

DEDICATION

THE STORY OF COMPANY "I" 232ND INF. IS DEDICATED

SINCERELY TO THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE

CAUSE FOR WHICH WE FOUGHT, AND IS HEREWITH PRESENTED TO THEIR

FAMILIES AND LOVED ONE AS A SMALL TOKEN OF THE RESPECT AND LOVE

WHICH WE HOLD FOR THESE MEN.

PREFACE

The story of Company "I" begins on a hot dusty Oklahoma prairie, 14 July 1943, when the cadre received its assignment from Major General (then Brig. Gen.) Harry J. Collins at Camp Gruber. The task of whipping a bunch of green civilians into a well-knit fighting unit was indeed a monumental one, but the finished product, when put to the test, vindicated the faith put in it by the Division. Company "I" now has a proud fighting tradition, and to all the men old and new -- the deeds of "I" Tribe are a legend. How this legend came to be born and the perpetrators of these exploits is the theme to be followed in the ensuing pages.

THE WAR AND COMPANY "I"

The boat trip across was well flavored with rumors about what we were going to do, and where we were going. Some thought we were going to Liverpool, England or Le Harve, France, until the ship changed course, and the weather got balmy.

Our days were made up mostly of eating, sleeping, and standing inspections. Of course not everyone was so fortunate as to be able to eat and sleep. Many found the proverb, "What goes up must come down" to work in reverse, "What goes down must come up." The food was abundant but the thought of hanging one's head over the rail in sickening agony, discouraged many from making the perilous jaunt to the mess hall. The blackout didn't help matters either.

Company "I" had good old E-7 deck in the rear, bottom part of the ship where every movement was exaggerated to the point where everyone had to close their eyes to keep from getting sick. We kept hearing the news over the ship's radio, little knowing that we would be making news instead of hearing the news in less than a month.

As the ship veered further and further south, we started thinking of Marseille or maybe Naples, Italy. Then came the straits of Gibraltar and Tangiers on the African side and the quiet Mediterranean. Then our first glimpse of destruction caused by the war, at the port of Marseille. Ships were sticking out of the water at all crazy angles and the harbor installations were simply a mass of burned twisted wreckage.

It was a funny sensation to step on nice solid ground after two weeks at sea. It took an hour to stop swaying back and forth. There was no band to greet us, no cheering crowds to welcome us, nothing but some expressionless Italian laborers and some even more glum, sad looking Kraut P.W's. It was then we decided that there must be a War going on some place----There was....!

We then marched about five miles to a place called Callahan's Beach (we doubt if Callahan ever saw the place) where we got on to trucks and rode to C. P. 2 in the most "Flying low fashion" one could never in his own mind forget. The trucks drove around 50 miles an hour through streets that seemed narrower than the trucks.

From the stuffed decks of the S.S. Alexander to the windswept hills overlooking Marseille was a shocking change. The "K" and "C" rations made the difference even more obvious.

We could never understand why a camp should be over a solid bed of rock. Steel tent pins would have been more appropriate. The endless cussing about the broken tent pins kept the air lively. Naturally we did more than just drive in tent pins.

Here we were getting the final brush up on our training and receiving the equipment necessary for winter combat. We were issued shoe-packs ski socks, a small gas burner per squad and other supplies which later proved essential. We also removed the dust and cosmoline from

our weapons, learned the new Rifle Squad Tactics, how to keep from getting trench-foot, organized and reorganized our squads, platoons, and the Company as a whole, into the best fighting units.

After four or five days at C.P. 2 it began to rain, the weather got cold and ice formed. Then many of the boys learned why the Army always wants to take the High Ground. It is very disconcerting to wake up and find a small river running through your tent, especially when there's a cold wind blowing.

Since we didn't have steam heaters to keep us warm, we had to resort to the ancient practice of building fires and that made "wood patrols" a must for after chow relaxation. Of course, some of the fellows wound up with bottles of slightly watered wine instead of wood, but then they kept warm inside at least. One night however, Jerry put an end to the fires.

We said "Goodbye" to old C.P. 2 one sloppy morning in mid- December and boarded the infamous "40 and 8s" cattle cars of World War I, famous for a five-day ride up the Rhone Valley to Eastern France and Alsace-Lorraine. We were able to withstand the cars only because of the utter ridiculousness of the situation. A person can't help laughing at someone trying to shave on a train that lurches every few seconds, or trying to balance a cup of coffee on a tiny gas burner.

As we went up the Rhone Valley, we began to see the extent of the destruction which the Germans (Boche to the French) had brought upon France. All the railway stations were shot up or destroyed. We could see on the faces of the usually expressive French their complete humiliation by the Boche.

We got to see the towns of Avignon, Valence, Lyon, Macon, Neuchateau and Toul. We were thankful that these villages weren't our own home towns. The names of the towns were German, but the people weren't. Evidence that the Germans had been there was obvious by the beat-up tanks, the destroyed buildings and the artillery scared fields. Yes, the War was sneaking up on us now.

