Headquarters and stopped by the G-4 Section to chat a bit with Lt. Col. Roy Ross. It was only an instant before I became aware that something unusual was happening. Lt. Col. Ross was too busy to visit with me, something that he had never been too busy to do in all the preceding year. His people were all busy, appearing very tense and preoccupied, each within his own little world. I wasn't ready for his "Get lost, Neale, if you have to loaf, do it--please do it elsewhere."

"Yes Sir! I'll go dig a hole."

It was still early to take seats for the meeting that was the cause for my visit so I wandered over to the G-3 rooms hoping to find my friend, Capt. Tom Bishop. I wanted to needle him for any personal 'poop' that he might have on Lt. Col. Warren. Capt. Bishop was almost as knowledgeable as Lt. Col. Ross in knowing things that he didn't talk about unless asked.

Capt. Bishop was not hard to find. He was in the conference room personally preparing an overlay for the big operations map that was on the wall from ceiling to floor behind the wall curtains. The wall curtains were open.

"Capt. Tom, what's known about a Lt. Col. Warren, Engineer of the 2nd Division?"

"Col., you tell me; I hear you know him." This without even looking up or in the direction of my voice.

"Well, we've met. Yesterday, in fact, just after my noon meal. Your ball."

"He visited with the Chief about 1400 hrs. yesterday. Understand you weren't too friendly."

"If I'm being paid to be friendly, maybe I should give the Chief a crack at my rear."

"Not necessarily, I don't think you should. He knows where to find you. He hasn't said anything yet and after the pride of the Academy departed he seemed more amused than upset."

"OK, your point is made--and accepted. What the hell are you doing?"

"A map for the (expletives deleted) tea party. I'll finish just as quickly as a Lt. Col. of Engineers leaves me alone. Why don't you visit Col. Ross? He always is needing someone to talk to."

"Not so, or so says he. How about if I see if Lt. Col. St. Clair (G-2) has any new Hun-type ghost stories. If worse comes to worse, I'll visit my own people in your Engineer Closet."

Leaving Capt. Bishop to his chores and not wanting to visit with Howard St. Clair, I next turned up at the Engineer Office, affectionately known as The Closet and found Capt. Talbott, making fresh coffee. Besides Bill, his driver, my driver, and my radio operator, were in the small room, only about 6 ft. by 8 ft. of floor with a 9 ft. wall height. The three enlisted men were drinking the last of the stale coffee.

"Has the Chief been looking for me?"

"Not in here, sir. Care for a cup? If so, get out your canteen cup for

inspection."

"If it's not clean I'll kill Simmons. No, I'll kill both Tosk and Simmons. I have to kill them at least once a day to keep at all even with the times they wish me dead."

Coffee drinking and G.I. chatter took over when the fresh coffee was ready but Maj. Perrine arrived before it ran out. It was decided by a vote of five to zero that there was still time for him to have a cup before the tea party.

Maj. Perrine and I eventually moved to the three-shop conference room and became part of the crowd that was gathering. We found our appropriate seats and began a friendly, though disparaging, communication with Lt. Col. Scott and Maj. Elmer Schmierer (S-3, 393rd Infantry). Lt. Col. Scott had been the commander of troops on the Argentina and Maj. Schemierer had been one of my three cabin mates.

By stateside training and established protocol, at Division Command and Staff meetings the three regimental commanders and the Chief of Staff sat with their staff representation, usually only their S-3's, on the front row. The second row reading from right to left sat the Engineer, the Medical Bn CO, the Signal Officer, the Ordnance Officer, and the Quartermaster. The third row was occupied by the commanders of any attached troops. All other rows were considered open seats.

The meeting got underway at exactly 1400 hrs. with Maj. Francis X. Calligher entering the room after all assembled and with a smooth and polished voice commanding, "A-Ten-Shon! Gentlemen, your Commanding General."

After an instant of increased noise level, dead silence and thirty-five or so gentlemen stood ramrod straight, without stiffness--as they had been taught. Then led by Col. Davison, Chief of Staff, there followed the two brigadier generals, Gen. Hugh Mayberry and Gen. Fredrick Black. The last to enter was the Checkerboard's Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Walter Lauer.

Col. Davison observed the room while the generals and aides took their seats and when all were seated, quietly commanded, "Be seated, Gentlemen." More noise for an instant and then again, silence.

General Lauer opened the meeting. "We must whip trench-foot before we can whip the Hun. There is no excuse for the loss of a man to such a disease, if it can be classed as a disease. Each of you must see that each of your men takes care of his feet each day. (In theory, socks were to be changed each day.) There is nothing more important you can do. Col. Miller (Division Surgeon) reports that the incident rate has fallen a little, but not nearly enough."

Since Little Doc, Capt. Fischer, and the Extractor, Capt. Morton Fireman (our dentist), had joined the battalion, we were getting the low down on the trench foot problem. The news was not good and not too bad--if only we could get overshoes.

"Damn it, if the rate doesn't fall to zero I'll have to punish some one of you; will it be you? What I have said is the most important thing that you will hear this afternoon."

While the general was speaking, Col. Davison took a mental roll call, twisting in his seat on the right of the first row next to Lt. Col. Scott. I was sitting behind Scott, the seat to my right vacant. Sam was on my left, so that to see me he turned to the left rear with body and neck. His eyes said, "We know something, don't we?" His partial smile said, "Don't worry about it." I thought--so much for Lt. Col. Warren. I'd still be around to fight trench-foot.

The general paused, then picked up the G-3 with his eyes. Then he spoke. "The V Corps Commander has determined that the air corps will not destroy the dams any time soon and certainly not soon enough to allow the winter offensive, as planned." Cpt. Bishop with a long pointer identified the four Roer River Dams.

Then the G-3 Lt. Col. Norman started by reading the V Corps operation plan

east of the 2nd Infantry Division and acquired all of the 2/393 INF. Thus the 395th RCT was to attack more or less to the northeast alongside of the 2nd Division's leading element and to protect the 2nd Division's south flank. The gap between the south flank of the 395th and the north flank of the 393rd would be controlled by part time patrolling and demonstration by the left unit, 3/393rd(-) INF.

The 324th ECB would support the attack with the whole of C Co. in direct support of the 395th Infantry.

One platoon of A Co. was attached to the 2/393 INF which was itself attached to the 395th Infantry. B Co., less one platoon which was in direct support of the 394th Infantry, was in general support of the 395th RCT attack but remained under ECB control and had not been designated in any manner as division reserve.

The attack, basically two divisions, began on 13 December and proceeded satisfactorily as far as the elements of both divisions were concerned. Details of this action are covered in Battle Babies pages 119 through 131.)

December 13, 1944

The Lakes

In a letter written by JRN to Alex Lindner - April 25, 1992:

Lt. Ralph Sewell was "hit" and was left for dead while on patrol with the 393rd Infantry. He "walked in" when he came to, the snow he fell in congealed the blood from his wound.

The 99th Division became part of the V Corps plan of attack to capture the lake area just to the east of Hofen because of its deployed position. The four lakes existed before Hitler as the result of the construction of four river water retention dams. The lakes were named Urfttalspeere, Schwammenauel, Paulushoff and Heimbach. The first two, because they made possible the control of the water level

stages of the Roer River to the north, were considered to be a threat to present and future V Corps attack plans and were to be the principal targets of the immediate V Corps offensive effort.

The final, final plans of V Corps left the 3/395 INF in place between Kalterherberg and Hofen. The 99th's Reconnaissance Troop would replace the 395th's 2nd Battalion and the Recon Troop of the 2nd Infantry Division would replace the 395th's 1st Battalion. Both Recon Troops were reinforced with additional automatic weapons, particularly 30 and 50 caliber machine guns. The 2nd Recon Troop was on the north flank of the 2nd Division attack zone. On the right of the 2nd Recon Troop, the 2nd Infantry Division deployed its two regiments abreast. The third regiment was in the vicinity of Wirtzfeld, well to the south and represented the V Corps reserve in the area and was not immediately available to the CG 2nd Division.

The 395th RCT deployed on the right of the leading regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division. South of the 395th RCT's deployment area, the area from which the 2nd Battalion of the 393rd Infantry was retracted, there was a two mile gap. The plan was to cover this area with aggressive patrolling by the next south unit, the 3rd Battalion of the 393rd Infantry.

History records that in fact, the 3/393 INF patrolled so aggressively that it captured Rath Hill. It crossed the deep and wooded ravine to the immediate east, crossed the International Highway and stormed up the mountainous hillside, driving the German troops from their positions. Offensive doctrine does not generally require extensive defensive preparations when the action is classed as a demonstration in force, so history also records that they were still on top of this newly acquired ground at 0530 hrs. on the 16th of December when the German 6th Army moved out to the west along the front of the attack zone.

The 1/393 INF was in its developed defensive positions to the south of the self-dislodged 3/393 INF. The 394th Infantry extended the 99th Division's defensive positions to the south from the right flank of the 1/393 INF. The 2/394 INF on the north, faced east and 1/394 INF faced east and southeast. The 3/394 INF faced toward the south, to the west of the 1st Battalion and overlooked the five mile wide Losheim Cap. The 3/394 INF was the 99th Infantry Division's reserve and it constructed defensive positions west of Honsfeld and north of the northwest regiment of the 106th Infantry of VIII Corps. The north boundary of the Losheim Cap was basically the north boundary of the 106th Infantry Division and was patrolled by a Squadron of the 14th Cavalry Group. This very real and distinctive natural boundary was also the boundary between the V Corps to the north and VIII Corps to the south. However, the Losheim Cap was the total responsibility of the CG VIII Corps. Throughout November 1944 after the 99th Division relieved the 9th Division, the I&R Platoon of the 99th Division's 394th Infantry Regiment patrolled to the south and maintained contact with a Task Force X, the 14th Cavalry Group on the north flank of the newly arrived 106th Infantry Division. Very early in the morning on December 16th and throughout the day, the I&R Platoon found itself engaged with very aggressive formations of the German enemy attacking westward at the village of Lanzerath. That story is told well by John Eisenhower in his Bitter Woods.

