

the same number to England. Other leave groups went to Paris and Brussels.

Though the chow situation wasn't good at first—Fifteenth Army was brand new, having been activated on March 30, and its bakeries and depots hadn't come up when the 101st arrived—the shortages in bread and fresh meat were sometimes alleviated in individual cases by stealthy exchanges of cigarettes and soap for German *Pumpernickel* and eggs. The Division Quartermaster Company scrounged bread from Army bakeries as far back as Aachen and Liège. After a week Fifteenth Army began baking and solved the bread shortage.

#### PATROLS ACROSS THE RHINE

What fighting there was occurred when the patrols from the line regiments slipped across the river at night—the once-thought impregnable Rhine, now vulnerable to any squad with a boat—and bumped into the still-dangerous defenders. Not that all the losses were on raids; the Germans still threw over artillery. The first and one of the most severe blows suffered in the Ruhr occurred on the morning of the 5th when a round from a large-caliber gun, believed to have been a railroad piece, landed across the street from the 327th's 3d Battalion CP. Two members of the Regimental Antitank Company were killed and four were wounded. A fragment which penetrated the Battalion CP hit Lt. Col. Ray C. Allen, who lost a leg. Colonel Allen, although he had been in Neuss all day, had been busy inspecting the DP camps, factories and other installations his battalion was to guard, and he did not get to the building in which his staff had set up the CP until almost midnight. When he saw the old wire leading into the building he realized that it had been the CP of the unit his battalion had relieved; and only the fact that he would have to wake and re-billet his sleeping men kept him from moving that night. He figured that the Germans on the other side of the river knew that the building was being used as a headquarters, and he determined to get out the first thing in the morning. Ironically, Colonel Allen, who had led the battalion with distinction from Normandy through Holland, Bastogne, Alsace and into the Ruhr, was the only casualty the battalion had in the Pocket and was the last loss it suffered from enemy action in the war. He was succeeded by his battalion S-3, Capt. Robert J. McDonald.

Another veteran officer of the Division was lost a week later when Maj. William Leach, who had been S-2 of the 506th throughout combat, accompanied a regimental patrol across the Rhine. The patrol was detected in midstream by the Germans, who opened fire; this fire was

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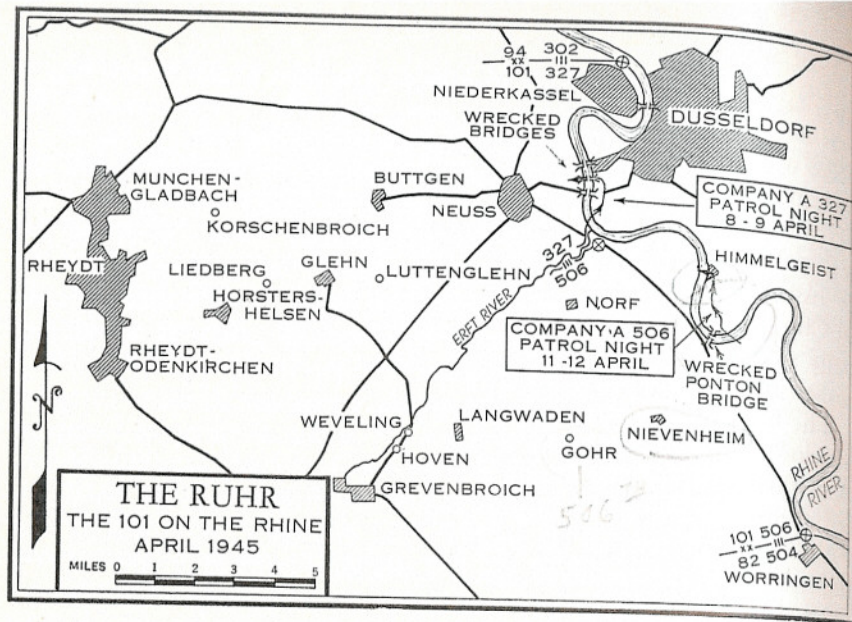
then taken up from the American side. The boat Major Leach was in was hit and he and several others were wounded. Two days later his body was recovered several hundred yards downstream.

Almost nightly patrolling across the Rhine by the 506th and the 327th began on the night of the 5th when all the battalions on the line sent patrols across the river. These patrols were usually of squad size or less. Whenever possible the leaders, prior to the mission, were flown in Cub planes over the area they were to patrol. Two patrols of company size crossed the Rhine during the campaign; these two raids furnished most of the action seen by the Division in the Ruhr.