After two days of waiting and wondering what we were going to do in the War, and listening to Teddy Barton (our B.S. specialist) tell us about his trip up from Marseille in his Jeep and how he slept out in the mud-etc, we made a rather crooked bee-line for the recently liberated city of Strasbourg on the Rhine River. The trip was just one long feeling of cold numbness. We had learned about trench-foot, but we hadn't realized our possibilities of being subjected to such extreme coldness. Strasbourg was a startling contrast to the destroyed towns in France. There everyone was fairly neat, had shined shoes and sharp looking "Toppers." To them it made little difference who controlled the city because they were always set with either their French Tri-Colour or their Nazi Swastika Flag.

During the German counter-attack in December they were always getting the wrong flag out or trying to remember to say "Vive La France" instead of "Sieg Heil."

Company "I" went into the lines on Christmas Eve at a little town north of Strasbourg

called La Wantzenau. The Germans had launched a full-scale counterattack in Alsace Lorraine to retake Strasbourg and Saarburg and push us back into the Vosges Mountains and off of the Alsace Plains. This attack had started in the Hardt Mountains and was making some headway, so divisions were pulled up north to halt it. (The Germans were attacking in the Ardennes at the same time.) Our mission was to occupy those vacated positions on the Rhine River and HOLD!!! We relieved a company of the 36th Division and the war commenced in earnest for old "I Tribe".

At La Wantzenau, the company was to dig in on the dike or Levee in a rather stretched form of defense. We had booby traps and flares between our positions and the Rhine River. We also had an observation post right on the edge of the river. The observation post gave the men a good many gray hairs because of its position in relation to the many Jerry machine guns across the river. Jerry seemed to delight in setting in his safe pillbox (one about every twenty yards) and fire deadly accurate machine gun slugs through the O. P. (observation post) windows.

Sometimes they would add a little variety by throwing artillery. Another head-ache was the fact that our own artillery (105's) kept using our O. P. as a base point. The observation post was located out in the open and all our movements were made at night.

These eerie nights, cold clear nights, when the moon would shine on the fast moving yet serene Rhine, will be hard to forget. In the front of our positions the Rhine, and across from that the Germans. It was hard to believe that we were so close. We couldn't see anything and there was no firing.

The company was stretched out along the dike with foxholes every 60 or 70 yards, and here and there was an old pill box, (Maginot Out Posts) that we occupied, but we had woeful lack of men, and no artillery that we could call our own.

The battle of the Bulge was going on at this time, and we in the Seventh Army, were occupying two Army fronts, our sector and that of the Third Army, which had been diverted to try and stop Von Runstedt. All we had in this front was our three infantry regiments called "(Task Force Linden)" and north of us in the same predicament was the Seventieth Division called "(T. F. Herren.)" The only artillery on hand was from Corps and they were short of ammunition.

"I" Tribe was in the little town of La Wantzenau about six miles north of Strasbourg. Battalion occupied a big Maginot Line Front some two miles down the line. Information was passed on to us that the Germans were to stage a counter-offensive and retake the cities of Strasbourg and Saarburg. A counter-intelligence plan went into effect and the Regiment kept moving from one place to another every day or so to confuse the Jerries and make them think we had more troops than we did.

Finally on January 5th we wound up dug in around a big Chateau (La Robertseau) just outside of Strasbourg. First platoon was on a little strip of land about a mile and a half from the

Chateau, right on the river. The only access to the platoon was to cross a canal by means of a crude ferry boat which couldn't operate when the canal was frozen over.

One morning when up on the dike, Harlan Thompson and Paul Sharich (First Platoon Men) spotted the Jerries trying to launch some assault boats and apparently make a landing on our side of the river. Thompson alerted the platoon and they, with the help of Pfc. Howard Willet and Pvt. Worley Jacks, expert machine gunners of the weapons platoon, did a terrific job of wiping out the Jerries and beating them off. On trying to report the incident to the company C. P. they learned that communications between platoon and company had been severed. It was necessary to contact the company so Pvt. Peter Graber grabbed a Frenchy's bike and rode back fast as was possible to alert the rest of the platoons.

Lt. Roberts O. Ricketts (then first platoon leader) noticed the Jerries were laying down a smoke screen, about dusk the same day, so he alerted his platoon, and in the meantime T/Sgt. Trout (now Lt.) with Sgt. Paul Sharich and Pvt. Cotton Swafford, crossed the canal to make sure that the company was ready for anything that might come up and also to check in on chow. As they reached the edge of the canal the Jerries dropped in several accurate rounds of 88's which wounded Pvt. Leonard E. Creo in the legs and the back, T/Sgt. Trout also in the back, Pvt. Swafford and Sgt. Sharich so seriously that they were immediately evacuated to the rear, after the best of front line aid was rendered by one of our top three company medics (T/5 Jerry Kohn). It has since been learned that Sgt. Paul Sharich became the first Company "I" man to have to pay for the PRICE OF FREEDOM, and Pvt. Swafford was reported to have been sent to England for evacuation.

That which was expected became apparent, when we heard massed artillery and P-47's making one helluva racket north of Strasbourg.