December 14-16, 1944
Before Rocherath

The planned progress of the 99th Division's first offensive combat was on schedule. It had been so successful in protecting the 2nd Division's right flank that technically the 99th's left flank was somewhat exposed. By mid-afternoon of the

directly in my hands. Though problems of the 99th Division sector would fall upon A and B Co.'s, their "by order of" requirements would only be in support of the 395th RCT.

By 1200 hrs. on the 14th, Maj. Perrine was of the opinion that our staff and command were too far from the action and requested divisional permission to establish a forward command post to the north of Rocherath and northeast of Krinkelt on the Gemund road with a forward supply point at the A Co. platoon area on the west side of Krinkelt. This unit was under the command of CWO Hayes and would have WOJG Richard Pshaw Jones from the S-4 section in Butgenbach as second in command upon his arrival with the forward supplies.

The recon team of the S-2 section located a gasthaus for the forward headquarters in the open country just east of Rocherath. Division approvals of the selected sites were received late, about 2200 hrs. on the 14th. During the 15th the approvals were acted upon. By 1700 hrs. on the 15th both displacements had been completed and reported to division. All necessary operating enlisted personnel were present at the command unit to include a section of the H/S kitchen.

The Battalion's message center and the operations section were established in the basement of the inn in deference to the combat conditions. An eating area and kitchen was established on the entry floor in the same rooms used when the inn operated commercially in support of the local hunters. The top two floors were sleeping areas and sleeping bags. Sacks were the allowed level of comfort.

The supply point, a command tent, and tape marked trails through the trees were being stocked. First priority was offensive explosives, particularly prima-cord and shaped charges. The second priority was anti-tank mines and other defensive items. There was no third priority. No anti-tank concertina or barbed wire was initially available for inventory or issue. In fact very little, if any, wire had been

available since the division relieved the 9th Division in early November. In V Corps, intelligent defensive discussion was frowned upon.

And so early to bed. The 14th and 15th had been two very busy days. As darkness replaced the daylight, about 1700 hrs. supper was available. The cooks offered a choice of C rations and the blacked-out conditions made it just like maneuvers according to Sgt. Norman Baehr, our S-2 Sergeant. And, just like maneuvers, the fourteen vehicles and assorted trailers were dispersed about the gasthaus structure. None were dug in nor were the tires sandbagged. The commanding officer's jeep with its two radios was parked tight against the west wall by the basement window. The speakers of both radios and their microphones were extended into the message center, again just like maneuvers. Neither radio could be used for transmission. The company set couldn't reach the companies. The division's radio, the General's command set, could not be used until after certain land line instructions were received by a telephone call alert. Even though the telephone had not rung, both sets were on at all times to listen to and monitor the traffic. Just in case, the duty NCO would keep the gas tank full throughout the night from one of the four five-gallon cans of motor fuel stored in front of the vehicle under the bumper on the north side of the gausthaus.

Present at the command post were the CO, the ExO, the S-3, and Lt. Vulture McLean (Battalion Adjutant). Still due to arrive were Capt. Feeney and Capt. Eble. Also present in the command and operations group were Sgt. James Feaster (S-3), Sgt. Baehr (S-2), and Sgt. Maj. McFadden (Commo). Capt. Feeney and Capt. Eble both arrived in the early hours of darkness but after the "old man" had retired to the second floor.

In a letter written by JRN to George Sharpnack - August 30, 1982:

My memory of Sgt Maj. McFadden is on a sidewalk outside of a town in the Ruhr. A company clerk sitting in a chair, a white chalk about his neck and the Sgt. Maj. giving him a haircut. Anything could happen in the 324th and sometimes did. My inquiry turned up that he had been cutting hair since we left the states because the H/S Co. did not have a barber among the 107 or so soldiers. How come I did not find out until after the Ruhr Pocket Operation? Capt. Eble knew. CWO Hayes knew. Everyone but me knew, I guess. Even Tosk and Simmons knew.

The hours between 0001 and 0530 on Saturday, December 16, 1944, were still and quiet and no different than the same hours of the nights that had gone before. The quiet hours duty was assigned with two hours on so that everyone would get some sleep. One special duty was to call the cooks at 0400 hrs. The duty pair and the cooks were the only ones up when it started.

Everyone else was still in the sack and could have been literally blown out of bed if the first rounds had been on target. Artillery rounds of several sizes arrived in the area. They landed long and wide and short and close, all about the gasthaus--almost at the same instant. After ten or so groups of shells landed, incoming fire thinned a bit. We could hear the guns firing to the northeast and southeast, but no one wanted to venture up and out.

The individual explosions got everyone awake. By the third group the basement was full of soldiers in all stages of undress. One hit could have had us all, still no one thought of moving out to seek safety elsewhere. Shortly the fire lifted off us it seemed to walk to the east and settle in the area of the infantry units.

The area to the south seemed to be catching the most pounding but the boxcars that were heading northwest seemed to pass just south of us. Though little was known of big artillery beyond our divisional 155's, there was no doubt that the

rumbles passing overhead were big. The ground vibration that followed shook the foundation and timbers of the gasthaus. The strike explosion to the west followed the ground vibration very quickly. They were landing to the north of Elsenborn or just beyond where the Battalion CP still was still located. We had our own problems, no one thought of trying to use the telephone to call Derrick.

I wasn't the first to arrive in the basement, nor was I the last. There was no conversation, no questions, and no smart talk. Everyone except Perrine arrived wearing his or someone else's helmet. Sam was bareheaded as usual, but I said nothing. I noted that he had taken the time to light up, for his pipe was in his hand and it was burning.

Capt. Feeney arrived. He had his usual sly grin mixed with a bit of a puzzled frown. He did not speak; he just walked over to Sam's operations map and stood staring at it, in disbelief. "Sam, if you would keep this map up to date, we'd know what's up." At least the CO now knew that he had arrived at the forward CP.

When not on the receiving end of this plastering, we could hear the muzzle blast reports of its dispatching. Most seemed to be coming from the northeast, very far away, but there was also artillery action to the south of east and to the southeast. There did not seem to be artillery action originating directly east of Rocherath-Krinkelt. After the first fifteen or twenty minutes, Sam started marking our operations map, making his estimate of origins (o's) and impacts (x's).

Before long Sam's activity drew a crowd, all in the area except Maj. Lovett. Norm sat silently on a chair which leaned back against the rock wall of the basement. He seemed to be hurting somewhere, his facial muscles were tight, his jaws rigid. His hands gripped the cross-bracing of the chair legs holding the chair tightly to his bottom or all of him to the chair. His eyes looked down at the floor paying no attention to the movement of feet as we moved about. I glanced at him

several times, nothing changed. I did not speak; his behavior did not bother me particularly but he definitely appeared out of it and certainly not himself. His personality had started to change almost immediately after our arrival in England and his effectiveness had slipped, in my opinion, to almost zero. He did not, and had not at any time since Aibel, resemble the sharp senior Captain that I worked to get into the unit and then recommended for promotion to Field Grade just before departing the States. I wasn't particularly worried, I felt sure he would snap out of it before long; but today he was meeting our situation in his own way. To me it was not an acceptable approach. He could not contribute in any way to either command or control.

In a letter written by Al Maurhoff to ENM after JRN's death - October 30, 1992:

Your Dad wrote that Maj. Lovett left that day because of battle fatigue.

The group continued to help Sam play "from where to where" until about 0550 hrs. when the old gasthaus took a direct hit. It shook, it vibrated, and it shook some more. Fortunately, it did not seem inclined to come apart. The dust of the ages past sifted down upon us from the floors above. Across our room, from ceiling to floor the particles slowly settled. The projectile penetrated the south wall, WHAM, passed through the structure and out the west wall, WHACK, and exploded apparently above the ground. Then, THUD, THUD, THUD, as the steel of the projectile slammed into the now damaged west wall. It was over in an instant--except for the dust.

Capt. Feeney was the first to find a voice. "Hope they don't get any shorter than that fellow."

Maj. Perrine countered, "Which side of the house is your duece-and-a-half

on?" I checked my two radios. They were still operational. The motor of my jeep was still running.

At 0630 hrs. or there about something bigger hit the south side of the roof. It must have been point detonating, the concussion was something else. It hurt the eyes, ears, throat, and chest. All felt crushed and then blown apart. Maj. Lovett's moan attracted several glances as he became rigid, then relaxed and slumped. There was no doubt of his extreme pain, but he did not appear to have been injured. Throughout, he did not release his grip on the chair leg braces. Parts of the structure continued to fall on the floor above our heads and the ancient dust continued to settle in the room.

Through the dust Capt. Feeney caught my eye. He grinned slightly, and spoke as I spoke, "What Price Clory?" We spoke together as one, as if we had repeatedly rehearsed for just this moment. Not so, we just had recalled the same scene of the World War I movie at the same time.

The excitement and pain of being hit and not hurt was soon over. There were more hits, but the shelling continued until about 0700 hrs. By then all the dust of years past in the gausthaus had been knocked loose and settled.

Capt. Eble wanted to know from no one in particular, "How do we know when this is over?"

Just then the phone tinkled a couple of times. Sgt. Maj. McFadden answered loudly, "Derrick, this is Derrick, go ahead." The line was dead. Both radios started playing band music, American band music. Female voices started reading articles from Stars and Stripes in German-accented English. The phone rang again. It was Derrick Able Blue (A Co.'s third platoon) checking the line. He was trying to call Derrick Able through Derrick Forward. Sgt. Maj. McFadden explained that we were at the end of the line. Derrick Forward could call through Derrick Able Blue to get

the companies, Derrick or Dauntless, but the Derrick switch was at Derrick Able Blue in Rocherath.