The first of these company-size patrols crossed the Rhine to carry out a corps mission on the night of April 8-9. It was made up of Company A of the 327th, less the 60mm mortar crews, and was accompanied by ten men from the 326th Engineers and four from the 463d Parachute FA Battalion, a total of 118 soldiers. The original mission was to seize the east end of the destroyed Neuss-Düsseldorf railroad bridge, hold the position for twenty-four hours, using it as a base from which to send out patrols and place demolitions and booby traps, and to return on the following night. To hold this position the company was given two of the new 57mm recoilless guns, mines, booby traps, and some of the captured German *Panzerfausts*, one-shot bazooka affairs which were very effective against armor. However, a few hours before jump-off time the mission was changed on corps orders so that the company was to return that same night. This decision may have been influenced by the unfortunate experience of Company A of the adjoining 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82d. Company A had crossed on a somewhat similar mission on the early morning of the 6th, and had been heavily attacked during the day. Only 70 of the 140 participants had managed to return.

The 327th's crossing was made east of Neuss, not far from the regiment's southern flank. The strong current scattered the fifteen assault boats but by midnight Capt. Philip G. Walker had reassembled his command. The company moved north, downstream, killing two Germans and taking three prisoners along the river dike. At 0300 a pillbox and a machine-gun nest were encountered; two Germans were killed in the former and the entire crew of the latter was killed. Several more machine guns were met and knocked out, six more enemy killed and two more prisoners taken. By this time the glidermen were fighting on the outskirts of the village of Hamm, just across the river from Neuss. In the houses and factories in this area they killed or wounded a number of enemy, knocked out several guns and strongpoints, took a few more





Map 102.

prisoners. During all this action the Division's artillery was laying down fire on call.

It was now getting late; so the withdrawal was begun. The return crossing was to be made opposite Neuss. First the prisoners and engineers were evacuated; then the platoons covered each other as they fell back. The crossing itself was uneventful except for the capsizing of one of the boats which resulted in the drowning of one man. By 0515 the party was back on the friendly bank. Three other men were missing during the rear-guard fighting on the far bank.

The troops had taken sixteen prisoners, including three civilians. The prisoners were not élite, but had fought hard; most were former policemen, firemen and the like, had had little training, and were glad to get their part of the war over with.

The other large raid of the campaign was carried out on the night of April 11-12 by Company A of the 506th. One hundred twenty-six members of the company and four from the 321st Artillery Battalion crossed the Rhine in sixteen assault boats just after midnight and attacked the river-bank village of Himmelgeist. They ran into a scattering of small-arms fire, killed two defenders, and entered the town. In Himmelgeist they captured seven civilians suspected of having taken part in the defense of the place and then withdrew, getting back to the far shore by 0415. The raid cost the company three killed and four

wounded, mostly from small-arms fire, though there was some flat-trajectory shelling during the withdrawal. Two boats capsized in mid-stream under enemy artillery fire and eight men were missing, believed drowned.

These two patrols accounted for the greater part of the Division's activities and, incidentally, a good part of the losses in the Ruhr. The two regiments on the line spent the rest of the time watching the river flow between them and the enemy and in sending over the nightly small patrols. A typical small patrol was that carried out on the night of April 5-6 by an officer and six men of Company A of the 327th.

The leader was Lt. Clifford J. Myer who was handicapped by a broken arm in a plaster cast. (Lieutenant Myer also helped lead the full company raid three nights later, for which he received the Silver Star Medal.) With him were Sgt. Don Ellenberger and five volunteers from the company's jump platoon (so called because all the members were either qualified parachutists or were waiting to take parachute training). These men were Pfc. J. B. Eason, Pfc. Jack Damsky, Pfc. Woodrow Bauer, Pvt. William Lamb and Pvt. Bob Landers.

Along the waterfront in Neuss Lieutenant Myer and Sergeant Ellenberger had located a former German boat club with a boathouse full of kayaks, racing shells, rowboats, scows, sailboats, motor boats, and whatnot. For several days before the patrol, on a lagoon protected from enemy observation by a dyke, the two men had tested the various boats and decided on an outboard-motor boat with paddles.

The night before the raid the lieutenant and the sergeant had taken out the kayak and had gone over the selected route for the crossing. They decided that it was going to be a real job; not only was the river three hundred yards wide at the spot but the current was swift.

The next night it was raining and very dark. Just before 2300 the patrol went down to the lagoon in which the boat was hidden and pushed off. Their mission was to reconnoiter the hostile shore and locate the enemy defenses in that sector. For armament the patrol relied on .45-caliber ammunition, taking six Thompson submachine guns and eight automatic pistols; they also carried hand grenades. They had a signal lamp with which to call for support, if necessary.

The motorless outboard, once launched, immediately caused trouble. Water began seeping through holes in the boat's sides and it settled in the river. They banked it, looked around, and finally chose an engineer assault boat.

The new boat was watertight and the party pulled away from the friendly shore along which lay their buddies of the jump platoon, ready