The Germans crossed at Gambsheim, six miles north. We were alerted the next morning the French came to the Chateau to relieve us. The French Colonials with their handlebar mustaches and friendliness made a good impression on us. Their lack of concern about the threatening situation was something to remember.

We took off for Gambsheim like the proverbial "Big Bird" to stop Jerry before he broke out of his bridgehead across the Rhine. His bridgehead was two miles deep and five miles long when we got there. They had all kinds of artillery and we didn't, unfortunately for us. The trucks took us right up under their noses and we deployed in readiness to make an attack. The weather was almost of blizzard proportions and it began to snow. We discarded (in a big pile) all of our personal equipment and loaded ourselves down with ammunition. During all this, Jerry was giving one of those famous "88" barrages with machine guns breaking the silence between explosions. The noise was terrific. The machine gun were augmented by an umbrella of murderous artillery fire. Our mission would have been suicide, but orders came down to hold on to what we had.

Our O.P. at that time was really catching hell from Jerry's artillery and communications between the O.P. and the company C.P. had gone out. Good old faithful Sgt. Tex Gustafson was on hand and took the responsibility of checking and trying to repair the line. Tex crept, crawled, and ran his way back to the C.P. following the wire all of the way finally discovering the break to be at a road junction where French tanks had been crossing a few minutes before. He reported the break to S/Sgt. James Turner (then communications sergeant, now first sergeant) who immediately strung a new line and once again put life back into the company. Slowly the Germans realized that we weren't going to give ground, regardless. The artillery quieted down a little and probably the Jerry machine guns decided to dig a little deeper into their foxholes.

Speaking of foxholes, the ground was frozen at least to six inches in thickness and our shovels would hardly dent the ground. But, the "88"s made us feel capable of digging a hole in solid concrete. The artillery was the most accurate and concentrated fire that we ever hope to sweat out.

In idle moments the boys would try to guess whether this or that shell would land on the next house, in the back yard, or in the garden. Many times the whistle seemed to end right in our back pockets, breathtaking to say the very least, and if the artillery was taking a break, those high pitched machine gun tracer bullets would start knocking bricks off the corner of the house.

The next day some French Infantrymen started sifting in, they didn't seem to care much about the artillery that was pounding us. They were very nonchalant and unconcerned, regardless of the casualties they suffered.

T/Sgt. Paul Eyer was around (as was always the case whenever there was any trouble or Krauts to take care of). He was standing in a doorway of a building near the O.P. with a French soldier observing the front and trying to guess where the next round of Jerry artillery would land. We quit trying to guess because he looked around and saw the Frenchman on the floor by his side, now with only one leg. That wasn't the first, or the last close shave for Sgt. Eyer as he has had plenty of experiences and very close calls. One day later we were relieved by an Armored Task Force of the First French Army.

We marched through a snowstorm back to La Wantzenau, dug in until dawn and then at 0:800, with no small amount of griping, loaded on trucks. From La Wantzenau we skirted the German bridgehead around to Camp Oberhoffen (which was wrecked) stayed all night and marched to Schirrheim and set up a defense.

In Alsace, we always trusted the civilians so explicitly that when we went through Schirrheim we wondered if the wormy looking apples they gave us were flavored with strychnine or plain everyday rat poison.

We pulled out of Schirrheim and went through the snow covered Hagenau Forest to Leutenheim. At Leutenheim and Kauffenheim the foul weather, the frozen swamps and the intense activity of the Germans combined to make our stay one of the most miserable two weeks

of our lives.

The company was stretched (as usual) along a three or four mile front at the edge of the Hagenau Forest with all of the platoons on line. Communications were hard to keep because of those distances and the knee deep snow. There was always someone on the wire trying to locate a break or a short and with the Krauts all around the place everyone soon acquired an itchy trigger finger. Pfc. Misczak and S/Sgt. Schaefer of communications always had to sweat out the numerous B.A.R.'s and M1's plus the machine guns pointed their way when they came on their mid-nite "Wire Calls".

The swamps gave us a lot of trouble, one could dig about six inches and then it was a matter of sleeping on ice or in water or taking one's chance on being at the right place at the right time when the enemy was throwing the artillery in. Some of the fellows got hay and cushioned up their foxholes and used snow as their camouflage. "K" ration boxes were used for fires whenever a canteen had to be thawed out or a can of that lovely meat and vegetable hash had to be heated. Sometimes "K" rations broke the monotony of those dreaded "C" rations and this brought on endless debate and discussion about the relative qualities, assets, and liabilities, of the supper, the dinner, or the breakfast ration. There was one universal agreement, corned pork loaf was inedible whether cold, roasted, or otherwise.

After a week we started getting chow from the kitchen and that was quite a thrill for the cooks, especially when they had to sweat out the Jerries as well as our own mortar barrages. T/4 Joe Vancorra can tell you about how it feels to be around when our mortar shells are landing. The cooks also have a story about the supposedly uncanny accuracy of the dreaded "88"'s in hitting immersion heaters around the kitchen.