It was going to be an interesting day, maybe good, maybe bad, but interesting. Derrick Able Blue was with Derrick Able and they were both several miles to the northeast still supporting the 2nd Battalion 393rd Infantry attached to 395th RCT, as was Derrick Charlie. At least we had a line to the west side of Rocherath where Able Blue Rear was located and where Able Blue had been until four days earlier.

Some one asked all present, "How do we know when this is over?" and some one answered, "When it stops, when they quit shooting at us!"

At 0715 hrs. we heard artillery fire from somewhere to the southeast. Nothing came our way. The strike when we heard it seemed to be straight south, maybe a little to the southeast, west of south.

Sam marked his map. The guns he located east of Losheimergrahen and the impacts he placed directly west, on the village of Honsfeld. He announced to all present, "They will push west into the gap."

Capt. Feeney intercepted, "Pity the poor Danzig I&R Platoon."

Sam continued, "They should be able to get deep enough, to Butgenbach, to push us out of here." Pointing with his pipe stem, "They can keep the lake on their north and turn north around it. It's wide open, all we can do is go east or northwest. We can't back up fast enough to block them and they won't let us go east except as POW's."

My infantry expert had spoken. Little did I doubt his evaluation because it matched perfectly with my thoughts and subsequent actions of the 11th and 12th of December, when I got permission to pull Able and Baker back out of the forward areas leaving only a platoon in daily support of each regiment.

Hopefully Lt. Francis Hunt, in command of Baker Red Rear at Honsfeld was

on the road by now toward the Sourbrodt Forest, west of Elsenborn. His route would take him through Bullingen, Butgenback, Elsenborn, and Camp Elsenborn. If he got started on time, at least he would be moving west away from the shelling. My thoughts were positive, I considered Hunt a resourceful young officer and I had no doubts that he would lead Baker Rear to Camp Elsenborn where Lt. McLean would fit him into the rear camp of Derrick. I then remembered that Lt. McLean was with us at Derrick Forward where he wasn't needed.

This thinking ended when Capt. Eble yelled, "Hey Tom. You're the chief spook of this organization, what do you read into this steel shower bath?"

Capt. Feeney, flashing his knowing grin, "Well-er-a, G-2, last night said that there was a horse drawn 105 battery across from the 2nd Battalion 394th, a line crosser report. He didn't say anything about ash cans, though." The room was quiet again.

Sgt. Edwin Brown, Maj. Perrine's number one Tech. Sgt. spoke for the first time, "I'm getting out of here, this hole will attract potato mashers."

Another voice, "There's no Hun near here yet is there?"

Sgt. Brown, "You don't know, maybe they started walking a couple of hours before they started shooting. I'm getting outside so I can shoot back." The bolt of his carbine clicked and snapped as he loaded it while moving towards the stairs.

All of us but the two majors started moving around. Sam continued to observe his map and smoke his pipe. Norm just sat on the leaned back chair. Sgt. Brown's outburst had not phased either of them.

I spoke to Capt. Feeney, "Tom, if it's light enough, why don't you and Sgt. Baehr take a patrol out? See what's left of our vehicles."

Capt. Feeney, "Sure, why not?"

"Choose a couple of volunteers, I'll be your first. I tend to agree with Sgt.

Brown, I'd rather be on top of the ground when they get here."

Capt. Feeney, "When who gets here?"

Outside it was barely daylight, the fog was about ten feet above the ground and met the ground about a hundred yards in front of where ever you looked. The air, what there was of it smelled of exploded explosives and moldy organic mud. I headed for my jeep to get our M-1 rifle. It belonged to the three of us; my driver Botti, the radio operator, and me. I claimed it to be mine because Tosk kept it clean and ready for use. Almost all officers and NCO's carried M-1's when exposed. It was generally accepted as fact, that to appear different to the German attracted his attention and his bullets. Lots of them, usually.

It didn't take long to establish that we had been hit, but good. All except two of our vehicles, mine and the 1st Sgt.'s 3/4 ton, had some damage and at least one flat tire. However, no motors had been hit, no hoses cut, therefore no lost antifreeze, and no gasoline line tanks punctured. Given time we could get them all moving without help, except for tires. There were several more flats on the ground than usable spares present. CWO Hayes would have to use his magic to help. He was scheduled to open a forward support motor pool at Able Blue on the west side of Rocherath by 0700 hrs. this day. If he were ready for customers our business would give him a good send off. For sure, CWO Hayes would have good tires, tubes, jacks, and mechanics. He would make short work of fixing us up. If only we could get word to him. Should I go back in and try to call?

So much for thinking and planning of how I would get help from CWO Hayes. I heard Capt. Feeney call, "Col.-Sir." I looked with my eyes, but tried not to move my body in his direction. He motioned for me to close and disappeared into the fog to the south.

I followed, trying not to appear to be reacting to his call. I knew I'd have to

talk to Tom and convince him that his "Colonel-Sir-ing" could get me killed--dead. It would be much better to call me "Bob" or "dummy" or "stupid," but yelling out my rank, in my opinion, could quickly make it very useless to me and to posterity. It never once occurred to me, that if I couldn't see the enemy, they couldn't see me. I was to learn this later, almost.

I moved west, away from Capt. Fenney and then worked my way toward the area where he had disappeared into the fog. I practiced my own private version of evasive action.

When I reached Capt. Tom, he was just standing, observing a scene to his immediate front. It was an up-ended 105mm American howitzer, B-370-2. What was B Battery doing in this area? Lost? A sudden shift, or the execution of one of General Black's well kept secrets?

Several members of its crew were moving silently about digging, filling sand bags with muddy snow earth, or carrying things from here to there. They appeared stunned; they paid us no never mind nor acknowledged our presence.

Capt. Feeney spoke to one soldier. "Soldier, where is your CP?"

Without a sound, or a word, he looked at us, then pointed to the west into the fog. Tom said thanks and we moved off, headed west.

At the CP we met the Battery ExO. He was busy with the wounded. Five were wrapped up and lying stretched out more or less side by side. Two were sitting propped up each against a tree trunk. Two aid men were working deliberately and carefully among them.

The ExO offered the information that the Battery CO had headed to the 393rd Regiment CP in Krinkelt to secure help. The battery was without communications. In the meantime he was getting ready to shoot.

I told him the jeep motor he could hear to the north about 300 yards was

mine and when I left it we had wire to Dauntless through Derrick at Elsenborn. If he could get wire to us he might be able to get through to his battalion. In any event he and his CO were welcome to use our lines and phones as we wouldn't be needing them.

"We are pulling out, an engineer CP has no business under the cannon's muzzle."

Capt. Feeney and I honed in on the jeep's motor and upon arrival I instructed the Sgt. Major to contact the Assistant Division Engineer (ADE) at Dauntless and tell him that the unit on our right had casualties and damage that would require assistance to repair.

Before the Sgt. Major could react the telephone rang, and rang with authority. It was CWO Hayes just across town to the west. He asked for Capt. Feeney, stating that Dauntless-Two, Lt. Col. St. Clair, was urgently trying to contact him. The Sgt. Major acknowledged that Capt. Feeney was present to connect him to Dauntless-Two. He handed the phone to Capt. Feeney.

There was a period of time of silence, then Capt. Feeney spoke: "Derrick-Two speaking, go ahead Dauntless-Two." A perplexed look came on Capt. Feeney's face. He looked at me, a look of disbelief, disgust and perplexity all at once. Then he said, "We did that yesterday. We moved it to Derrick-Four's area west of Elsenborn. I'll check into that immediately--personally. It is regrettable that," he paused for the right phrase, "you have to personally get involved in my housekeeping."

I became all ears. I wondered if St. Clair had become Division Police Officer again, as he had done a couple of times at Maxey. I couldn't wait for Capt. Feeney to finish. He had stopped talking. Now all he was doing was listening, saying "Yes Sir" and listening some more. When he finally handed the phone back to the Sgt. Major I said, "In a combat situation, I think you should drop the Sir, a simple yes

should suffice. Capt. Feeney, "With Lt. Col. St. Clair one doesn't take chances."

"Well, what's his gripe today, newspapers in the company street?"

Capt. Feeney, " Well no, not exactly, but you're close. He personally inspected the division map building that we closed out in Butgenbach yesterday and moved to Camp Elsenborn. He says that we left classified trash about everywhere in the building. He wants it cleaned up at once and I am to report to him when it's finished so that he can reinspect. He also stated he would have to make a full report to the Chief of Staff and no doubt General Lauer would hear about it."

I was hot, hot enough to melt the snow outside. Hot enough to ride in my jeep with the windshield down without my truck Mackinaw. I was burning.

"I wonder if he knows he's in a war zone and the division just took a hell of a shelling!"

December 16, 1944

Now What?

Trip to 393rd Infantry--instructions to Capt. Eble to fall back to Elsenborn.

Trip to the companies--instructions to the 1st Sergeants to get ready to fight, follow the SOP, move on Trigger.

Return trip to 393rd Infantry.

On the evening of December 16th at about 2000 hrs. I arrived at the Headquarters of the 99th Division in Butgenbach. I entered the G-3 operations room and almost immediately was inundated with questions about the happenings of the day. Finally, Lt. Col. Davidson took me in hand and debriefed me. While this activity was going on, someone pressed a cold beef sandwich and a cup of coffee into my hands. Since I had not eaten since before 0600 hrs. that day and had been too

occupied to miss the food I should have eaten, I suddenly became so weary and weak and famished that Lt. Col. Davison stopped talking to me until I had finished eating.

Get everything out tonight that you can.

Make ready for infantry use.

Leave C Co. alone. Take the platoon from the 2nd Battalion of 393rd Infantry, Co. A and Co. B, and scrape up H/S and assemble at Krinkelt. (At least 250 men.)

Move north and east of the 23rd, dig in to defend the south, east, and north.

Lt. Col. Scott to provide wire from the 3rd Battalion to the southwest.

December 17, 1944

Maj. Sam Perrine (Bn S-3) KIA northeast of Krinkelt

Capt. Tom Feeney (Bn S-2) KIA around Bullingen

Moved at 1300 hrs. by truck to selected dismount and then hiked to position without incident. Plenty of automatic weapons, ammo.

Only two jeeps left. All wheels were to move back to Krinkelt and then to Sourbrodt Forest.

I went looking for Lt. Col. Scott to get either wire or a radio since mine couldn't talk to the infantry. The 393rd Infantry wasn't where he left them the day before. I could not get across the Krinkelt main street. German tank with bonfire. This story is told on the documentary, The Battle for Elsenborn Ridge. The tank pulled up and we left to the north.

Spent nearly four hours getting from Krinkelt back to Butgenbach and the Division CP. Explained commo problem to CO and lack of FO for artillery.

Contacted the 395th on the move to get wire or a radio to Derrick.

I'm in Butgenbach. Harverstick, Wasko, and Eble are west of Rath Hill and

no communication. The 3rd Battalion of the 23rd Infantry prevented withdrawal to the west. The 1st battalion of the 395th took their withdrawal under fire. So Harverstick withdrew to the northeast, then west to the attack road of December 13th and came south to the 2nd Infantry Division straggler line. There Gen. Walter Robertson (CC, 2nd Infantry Division) happened upon them and contacted Gen. Lauer. Gen. Lauer directed their return to Elsenborn on foot cross-country.

In a letter written by Lt. Bob Bass, C Co., to his father, Henry Bass - January 5, 1945 - copy given to JRN:

Finally we got an order for our whole battalion to retire to a little town in the rear and reorganize as an infantry battalion. We moved back, dropped all of our engineer tools and equipment, left our trucks, put our machine guns and rifles on our back, and after dark marched up into the line as infantry. We were supposed to have tied in on our right and left flanks with infantry units of our own division. But we never saw another American unit. For two days and nights we sat on the side a hill waiting for a German attack. We could hear fighting on both sides of us and in our rear, and we couldn't figure out what was going on. We still didn't know the Germans had opened a counter-offensive. Finally, since we had no communication with anyone, nor had we for two days, and since we could not find our own infantry units which we were supposed to tie into, our battalion commander (whom you know) led us out of this hole down through a valley and on to the rear. The Germans never knew we were on the side of that hill. They had us practically surrounded, and if they had known we were there, it wouldn't have taken much to fix us. We hadn't had one bite of food in over two days and had just enough ammunition to fill our guns. We had to march up there and therefore couldn't carry much with us other than our weapons. We were supposed to have been supplied, but no one knew where we were.

The division had our battalion up for lost, and, as we came marching through the small American held town, a Chaplain rushed out and asked what unit we were. When my company commander said, "The 324th Engineers", this Chaplain said "Thank God".

We marched on for a day and finally reached the little village

where we had been staying. There for the first time, we found out about the enemy offensive. We ate our first meal in three days, we received a new complement of ammunition, and were sent right back to the line. This time, however, we tied right in with an infantry unit on our right and the one on our left. We were told to dig in defensive positions and get ready for an enemy armored attack.

My efforts to get east having proved futile, I returned to Dauntless Headquarters where Capt. Bishop told me that my lost were safely in Elsenborn and that I should get there pronto.

Col. Norman wanted to know if I could get any engineer digging equipment ready to go. Like an air compressor. My answer was, "How about three or four?" He then explained the role I would play in preparing four battalion positions for 200 men each.

December 18, 1944

Return to Elsenborn

In a letter written by Frank Kyser to ENM after JRN's death - October 22, 1992:

On December 18, 1944, in the late afternoon, A and B Co.'s were coming back from a forward position in the front lines to dig in on Elsenborn Ridge to form a new line. The Colonel was real happy because he thought we were surrounded up front. Seeing the Colonel in a doorway talking to two company commanders, I called out and said "Colonel, what in the H— is coming off?" Being out of touch we didn't realize how serious the whole thing was. The Colonel said, "I Don't know." I asked the Colonel (years later) if he happened to remember that. He said, yes, but he hadn't told the whole story. He very well knew what was going on and that we were in for some hard times.

December 19, 1944

Fortify the Ridge

All four of the air compressors were moved from the Sourbrodt Forest to Elsenborn and the forward slope of the Elsenborn Ridge was fortified. Gen. Lauer visited the site during the afternoon and told me we would revert to the 393rd Infantry control upon completion. I could have either the right or the left position. I chose the left position on the north. So Lt. Col. Jack Allen's 3rd Battalion would be on my right, but he wasn't clear of Krinkelt yet.

December 20, 1944

Iron Men

That's how the 324th ECB became infantry and became part of the battle on the 20th of December.

In a letter written by MG (Ret.) Walter Lauer to JRN - January 16, 1951:

The elan, the esprit-de-corps, the downright unity of purpose which permeated all in the old organization, and the do-or-die determination with which they faced every problem, made my service with them something never-to-be-forgotten. ...

I referred to your old outfit—the 324th Combat Engineers in the history as "Iron men who could double on cold steel" and make reference to them as my 10th Infantry Battalion. That credit belongs to you Neale, and no one else.

In a letter written by Lt. Bob Bass, C Co., to his father, Henry Bass - January 5, 1945 - copy given to JRN:

Sure enough, we had only been in these positions a day and then came the German tanks followed by their infantry. Their main thrust was in our own sector. Our own small arms fire stopped the infantry, but those tanks kept coming. There was an artillery forward observer with

us and he was trying to adjust his fire on these tanks. I don't imagine a bunch of engineers ever said quite so many prayers as we did in those few minutes, when the German tanks were almost upon us before the artillery observer could get his fire on them. The tanks were less than 200 yards from us when our artillery finally began hitting around them. Dad, remember about the terrible barrage that I told you about when I was in OCS at Ft. Sill, layed down by 105 mm artillery pieces. Well, that barrage was child's play compared to the barrage the good old American artillery put on those attacking German Tiger tanks. I can't tell you how many tanks or Germans that were knocked out in front of our positions that night but they were really stacked up. What few tanks weren't knocked out, turned tail and fled. All night long we could hear the wounded Germans out in front of us hollering "surrender".

In a letter written by JRN to Frank Kyser - August 2, 1988:

Capt. Harverstick, "Col. Sir, where's our next defensive line to be?"

"Capt., how well do you swim?"

"That bad?"

"That bad."

"Do we have any artillery this time?"

"Not yet. We're tied in but there is a shortage of FO's. You may have to stay here without help."

"So what's new?" Capt. Harverstick left the CP.

Capt. Eble, "You think we'll go all the way to England if they push us out of here?"

"Not really. More likely, we'll see Germany protected by German rifles."

Capt. Robert Fowler arrived. "Col. Neale, where is Col. Neale?"

"If you yell a little louder the Germans will know where I am. I'm Derrick-Six or "the Rig."

"I'm your temporary FO. I'm ExO of B Battery but A Battery is in support of you."

"I don't care if it's A, B, or C. Get up to the ridge and get started."

Softly, "Colonel. I said I'm only the temporary FO. A lieutenant will be along shortly."

"Get up there and get started. You're it "till he comes or you get dead!"

"Colonel, you're always cheerful."

Lt. William Markin and Sgt. Francis Gramlich and a radio operator did not arrive until after the first German attack at about 1100 hrs. so Capt. Fowler got to shoot. I believe he stopped three tanks on the north approach, on the seam between the 394th Infantry and the 324th CEB. Capt. Fowler exchanged places with the lieutenant and his team and rejoined his battery in the woods west of Elsenborn.

(Appendix E).

In Conclusion

In a letter written by Shipman Winter to his parents - January 4, 1945 - copy given to JRN:

I don't know whether you've heard yet or not that Col. Neale has been decorated twice, the Silver Star for getting us out of a tight spot behind German lines and the Bronze Star for something else I haven't heard about. He came by my hole a couple of times during an attack the Germans were making and although there was intermittent artillery fire he stood around and told us the situation and how things were going and then whenever he came by he would say, "Was Lawrence ever like this?" I had to admit that that Belgium hill had something Lawrence never had even on the Fourth of July.

In a letter written by Lt. Bob Bass, C Co., to his father, Henry Bass - January 5, 1945 - copy given to JRN:

Col. Neale received the Silver and Bronze Star for the job his engineers did. During one of our dark moments just after the first German tank attack, I was talking with Col. Neale, and he told me that General Eisenhower was throwing 30 American divisions into the big gap to stop the German drive. An infantry officer standing near us overheard and said, "What the hell are they throwing 30 divisions in

for, when they've got engineers?"

In a letter written by JRN to Shipman Winter's parents - February 9, 1945:

You will have to pardon my lack of letter writing but these 600 or so kids of mine keep me just a shade busy, and then there is a little matter of Hun fighting that must be done each day to get the war on with.

Up to now I've found this war up to all of my expectations and more. There are no words to describe it. It's too horrible during the periods of violent contact and the boredom of the quiet periods is unbearable.

By now you undoubtedly know more about me and my outfit than I do because you get to see it through the eyes of the men in it. A situation that never quite develops for a commander. Also the papers at home picture us as the war correspondents see us and we seldom get their views.

Censorship also makes letter writing hard. The enlisted man usually can write more because some officer takes the responsibility for passing it, but the officer would not write the information himself and censor it with his own signature.