On days when the sky was clear and cold looking, bombers would start coming over with their long straight vapor trails and perfect formations. They looked so beautiful and serene. But then all hell would break loose with the Jerry ack-ack throwing a veritable carpet of flak up at them. Perhaps a bomber would come through the fire, get hit, and explode, and plummet to the ground, yet the bombers would keep right on coming regardless. We didn't feel so much like we were fighting alone.

The days the P-47's weren't strafing, we would have the Jerry Me-262 Jet-propelled planes coming around Souffleheim and shooting up the place. Since the Me-262 had no propeller to make the normal airplane sound, we always had to look and listen to make sure there weren't some big artillery shells coming in. The speed of the Me-262's was terrific, it would make the eight or ten mile loop around Souffleheim in less than a minute.

We were in a defensive position and there were a lot of Engineers laying mines and putting up wire entanglements. We put in our own flares and generally made ourselves ready for the expected German thrust.

The Jerry patrols started coming around and we kept shooting them up. One such patrol

came into our area looking for trouble and Pfc. Arthur Kessler got out with his machine gun (with no helmet and plenty of guts) and literally mowed them down as they came down the street. Another patrol came into Kauffenheim, where our mighty second platoon was, unaware that there were Americans in the town, Sgt. Albert (Pete) Gross had a heck of a time rounding up his grenades and rifle to prove that there were Americans in the town.

Not all the patrols in the area were German, though. The second platoon sent one patrol out from Kauffenheim at that time, the closest part of the Western Front to Berlin. Many patrols went out just to look for Jerry patrols and shoot them up. Those of us who weren't on patrols were standing a long weary guard in the bitter cold nights. Those hours on patrol were tense and strictly out of this world, every little twig that cracked could be heard for at least a couple hundred yards. The quietness of those winter nights made a lot of imaginations work overtime.

During our stay at Leutenheim, the whole face of the company changed with platoon sergeants (Watson of the second platoon, Steffer of the weapons and Chuck of the Third) getting battlefield commissions. A new company commander (Capt. Carl Miller) replaced Captain Riley. James Turner, the S/Sgt. of headquarters platoon became our new First Sergeant and is to this day.

More and more the rumble of German Armor permeated the air and the "Big Picture" began to tell us that we were out on the tip of a long finger with the Germans on our front, on our left, on our right and seemingly to be on our rear. Instead of fighting the war alone, we pulled back.

It was very cold and an overcoat would have been a good thing, but our orders were to shoot anyone wearing an overcoat as that was what Jerry was wearing.

The snow had been packed down along the road and walking on that slippery road was similar to tight rope walking. At first the boys would hit the ground, a clank of a helmet, a great flood of cussing maybe a few words of sympathy from buddies or an encouraging word from a second Lieutenant, but after every man had bruised himself (as well as his spirits) about five times, there would be only a clank of a helmet and a forced grunt. Occasionally our Battalion Commander (Lt. Col. Galloway) would come around and ask us why we had to lay right in the middle of the road during rare breaks. We would laboriously crawl off the road and lay in the softer snow. Maybe in three minutes someone was snoring. The word for the Hagenau March is "Rough".

We got back to Bossendorf just west of Hagenau and reorganized rested, and yes, trained for three days. We had chicken (both types) and some really swell meals as it had been quite some time since any hot chow had been brought up to us. We wrote a few letters, received a few, thawed ourselves out, cleaned our weapons and even ran a combat problem or two. Those three days went fast.

On January 25th we made a forced march into the direction of the Moder River and Hagenau. We arrived at the town of Ohlungen right across the river from the Jerries. The mortar shells were plopping around the center of town and there were rumors that Jerry intended to come across the next morning. We set up a perimeter of defense around the town and began sweating it out. It was here that Pfc. Billy Denton, of the weapons platoon, had his pick whipped from his belt and his left leg lacerated by fragments of a Jerry mortar round which was one of many thrown in by the Germans to keep us inactive as much as possible.

The next morning about three A. M. we started getting ready to mount our attack instead of allowing the Jerries to think about and prepare one. We scraped the snow and ice from our weapons and took off in single file for the Ohlungen Forest and waited while the 155's submitted a nerve wracking barrage of supporting fire in the woods in search of the Jerries.

Under cover of the artillery, we took off into the woods in search of the Jerries. We pushed them back across the river and and fortunately suffered no casualties. The going was plenty rough as every man was loaded down with every bit of fire power he could possibly carry.

On our side of the Moder we dug in through the snow as fast as possible, while the Jerries were peppering us with automatic fire and we weren't to sure of the situation. That afternoon we were relieved by a company of the Seventy Ninth Division.

The German offensive that had begun in December up in Belgium and in our Alsace, had finally petered out in the last attack across the Moder. We went back to a place called Grassendorf, loaded on trucks and went to France.

It was nice to see electric lights, real flushing toilets, G.I.'s with garrison caps again in Sarreburg, however, Gramercy a World War I relic of destruction where we were billeted, with the junk and dirtiness of Gramercy we all agreed it was a thousand times better than the front lines.