So far throughout the winter with the exception of a few days in December the three worst enemies in the order of the worstness are 1) Mud - 2) Bitter Cold - 3) The Hun. Mud makes supply problems which no book exists to help solve. The cold freezes men to a numbness which effects their will to react and the Hun harasses you with a little steel. We know how to minimize the effect of the Hun steel, but you don't minimize the other two. You just push against them with the puny strength of men and hope for a change.

Your boy is in the best of health as I write. I saw him this afternoon working in a mine field with the rest of his squad. I can always spot him by the rig he has made himself to keep warm. Different men seem to get cold in different spots and each has tried to insulate the critical area. His is the back of his neck and his ears. The snood he has installed on his helmet is quite a contrivance.

In a letter written by JRN to his younger sister, Maryanne - March 24, 1945:

We crossed the Rhine among the first units and have been steadily pushing since. It seems to me we have the Jerry whipped but he doesn't seem to know it. They fight doggedly on, and on for no apparent reason and with no apparent hope.

Last night the radio was jammed with the accounts of Montgomery crossing the Rhine. I'll say it was spectacular to no end. The bridge I crossed on was hit three times, so my crossing was just as exciting to me.

We have built several bridges lately which makes us feel like engineers. Jerry has been blowing up every bridge in sight and we restore the ones we need. It doesn't do him much good but he does tear up his own country with the ease he tore up all the other countries of Europe.

Our artillery does a good job of carving up Germany. Every town we pass through is in shambles. I'm glad we fight this war in Germany now and doubly glad we don't fight it in America.

Well I must get on with my work. Seems that duty calls more and more all the time. I just get a moment here and there for myself. Well, keep the mail coming. I may be slow in answering, but I certainly do enjoy getting them. Love, Bud.

Lawton Constitution article (Appendix A) - September 23, 1990:

After the Battle of the Bulge, the 99th joined in the drive to the Rhine, and it became the first full division to cross the river at Remagen. The division then was sent to the Ruhr Pocket before before being sent south to join George S. Patton's Third Army.

It was at the breakout from the Remagen bridgehead that Neale won a notoriety of sorts. The division commander had asked if the Wied River could be waded, so Neale found out by taking off his coat and wading out into the stream while Germans sniped from the high ground on the other side.

"You could send out a bunch of people or you could do it

yourself," Neale said. "I wasn't very busy at the time, so I did it." The stream, it turned out, was easily fordable.

In a letter written by Alex Lindner to JRN - May 21, 1984:

... you were only hard to live with during combat, the rest of the time you were fine.

In a letter written by Al Maurhoff to JRN - May 14, 1990:

... I want to thank you, Col. Neale, for your excellent leadership through all those hard times, the Bulge, Rhine Valley, etc. The morale of the men with me was good. We all had confidence in a well organized engineer battalion. The only time we felt shook up was when you were missing the morning the Bulge started. I was at the forward CP east of Krinkelt in the house standing by itself. We had been shelled, one jeep disabled. One of the Lt.'s was shook up so a Chaplain (Maj. Koons) took over, successfully showing us back to Elsenborn. It was sure good to see you each night as your jeep appeared out on Elsenborn Ridge as we did our best to hold that mile front as the Jerries shelled. Then too, your jeep made my job as radio operator easier. I could use the battery to crank the generator for the messages instead of hand cranking in our fox hole.

In a letter written by Al Maurhoff to ENM after JRN's death - October 30, 1992:

December 17th through the 25th your Dad, with his driver and radio operator, drove to my fox hole on the front lines, through the heaviest shell fire of WWII, to be with his men through the night--minus 13 degrees. He could have stayed in Elsenborn in a nice warm house. He risked his life many times for his men--I am proud to have known him.

In a letter written by Aaron Lander to ENM after JRN's death - November 5, 1992:

Your father was a fine gentleman and I valued our friendship. I often think of "Bob" walking on snowy, icy hills on the outskirts of

Elsenborn with a carbine strapped over his shoulder.

In a letter written by JRN to Joyce - July 10, 1945 - Dettlebach, Germany:

The weather has finally obliged with two days of sunshine and my sinuses decided they should have flared up when the weather was bad, so now they have really taken off. Sure is funny to have a nasty runny nose on a beautiful warm day. Guess I'll live through.

Honey, there isn't a thing to say except that

I love you.

I love Butch.

I love Pam.

Then I start over.

I love you. Bob

Closing thoughts - EMN

I have always been mindful of the fact that had a German bullet taken him, I would never have been born. It would be over five years from the date of this last letter before I arrived. As I was growing up he taught me the value of family, the necessity of truth, the merit of hard work, the treasure of love, and the honor of duty. During his last years he taught me courage, dignity, and grace.

Yes, Botti--he was always teaching.

Appendix

- A - The Lawton Constitution article - September 23, 1990
 "Battle Babies' set return to Europe"
- B - Two Checkerboard articles - January 12, 1944
 "324th Engineer Battalion Employs Two Tons Explosives to Clear Water Way for Denison Dam"
 "Col. Stenzel Starts New Duties at Ft. Lewis. Wash"
- C - "Where Were You?" map - source unknown
- D - Alex Lindner's strip map
- E - Ed Dickey's photos - Destroyed German tanks
- F - Four Stars and Stripes articles
 "Brunt of Nazi Attack Taken by 'Raw' Infantry"
 January 3, 1945
 "324th Engrs. Demonstrate Combat Skill"
 February 3, 1945
 "99th Div. Holds Hot Corner Against Five Nazi Divisions"
 date unknown
 "99th Doggies Smash Way To Dig In On Rhine Banks"
 March 10, 1945

'Battle Babies' set return to Europe

By STEPHEN ROBERTSON/Staff writer

Veterans of the 99th Infantry Division, which was almost ignored in the earliest accounts of the Battle of the Bulge, will return to Europe next month to install permanent reminders of the "Battle Babies" of World War II.

Retired Col. Justice "Bob" Neale of Lawton will be on hand to take part in special ceremonies and to act as a technical adviser for a video about the Battle of the Bulge.

Neale, who was division engineer and commander of the 324th Combat Engineer Battalion with the division, will attend a memorial service in the Henri-Chapelle Cemetery, where 288 members of the division are buried, and will join about 100 veterans in Krinkelt, Germany, on Oct. 6 for dedication of a monument to the men who died in fighting from Dec. 16, 1944, to Feb. 1, 1945. The names of the 3,400 who were killed or missing in action will be inscribed on the monument.

The veterans also will place a plaque on the west abutment of the Remagen Bridge, which the unit crossed to become the first division to cross the Rhine.

Neale will act as an adviser to Jim McIlroy, past president of the 99th Infantry Division Association and head of the association's video history effort, in locating battlefield sites for the video crew that is putting together a documentary.

Neale is no stranger to the battlefield, having visited the area several times since World War II. But the trip holds hope of allowing him to see part of the battlefield — along the Elsenborn Ridge — that has previously been off limits because it's in an impact area used by the Belgian Army artillery.

The 99th went into action in November, and units were assigned to an attack against the Siegfried Line in the middle of December. It was during that attack that the German counteroffensive struck south of the division.

Neale's engineer battalion was helping a combat team eliminate a series of pillboxes when the German attack struck. The division pulled back to defensive positions and became the north shoulder of the "bulge," withstanding the German onslaught until

the counterattack was broken and the Americans pressed forward again.

Neale said the division commander always insisted that the 99th dig in and that defense positions be prepared, which proved an asset when the Germans attacked.

"We weren't on top of the ground like everybody else," he said.

The weather was miserably cold, and it's the weather that Neale remembers most.

"We could handle the Germans. It was handling the weather that was killing us. I think most all of the men I lost from the line were foot casualties," he said.

The frigid weather did have its good points, Neale said. A hard freeze allowed some tanks to escape mud they'd been trapped in. The benefits, however, weren't recognized by the infantry.

"Anybody who was living out in it didn't appreciate it," Neale said.

After the Battle of the Bulge, the 99th joined in the drive to the Rhine, and it became the first full division to cross the river at Remagen. The division then was sent into the Ruhr Pocket before being sent south to join Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army.

It was at the breakout from the Remagen bridgehead that Neale won a notoriety of sorts. The division commander had asked if the Wied River could be waded, so Neale found out by taking off his coat and wading into the stream while Germans sniped from the high ground on the other side.

"You could send out a bunch of people or you could do it yourself," Neale said. "I wasn't very busy at that time, so I did it." The stream, it turned out, was easily fordable.

Next month's monument dedication and the video documentary also are opportunities for the veterans to continue to set straight their record.

The problem had begun during the Battle of the Bulge when folks back home were in the dark about the 99th. The division had been on the Secret List, which meant it couldn't be mentioned in news dispatches. Ordinarily, units were taken off the list when they had made contact with the enemy. The 99th, however, remained on the list until Jan. 3, 1945, more than two weeks after the beginning of the battle and after the stand on Elsenborn Ridge.



Randy Stotler/staff

Retired Col. Justice "Bob" Neale holds a map of the Battle of the Bulge area in which the 99th Infantry Division fought. Neale will revisit the battlefield area on a trip to Europe.

The division's bad luck continued after the war when Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote, based on inaccurate First Army reports, that the 99th Division was "rapidly forced back in confusion."

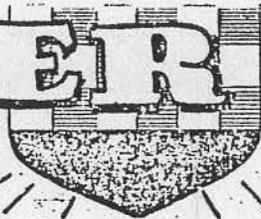
The division commander wrote to Eisenhower, and Eisenhower ordered that all future printings of the book be revised.

Recent histories have been more

accurate, Neale said, in reflecting the combat record of the division. The division's own documentary will feature footage of the modern battlefield as well as interviews with division soldiers — including Neale — about the Battle of the Bulge.

"History took off on the wrong foot, and it's taken us about 40 years to straighten it out," he said.

CHECKER BOARD



L. 2 99TH INFANTRY DIVISION, CAMP MAXEY, TEX., WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1944

NO. 7

324th Engineer Battalion Employs Two Tons Explosives to Clear Water Way for Denison Dam

Col. Stenzel Starts New Duties at Ft. Lewis, Wash.

Lt. Col. Roland Stenzel, commanding officer of the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion, has left the 99th Division to begin his duties as head of the 1152d Engineer Combat Group at Ft. Lewis, Wash. The post calls for the rank of full colonel.

Maj. Justice R. Neale is the 324th Engineers new commanding officer.

Officers and enlisted men were sorry to see Col. Stenzel leave and at the same time were glad that his work with the Engineer Battalion had been so excellent that he was given the new assignment.

Col. Stenzel won the admiration of his men when he took seven cadre officers, 17 "brand new" second lieutenants and 61 non-coms and about 700 recently inducted soldiers and organized and trained them into an efficient engineer-combat unit.

As one soldier stated it—"Col. Stenzel was an exemplary leader in every respect. He furnished the inspiration and the guidance that has permitted this Battalion to take its place in a Division rated as excellent."

Three Companies Demolish 28 Homes, Bridges, Abutments

Give an engineer some dynamite, an objective on which to use it, and you'll have a happy and excited soldier.

That in text was the order Maj. Justice R. Neale, Commanding Officer of the 324th Engineer Battalion, gave his men a few days ago in the announcement that three companies would use two tons of explosives to clear the waterway of the recently-completed Denison Dam.

Specifically, the outfits were assigned the demolition of 28 five-room concrete houses and an old bridge.

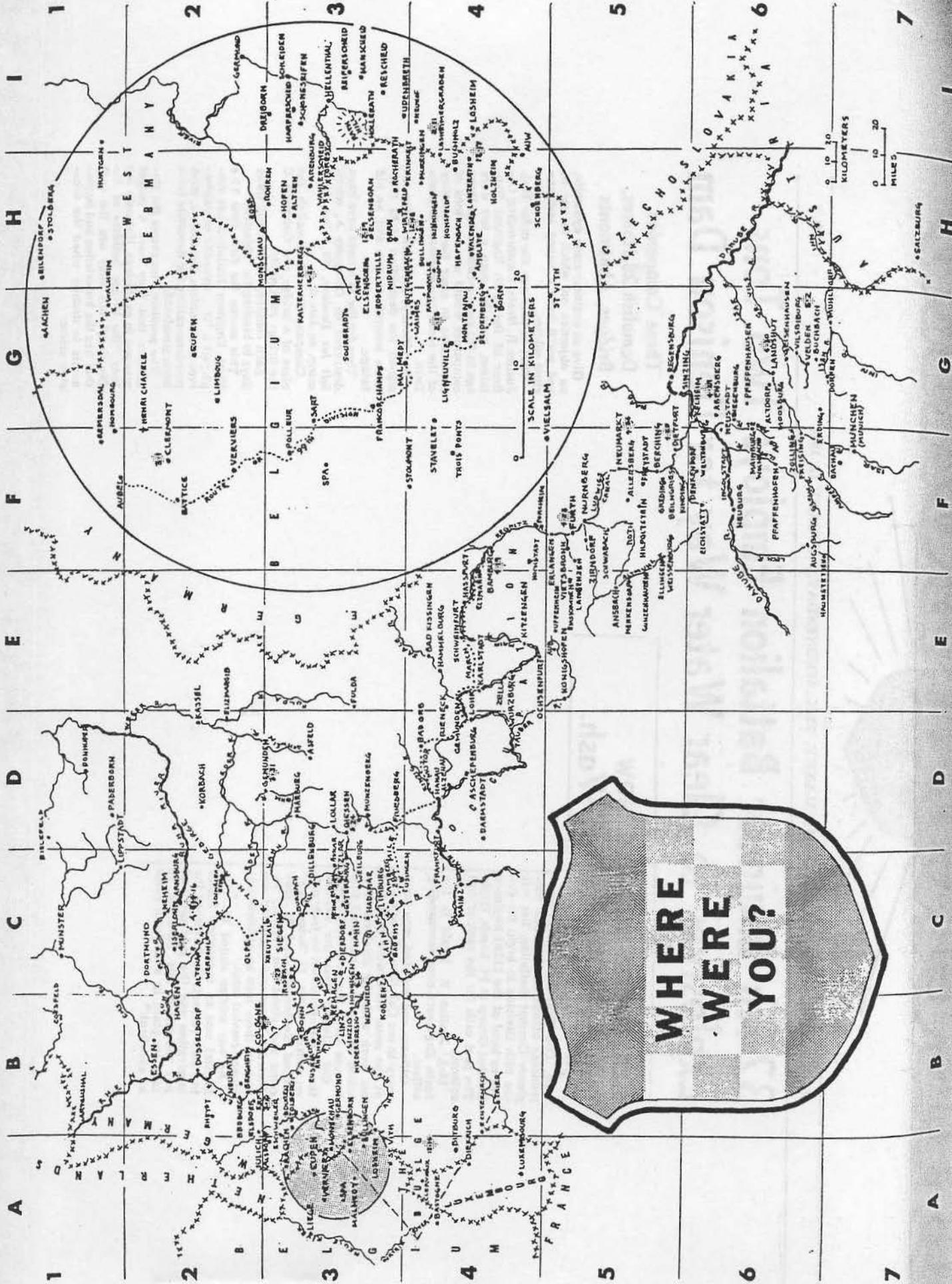
Thus far the 28 houses have been destroyed by Company A, which left for Denison, 60 miles from camp, on Jan. 6.

Company B will demolish the piers of a bridge and Company C the bridge abutments.

Each company is devoting three days to blasting its "objective."

This marks the first time the 324th Engineer Battalion has employed a large quantity of explosives in a problem. Heretofore, most problems calling for dynamite have been simulated.

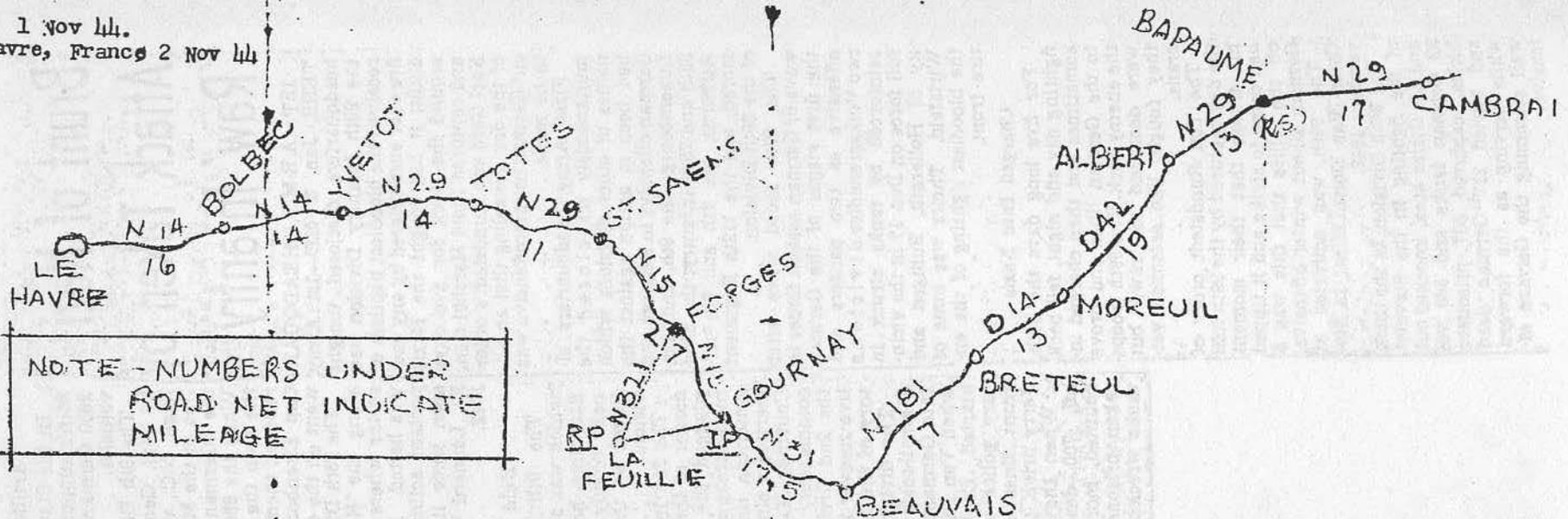
The problem also shows the Engineers that they have a potent weapon in explosives. Not only are they "the bridge builders of the Division," but they are the unit that has the knowledge and implements to destroy when the occasion arises.