At Gramercy we got to see a lot of new faces and we got to see what we had been doing in December and January. Some of us went to see Paris and Nancy, others of us got the usual detail of "Policing the Area". We were joined with our own artillery and Engineers and felt proud as we were now a full Division instead of an Infantry Task Force, as was the case all during the winter months. Our three weeks at Gramercy were spent living as much like human beings, as circumstances permitted. The "Combat mustaches and beards" came off, a haircut by Pfc. James (Ma) Hughes, a shave everyday and maybe some doughnuts from the Red Cross Girls in Nancy who would come out and smile in the good old American way.

On February 16th our rest ended and back to the Front old fighting "I Tribe" tramped, to the Northern Vosges Mountains of Alsace-Lorraine. There we relived a company of the 45th Division at Lichtenberg (an old castle town.) For a change, old "I Tribe" wasn't spread all over creation. The front was comparatively short and a company within the Battalion was always in reserve switching off every eight days, with the reserve company pulling the combat patrols and

the usual dirty work that came up.

We had our own artillery at Lichtenberg. Then we felt and knew that there was support behind us.

Our month at Lichtenberg was a merry-go-round of costly patrols, sweating out the lines and generally giving the Germans a hell of a bad time and suffering severe casualties within our own units.

The names of Lt. John Chuck Jr., Billy R. Watson, T/Sgt. Robert Ground, T/Sgt. John Bobick, S/Sgt. Elias Green, S.Sgt. Ernest Oates, S/Sgt. Joe Haney, Sgt. Allen J. Duncan, S/Sgt. Charles Beckwith and S/Sgt. Ernest Bossard shall be remembered as the best of the leaders in our experiences in combat. During our patrol duty here at Lichtenberg these men did an outstanding job as leaders and have always been respected as such.

Many will remember those lonely cold nights on the front yard. Some times Jerry would get right on top of us before we could see him. A burp gun would open up, then a B.A.R or an M1 would start spitting lead around through the trees and after a while it would be so quiet one could hear the man next to him breathe or a twig snap from the weight of the snow. After all had been quiet for a while the phone would ring and Captain Miller would inquire if everything was under control.

One morning about three A.M. T/Sgt. Robert Ground was on the phone talking to the phone guard at the C.P. his voice was lower than any whisper could ever be, but distinctly he said, "I think some of our friends are out in front of us," "How many?", "I don't know," "There they go again," then a long burst from a burp gun would break the silence and echo over the phone----"YEAH!!" things are pretty quiet---there is a flare over in "K" Company's area, stay by that damned phone and don't for God's sake lose your head" and so the night would pass and the days begin.

The days were a lot better than the nights, at least in the day we could see where we were going, and where Jerry was going. The mornings went fast and easy because we could fix up our shelter, or clear out our field of fire, or clean our weapon, and maybe down some "K" rations with a cold drink of water and some dog-biscuits.

When our seven or eight day stay on the line was up we would begin the climb back up the mountain towards Lichtenberg. It was necessary to be extremely cautious and careful when going up, as old faithful Jerry continuously dropped round after round on our only path up. It was necessary, therefore, to take off about dusk.

Once up on the hill at Lichtenberg, while in reserve, there were beds, places to shave, reading material and a chance to catch up on our correspondence, and we would relax in the sun which was slowly thawing out the ground,

But always in our minds was the constant thought of sweating out which platoon and which squads would be sent out in no-mans land each night. The many patrols into Jerryland made us all very jumpy and nervous because there was always the silent preparing without speaking to anyone, the thinking of what happened out there the night before and whether you would be the one this time not to come back or be captured, and whether you would be so scared that you would do the wrong thing and jeopardize conditions for your buddies. Everyone knew that the patrols went as close to the enemy as possible and that a few men would be lost---maybe to the high pitched burp guns, maybe to a shoe- mine or perhaps Jerry mortar would start plopping around.

Our rifle platoons were always showing their ability as combat soldiers and their experiences on patrol sat Lichtenberg aroused a permanent feeling of camaraderie between the men in the platoon and also between platoons. It is that natural cooperative spirit that made Company "I" the best in the Battalion. We always had officers who were considered "one of the boys".

Examples of this leadership and camaraderie took place on March 12th and 13th. The second platoon had been given the mission of searching out Hill 403 so that the Third Battalion could push over that same hill on the 15th. The patrol consisted of a reinforced rifle platoon and a forward observer from Battery C of the 232nd F.A.--Sgt. Milton. The group was divided into three groups: One, the feelers led by S/Sgt. Oates and S/Sgt. Pete Gross. Second, the main body, led by 2nd Lt. Billy R. Watson and T/Sgt. Paul Eyer, and the third group, the rear guard was led by Pfc. Donald Gage. The purpose was to pin-point enemy installations on the knoll of Hill 403 and, primarily, to contact the enemy in a firefight. The feelers job was to make first contact and pin down the enemy so that the main body could maneuver around. The feelers carried two B.A.R.'s and 2 M1's. S/Sgt. Gross first sighted the enemy when he spotted a Jerry changing his shirt near his gun position. In the following fire-fight, S/Sgt. Ernest Oates accounted for two Jerries and S/Sgt. Gross the same amount.

The only reason that more casualties didn't occur was the simple reason there were Beaucoup enemy mortar duds. In the withdrawal, it was discovered that one man was missing, Pfc. Styron James. He was found dead the next day on a similar patrol made by the same platoon. This patrol was typical of the many that occurred during our time in the holes outside of Lichtenberg.

The results of those patrols was two-fold. First: the men (many of which were new) learned what it was like to be under fire, both small arms and mortar, secondly we learned a lot about the terrain and the area that was to be our jump off into the very teeth of the Siegfried Line.

In the fighting down near Strasbourg, towns were the individual objectives, but up in the Vosges, Hills, like 402 and 415 and 403, were our objectives. Hill 415 was the meanest of the three, its forward slope gave the Jerries time to start his mortars popping and all their weapons

firing their f.p.l. Many a patrol went up the hill trying to find out why the Germans withstood our artillery concentrations which were placed all over the hill expending as much as 5000 rounds in fifteen minutes time. The shells would light up the area like flares, some were phosphorous and the hill looked as if a heavy fog were hanging over it.

During the last two weeks of February, we were thinking about the Spring Push that we knew was coming. We wondered which of those hills we should tackle first.

In the first week of March, Cologne was captured and General Patton began his drive on into the Northern Saar. We knew we would soon begin a drive in our own sector. Mules were brought to each company, combat packs were issued, a check was made on our weapons, blankets were brought in and rumors started spreading. In our chow lines when we came back in reserve, there was a little Shakespeare running around "Beware of the Ides of March" (about 1 A.M.). The poop came down that the whole Seventh Army was on the move.

We were to be a spearhead into the Siegfried Line and our immediate objective was to get the Saar Valley. Our ultimate objective was to get to the town of Munich. (There was a lot of skepticism about that, however.) We ate our last hot chow, got enough "K" rations for a day or so, loaded ourselves (and the mules) down with ammo and supplies and so we became the Rainbow Mountain Troops. The artillery laid a thirty minute barrage on the sector and our drive begun.

We left our lines on the extreme right and went up along a ridge line parallel to hills 415, 402, and 403. It was along those hills that General Linden came puffing up the mountain side with his cane. We were thoroughly surprised to see him especially when we had been pinned down on that same hill only a few minutes before.

It was on the next hill that "Big Joe Haney" and S/Sgt. Floyd Green were hit, and also where Lt. John Chuck was thoroughly disgusted because a mortar shell threw shrapnel his way, hitting him in the toe.

The next morning we attacked across the valley and secured the hills that given us so many headaches, 415, 402, and 403 respectively. Dead Germans were strung around over the hills. We found the fortress like shelters that had withstood our artillery so well. The outposts of the Siegfried Line were cracked and we began the tedious job of taking the next line of fortifications.

From the hills we went into Baerenthal, Phillipsbourg, and ran into our next resistance at Dambach. We had gotten quite a bit ahead of our artillery and supplies, so Jerry got nervy and tried to stop us. He was on the point of some woods across the river from us. When he was spotted on the point, our Weapons Platoon went into action pronto with the machine gun section and mortars firing at targets selected by their leader, Lt. Lewis F. Holmes.

The next morning we were breathing down their necks again moving as fast as our legs

would go. We chased them across the German border a few miles from Ludwigswinkel into the pillboxes of the vaunted Siegfried Line. We ran into all kinds of roadblocks, mines and pillbox outposts just before we got to the Sarrbach River. At Ludwigswinkel the Germans had pillboxes, a river and beaucoup machine guns and artillery. They intended to stay for awhile.

During those three days at the main defenses of the Siegfried Line there weren't ten seconds of quite. If our artillery wasn't throwing rounds at them, they were throwing them in our direction. There was a constant chatter of machine guns, our heavy 30's would fire belt after belt at the pillboxes.

At first two companies from second Battalion made a bridgehead across the Saarbach River, but since all Jerry had to do was to pepper the area with machine guns and artillery the big boys decided that the Siegfried Line needed a little more softening.

The order came down for us to move back from the river some 500 yards or so and wait for the P-47's and medium bombers to come in for some really close support. The planes came over and made a few short bursts of 50 caliber tracers. Then all was quiet, we thought "Are a few tracers our only air support?" Our question was answered a few minutes later when the 500 pound bombs started dropping. The murderous sound of those stuttering machine guns and the bombs kept the ground shaking like an earth quake for about thirty minutes. We shall never forget the thrill that went through us when that big stuff started beating down the very ground that we must soon go travel over.

That night we all got quite a laugh. Some Jerry from across the river kept yelling---"Shoot Me!"--as if to say, "You stupid Americans, Can't you get to us?" A lone shot from an "M1" down the line gave him his wish rather abruptly.

The morning of March 22 we began the slow methodical attack through the Siegfried Line. Each pillbox had to be secured, each roadblock or tank trap had to be checked. The Germans started retreating. The faster they fell back, the more we attacked, until their retreat developed into a complete rout.