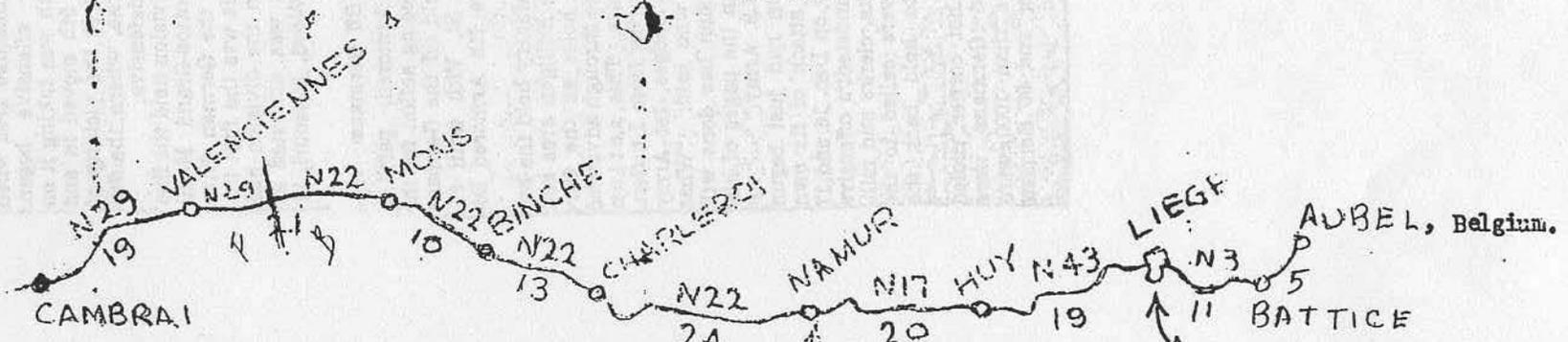
**WHERE
WERE
YOU?**

2

D
 left England 1 Nov 44.
 arrived Le Havre, France 2 Nov 44



NOTE - NUMBERS UNDER
 ROAD NET INDICATE
 MILEAGE



TRAFFIC HEADQUARTERS
 FIRST U.S. ARMY
 ROUTE FROM LE HAVRE TO AUBEL
 TOTAL DISTANCE 320.5 MI
 OVERLAY MICELIN MAP 1:1,000,000
 1 NOV 1944

BLACKOUT
 BEGINS

CAT EYE
 LIGHT

Brunt of Nazi Attack Taken by 'Raw' Infantry

1ST ARMY HEADQUARTERS, Jan. 3. (U.P.)—1st Army headquarters disclosed tonight the 99th Infantry Division had received the bloodiest baptism of fire ever encountered by any raw outfit; it had fought the Nazis around the clock for five days and captured Field Marshal Gen. Karl Gerd von Rundstedt's order of the day, revealing that an all-out German counteroffensive was to be made.

First Army headquarters simultaneously disclosed the names of other divisions which had been in action against the German offensive in Belgium and Luxembourg—the 9th, 2nd, 1st, 30th and 75th Infantry; the 82nd Airborne; the 7th and 9th Armored, and the 112th Regiment of the 28th Division.

The 99th faced wave after wave of German assault forces in the first stages of the German offensive as two panzers and two Volksgrenadier divisions reinforced by tanks struck in full force on Dec. 17 in the vicinity of Hollerath, Bulligen and Wirtsfeld. There was some of the bloodiest fighting of the entire front.

Charged into Nazis

For five long days the 99th, fighting day and night, fell back, sometimes and then charged into the German lines and drove the enemy back. The 99th troops were described as "raw," but they fought like seasoned veterans.

The Von Rundstedt order of the day captured by the 99th told his troops that their moment had come to strike and it tipped off the Allies that this was a German all-out winter offensive.

The 99th was activated at Camp Van Dorn, Miss., in November, 1942.

The 30th Division, in the thick of the fighting in the Stavelot and La Gleize area, knocked out 82 German tanks and 360 vehicles, captured 337 prisoners and buried 117 German dead while serving as the forward wall stemming the German offensive.

Artillery Kills 2000

In the Stavelot area alone the 30th's supporting artillery killed 2000 Germans, and destroyed 200 vehicles.

The 9th Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Louis Craig Raleigh, N.C., was hurled into the line in the Monschau area when the German offensive began. When the 99th was taking it on the chin the 9th moved in and relieved them in the vicinity of Cap. Elsenborn, where the 9th went on the defensive.

The 75th Division held the line along the Hotton-Grand Menil sector where the German drive was halted. It was the first important action the division had seen since it was activated at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, in 1942.

Held Off Germans

The 9th Armored, part of which was seeing action for the first time, held off the Germans near bloody St. Vith until relieved by the 7th Armored Division.

The 2nd Infantry held the hot corner of the Bulligen area and plugged the holes as the Germans streamed through advanced American units. This action merited a citation from Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges, 1st Army commander, who said: "What the 2nd Division has done will live forever in the pages of history of the U.S. Army."

The division had just begun a small-scale attack of its own into Germany on Dec. 16 and 17 when Von Rundstedt's offensive started. Cooks, clerks and military police were called to the front lines to hold back the Jerry drive.

When the hot corner cooled off, 700 dead Germans were counted, more than 1000 were taken prisoner and 50 German tanks wrecked.

E

324th Engrs. Demonstrate Combat Skill

WITH 99TH INF. DIV.—When the Engineers have to throw down their tools of trade and pick up rifles, you may be sure that the "going" is getting rough for the regular doughs and other fighting GIs. They are Engineers, yes—bridge builders, road builders, minefield builders—but these American "airy ears" can do a job of fighting when they're called. And that's what they did during the 99th division's gallant stand against the German onslaught into Belgium.

Ten days after the combat engineers went into action—that is, A and B companies of the 324th Eng. Bn.—their total score against the enemy was roughly 400 Germans killed, scores of enemy guns and pill-boxes knocked out and, paradoxically enough, two Nazi prisoners. They had no time for prisoners. They were too busy fighting.

The action began around the Engineer CP east of Kringelt, Belgium, on 16 December. The Americans retired under a furious German artillery assault. They arrived at Elsenborn on the morning of the 19th with only weapons, ammunition and the clothes on their backs and began at once to dig in positions for the defending infantry.

Plans Changed

A change of plans came in that night and the Engineers again reverted to doughboys and began to dig in their own positions two miles southeast of Elsenborn.

On the morning of the 20th as the fog lifted over the field ahead of them, they saw a patrol of 20 men wearing U.S. uniforms. Lt. Col. Justice R. Neale, of Oberlin, Kan., soon ascertained there was something wrong in Jerryland. The Engineers let 'em have it and all of the 20 went down.

The Germans' real attack began about noon when 1/Sgt. Gerald F. Scott, of Waldo, Ark. spotted eight self-propelled guns behind some hedgerows with a large force of Nazis climbing onto them. The Engineers' small arms fire at 500 yards range made the Jerry riflemen dismount.

At this point, Capt. Robert G. Fowler, of Watertown, N.Y., and Lt. Wm. D. Markin, of Oklahoma City, both with the 370th FA and acting as forward observers for the Engineers, got busy. They turned the massed fire of their artillery on the enemy guns and with the first 12 rounds set three of the guns a-fire and threw up another, cutting Jerry's 88 fire down 50 percent. Two of the remaining German guns fled and two of them hid nearby. Lt. Markin called for volunteers to go after the hidden guns with a bazooka, and from the ranks stepped Pvt. John S. McKuen, of Park Falls, Wis., and T/4 Joseph C. Kluepfel of Long Island, N.Y. They crawled out to meet the threat and stopped the first gun in its tracks. But they didn't stop its fire. Two of the Americans were killed.

No Support

Lt. Charles Sissel, of Commerce, Texas, ran amid streams of bullet gun traces, shouting, "We're holding 'em—but for God's sake, get us artillery!"

They got it. The artillery support that night consisted of 420 rounds per minute for 10 minutes and 200 rounds per minute for an additional 10 minutes—or approximately 7,000 rounds in 20 minutes by 16 artillery batteries on a target area 300 by 400 yards. And the two Engineer companies had directed the fire of 15,000 rounds of ammunition, themselves—most of it within a half-hour period.

The Jerries were stopped.

99th Div. Holds Hot Corner Against Five Nazi Divisions

WITH 99th INF. DIV.—For two days the 99th stood alone on a hot corner in front of Elsenborn while Von Rundstedt pounded away with five divisions during the battle of the bulge.

Forward companies were overrun and surrounded, but they kept fighting. Cooks, KPs, UPS clerks—everybody who could shoot—went into the frontlines.

Bayonet Charge

Lt. Harry Parker, of Johnson, Vt., took 40 men and led a bayonet charge against three Nazi companies to relieve what was left of Co. C, 393rd Inf.

Platoon Sgt. Fred Wallace, of Livingston, Calif., called down his own artillery fire within 50 yards of his position in the 394th Reg. When the First Bn., 393d Inf., led by Maj. Matthew Legler, of New York City, was cut off, the men went forward. They marched to Hohen, found the enemy there, marched back to Krinkelt, and Jerry was there too. Finally, they fought back to the lines, reformed, and moved into position to fight again.

It all started in the early hours of Saturday, Dec. 16. Saturday night was rough. Units of the division that were out in the offensive bulge in the north had to pull back. They left Co. C of the division engineers to cover them.

Little War of Own

(The engineers showed up three days later, after fighting a little war of their own in the Siegfried line.)

One of the withdrawing battalions—the First, of the 395th Reg—marched, dug in, marched to the rear, and then back toward the Germans again until artillery hit them. Ralph Jones, of Ft. Wayne, Ind., said:

"I hit the ground and started to dig. That's where the battalion CP was set up."

A forward observer of the 371st Bn was being overrun by the enemy, so he called fire down on himself. Battery C,

of the 370th, got nine tanks, and the 801st TD, an attached unit, fought like crazy men until it was overrun.

Fires 20,000 Rounds

One battalion alone fired over 22,000 rounds. Altogether, the 99th got 60 enemy tanks.

Pfc. Stanley Krohl and Roger Dable, Pennsylvanians, didn't know that you can't stop tanks with mortars. When five Tigers came over the hill, they peppered away with 60mm fire until the tanks turned.

By Sunday morning, armor had broken through on the south, overrun the 394th Inf., and was hammering at Bullingen. Things were too hot there, so they bounced off and headed north for Wertfeld, where Lt. Col. Justice R. Neale, of Oberlin, Kan., had the rest of his engineers dug in. But when the smoke cleared away the engineers were still there, and they'd killed 400 Jerries and captured 13 self-propelled guns.

In desperation, Jerry stormed into Krinkelt, had a show-down fight with clerks, artillerymen—anybody who could shoot. Eventually the enemy took what was left of the town, but another day had been lost, and the 99th was still there.