After two days of climbing the seemingly endless Hardt Mountains we reached the town of Dahn in the Saar Valley. At Dahn we began to see how badly the Germans had been beaten. The roads around Dahn were cluttered with burned trucks and motorcycles, dead Jerries, dead horses and smashed equipment. The prisoners were tired, muddy and completely unnerved. Our artillery, the P-47's and the tanks had cut them to pieces as they tried to pull back out of the Siegfried. We found the artillery (A whole battalion) that had given us so much trouble back at Ludwigswinkel. We found 88's, 105's, 155's and artillery equipment all over the fields. We even captured a strictly rear-echelon Jerry shoe repair unit.

On March 26th, Company "I" took a break at Darstein. We found that over 100,000 prisoners had been taken in the Saar, also that they had saved very little for the all-important task of holding the east bank of the Rhine River.

The stay at Darstein was interesting because the place was swarming with horses that the Germans had left behind also there were lots of German equipment which we enjoyed playing around with. It was swell to get behind 88's instead of in front of them for a change. Sometimes the boys would go in search of a horse to ride or in search of some fire wood and find a bunch of Mongolian or Italian prisoners that the Germans had used for delaying action. They only got in our way and cluttered up our P- W cages, and wondered what the hell it was all about.

Those few days at Darstein were critical days in the war so Sergeant Melikian would go down to Regiment and get the latest poop and bring up any stray rumors and opinions he happened to pick up. The boys would congregate around the fire to have a good old "bull session". "I heard the war would be over in two or three weeks," someone would say ---No!! I'll stick to June or July," some pessimist would pipe up. "They say the Germans can get up to 100 divisions to defend the "National Redoubt. or "The radio says, unofficially, that the whole Western Front is collapsing," and so into the night.

Then around April 1st, we took off, in convoy, for the Rhine up through Bad Bergzabern, bombed out Landau, and across the Rhine. At Worms everyone was in a flurry. Big ordnance trucks would come sailing by, tanks and everything were using every little road. Everyone was trying to find out where the front was. Our Blitzkrieg was on!!!

It was inevitable that there would be confusion when so many men were going so many directions. The Germans retreating to the rear, and we chasing them with everything from tanks and jeeps to artillery tractors and Ducks.

We finally situated about 50 miles east of the Rhine. Our first mission was to attack through the Main River and split a pocket of Jerries that was formed by a peculiar bend in the Main River. We marched through rain for about 24 hours and liquidated the pocket. We captured around 100 highly surprised Krauts in a little town north of Rothenfels.

At the same time the whole division was getting set for a big push. The engineers were building bridges like mad. The artillery was beginning to shell Wurzburg with their 155's. Company "I" loaded on two and a half ton trucks and took off down the west bank of the Main River, crossed it for the third time and moved up to within ten miles of Wurzburg.

The artillery was rocking the culture city from its foundation. We made an all-night forced march on to the outskirts of Wurzburg in the rain, sleet and under the most miserable conditions one in combat could ever expect.

After raining all that night the freshly plowed fields were slimy, muddy and definitely discouraging. Roads were made for traffic, but "I" Tribe used them for guides. We were a very unhappy and chilled company that morning. The poop came down that we were going to cross the Main River again. Go into Wurzburg and clear it out house by house.

The city was lousy with snipers and these snipers had the habit of shooting our medics. This made Pfc. Wyman Mossholder (second platoon medic) suggest a less distinctive helmet. One that didn't have the Red Cross on it that the Jerry could use for a bull's eye.

We crossed the bridge and got into Wurzburg under a smoke screen with tanks firing armor-piercing shells all over the place. We crouched in doorways and made a run for the next building. I can still hear Lt. Robert O. Rickets yelling "let's go, let's go, don't come across that opening walking, Let's go-- on the double--do you want to get killed?" In this way we infiltrated through the town, killing or capturing those snipers that couldn't escape.

The Third Battalion had the left sector of Wurzburg with "I" Tribe" controlling a railroad yard and a warehouse. We set up a series of road blocks and assumed that the city was ours. The next morning the Krauts came back in a desperate counter-attack. Their mission was probably the Regimental Headquarters and the 50 caliber machine guns that were mounted on the trucks. The attack came off about four in the morning. The Jerries were lead by fanatical officers. They had a lot of burp guns, hand grenades and Panzerfausts. One group of them hit our roadblocks, another hit our company C.P. while still another attacked Company "M".

At the first platoon road blocks were S/Sgt. Willis Jacques, Pfc. Reuben Jamison, Pfc. James Messmore, S/Sgt. Donald Crawford, T/5 Hans Nickolaisen, Pfc. Ruben Stanford, Pfc. Charles Seiver. Nickolaisen and Stanford got back to notify the company of the critical conditions, while S/Sgt. Crawford and his men gave the company time to prepare by engaging in a fire fight with the enemy. It was a terrific job done by the men of the first platoon and none of us shall ever forget the sacrifices made by several of our men, for it was here that S/Sgt. Crawford and Pfc. Jameison suffered wounds which removed them from duty with the company, and -believe me -we really missed them.