The 394th Reg. was fighting its way back on the south flank. Big Nazi patrols were everywhere among the tanks, and T/Sgt. Savino Travellini, of Mount Shasta, Calif., found his outfit pinned down by machine gun fire from a roundhouse. So he rounded up a bazooka and crawled for the Jerry gun. When the Krauts started running from their gun, he got them with his M1.

When Panzers hit Krinkelt they cut communications in the 293rd. None of the radios were working, whereupon the regimental executive officer, Lt. Col. Thomas E. Griffin, of Brooklyn, N.Y., drove his C&R to a commanding height and there, with shells falling all around, relayed messages on his radio until a tank drove him off.



324th Engrs. Demonstrate Combat Skill

WITH 99TH INF. DIV.—When the Engineers have to throw down their tools of trade and pick up rifles, you may be sure that the "going" is getting rough for the regular doughs and other fighting GIs. They are Engineers, yes—bridge builders, road builders, minefield builders—but these American "swirly ears" can do a job of fighting when they're called. And that's what they did during the 99th division's gallant stand against the German onslaught into Belgium.

Ten days after the combat engineers went into action—that is, A and B companies of the 324th Eng. Bn.—their total score against the enemy was roughly 400 Germans killed, scores of enemy guns and pill-boxes knocked out and, paradoxically enough, two Nazi prisoners. They had no time for prisoners. They were too busy fighting.

The action began around the Engineer CP east of Krinkelt, Belgium, on 16 December. The Americans retired under a furious German artillery assault. They arrived at Elsenborn on the morning of the 19th with only weapons, ammunition and the clothes on their backs and began at once to dig in positions for the defending infantry.

Plans Changed

A change of plans came in that night and the Engineers again reverted to doughboys and began to dig in their own positions two miles southeast of Elsenborn.

On the morning of the 20th as the fog lifted over the field ahead of them, they saw a patrol of 20 men wearing U.S. uniforms. Lt. Col. Justice R. Neale, of Oberlin, Kan., soon ascertained there was something wrong in Jerryland. The Engineers let 'em have it and all of the 20 went down.

The Germans' real attack began about noon when 1/Sgt. Gerald F. Scott, of Waldo, Ark. spotted eight self-propelled guns behind some hedgerows with a large force of Nazis climbing onto them. The Engineers' small arms fire at 500 yards range made the Jerry riflemen dismount.

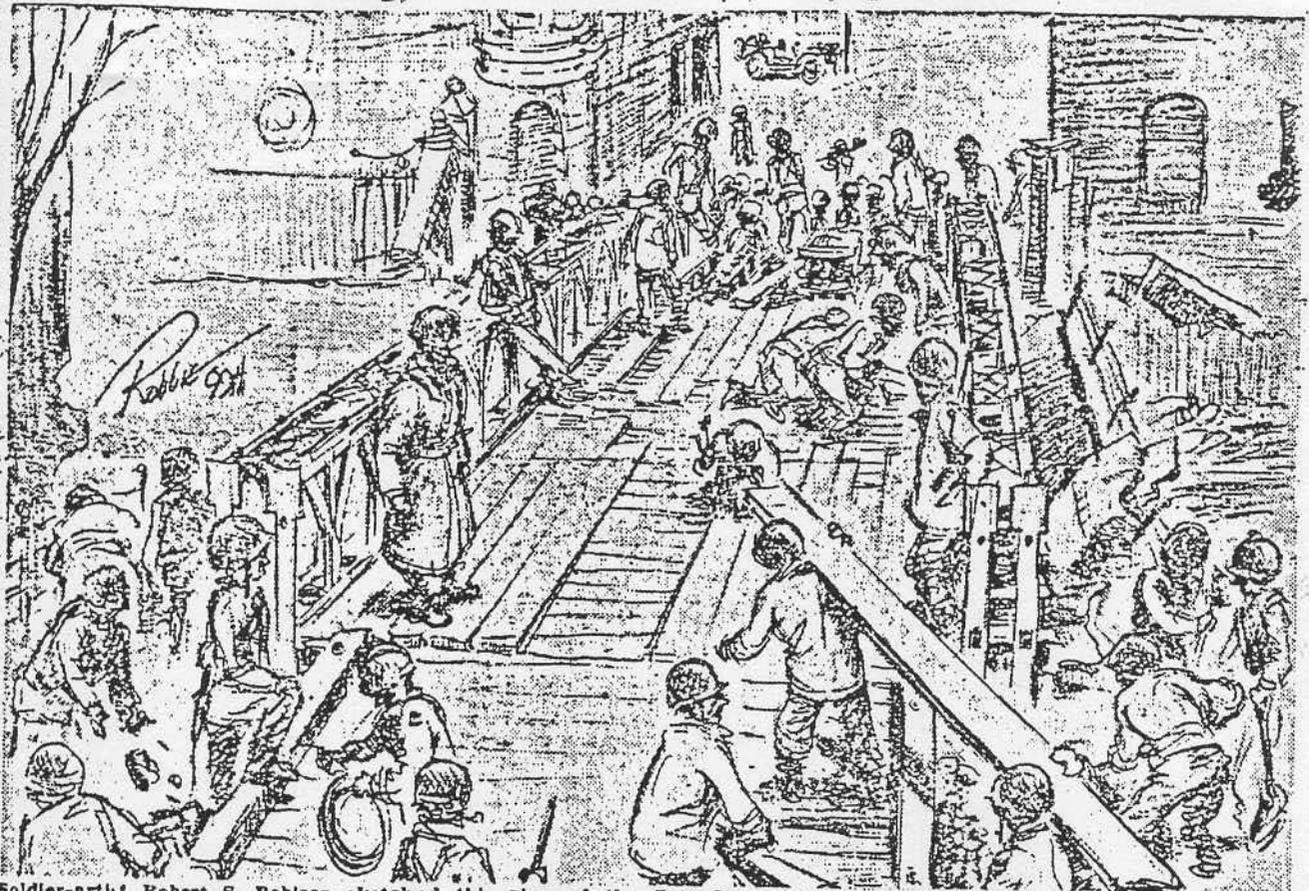
At this point, Capt. Robert G. Fowler, of Watertown, N.Y., and Lt. Wm. D. Markin, of Oklahoma City, both with the 370th FA and acting as forward observers for the Engineers, got busy. They turned the massed fire of their artillery on the enemy guns and with the first 12 rounds set three of the guns a-fire and blew up another, cutting Jerry's 88 fire down 50 percent. Two of the remaining German guns fled and two of them hid nearby. Lt. Markin called for volunteers to go after the hidden guns with a bazooka, and from the ranks stepped Pvt. John S. McKuen, of Park Falls, Wis., and T/4 Joseph C. Kluepfel of Long Island, N.Y. They crawled out to meet the threat and stopped the first gun in its tracks. But they didn't stop its fire. Two of the Americans were killed.

No Support

Lt. Charles Sissel, of Commerce, Texas, ran amid streams of bullet gun traces, shouting, "We're holding 'em—but for God's sake, get us artillery!"

They got it. The artillery support that night consisted of 420 rounds per minute for 10 minutes and 200 rounds per minute for an additional 10 minutes—approximately 7,000 rounds in 20 minutes by 16 artillery batteries on a target area 300 by 400 yards. And the two Engineer companies had directed the fire of 15,000 rounds of ammunition, themselves—most of it within a half-hour period.

The Jerries were stopped.



Soldier-artist Robert S. Robison sketched this view of the Erft Canal bridge, erected by 99th Inf. Div. engineers.

99th Doggies Smash Way To Dig in On Rhine Banks

By Robert S. Robison

Stars and Stripes Unit Correspondent

WITH 99th DIV.—The Third Armd. had laid a bridge across the Erft Canal before Bergheim, whose ancient city gates guard the highway to Cologne, but when tanks ran into trouble from the high, wooded Hill 140 on their left, 395th Regt. doggies stormed the town.

In a sweeping and bloody maneuver up the hill, and through a miniature Argonne forest of dug-in Jerries, they seized the high ground and the tanks rolled on to Cologne as the 395th hung the usual placard over the city gates.

By this time, the rest of the division was crossing the Erft in several places further up. While the 395th held the flank, the 394th fought through and around them and the 393rd on the left, raced toward the Rhine.

The Engineers moved into Bedburg and finished two bridges in less than 12 hours, and as the heavy stuff came over, the left flank moved as fast as the doughfeet could walk and sent back the prisoners. Then the 394th ran into trouble in the fortified towns, things began to get rough.

Task Force Lutens, reinforced by tanks, T.D.s and infantry roared into Deikum, to the River's bank as foot soldiers of the 393rd came close on their heels.

As the 394th worked forward in the center, the Nazis began to ferry stuff across the river, but the big guns of the 3. nd Artillery caught barges containing what was left of a division Hq and blew them to smithereens in mid-river.

The advance was so fast the doggies caught a kitchen train in the hill above Neurath and it still sits there, the stove hitched to its wagon, and carrot soup all over the road. A platoon of the Engineers A Co. barged into a factory office and heard the phone ringing. Answering it, they found it was the home office in Dusseldorf calling to see where the Americans were.

Four Jerries were caught with their glasses down as GIs interrupted a private party.

Co. K of the 393rd dug in on the Rhine and sent the CG, Maj. Gen. Walter E. Lauer of Brooklyn NY a bottle of water from the river.

Civilians hung white flags from the windows and watched open-mouthed. The doughs took a town one afternoon, and the Division CP roared in the next morning. Beer was still on tap for them, that's how fast the fight went.

The 395th went back into the fight and alongside of the 394th they slugged their way through the woods east of Rommerskirch which harbored tanks and artillery, and then dug in on the river.

The division was credited with 20 miles and a hundred towns in less than five days, more than 2,000 prisoners, and several hundred freed English, Russian and French PWs who had been forced laborers a few hours previously.

The Checkerboard men claim they were the first infantry division in the First Army to reach the Rhine.