Meanwhile, the third platoon which was in an awkward position at that time, had been cut off from the rest of the company, and had it not been for an alert guard Pfc. Frederick J. O'Connell, there may not have been so many men from the third platoon here today to talk of the experiences. The Krauts had set up an automatic weapon in a doorway pointing squarely at the building in which our men were stationed. Pfc. O'Connell awakened the entire platoon by firing at the Kraut and killing him with the first round he fired. The third platoon men then took up positions in doorways, windows, and around the house under orders from S/Sgt. Zouder, platoon sergeant, S/Sgt. Groesbeck, and S/Sgt John Ronco doing more than their part in beating off the Jerry counter-attack.

The weapons platoon, in no time at all, had their machine guns in position inflicting wounds on many a Kraut that was advancing down the streets. S/Sgt. Ernie Bossard, machine gun section leader, had his men out there so fast that they were dressed only in long johns (Lt. Holmes, as well.) The Jerry officer let a panzerfaust go at the machine gun positions inflicting wounds on Pfc. Lynn Johnson, Pfc. Howard Willet, Pfc. Lee Allred, giving Sgt. Jim Baker, Pfc. Malcolm Barker, and Pfc. Clay Meyers something to shoot at instead of spraying the streets. The

machine gun crews threw the manual away, picked up the gun, and fired it from the hip. The noise was terrific, but it was the kind of noise we wanted to hear.

The following men, S/Sgt. Ernie Bossard, Pfc. Elton Lynn Johnson, Pfc. Lee Allred, Pfc. Clay Meyers, and Pfc. Howard Willet have since been awarded the Silver Star, and the two machine gun squad leaders, S/Sgt Jim Barker and Pfc. Malcom Barker were awarded the Bronze Star and given credit for saving the Battalion Motor Pool from complete capture. During the first platoon action down by the road block, Pfc. Kruse was wounded and captured but it has been learned that he is now free and back in the good old U.S.A.

The next day the engineers were able to get a bridge across the Main River big enough to hold the tanks. The big push was on again when Jerry saw the big boys rolling into the streets of the city. As we climbed the hill just north of Wurzburg, the call came back, "Send up the artillery jeep," and our route march changed into an approach march. The Germans has not gone far, after all.

A quick reconnaissance was made and Company "L" took the left, "K" Company the right, and Company "I" was in reserve, that is, we were in reserve according to the situation, however, the "Soldaten" on that Jerry 20mm Flak gun and those machine gunners didn't take that into consideration. Company "I" was on the forward slope and the crest of this hill, when the flak guns and machine guns began peppering the area. We didn't mind the machine guns so much (after we crawled into some holes left by the Krauts) but the exploding flak slugs made us very much in doubt about our possibilities of moving about. It was during this flak barrage that third platoon bazooka man, Pfc. Nowaki took a 20mm slug in his knee. It was here that Lt. John Chuk of the Third Platoon, assigned Pfc. Frank Machado as the new bazooka man, and Pfc. Harold Lloyd as his ammo bearer. It was getting dark fast so that an attack would have been quite a rough deal, but down the hill we went slipping and sliding, running into brambles and cussing (under our breath) the pitch black darkness and the mud.

We attacked down through the town of Versback, up the other side of the valley where the Jerries were. It took us several hours to complete the attack because of the darkness and the slipperiness of the ground. Several of us lost our helmets and nearly everything that wasn't tied down. We got the high ground (Company "I" specialized in taking the high ground) and dug in. A couple of hours later it was daylight. We found the flak guns that had given us such a bad time. The Germans had retreated, but unfortunately they retreated into the waiting arms of the second battalion. It was wonderful to see the long lines of prisoners. One Jerry came riding in on a motorcycle waving his white handkerchief with more enthusiasm than if he had waved Hitler's Swastika.

We continued our march north through Gunzerhausen and on up to Thungen, where we were to make contact with the Third Division. Pfc. Morris Engstrom thought it was to be third platoon, others thought it was to be Third Army. At Thungen we got a day's rest, posed for pictures, and those of us, like S/Sgt. Eddie Latos and T/Sgt. John Bobick, who speak Polish got a chance to practice on some of the Polish slave laborers.

The next morning we began another march, heading east for Schweinfurt. The march was held up several times by German rear guards, but there was little or no resistance till we came to the town of Obbach.

Before we got to Obbach, we were told that Schweinfurt was a veritable hornet's nest of 88's and flak guns. The tank destroyers that were with us loaded up with plenty of ammunition and we added an extra round to our already to heavy load. Obbach, Kutzburg, and Kronugen. These are towns that old "I Tribe" will always remember because they typify the three main kinds of small towns that we took in our drive through Germany. At Obbach we caught the Germans by surprise. At Kutzburg we made a lot of noise and just stormed through. At Kronungen we took the town by carrying our orders from our platoon leaders and company to the last degree and displaying plenty of guts.

At Obbach, we came up in back of the Jerries while they were digging foxholes. They got one helluva big surprise when our machine guns and mortars started. We were sitting on the opposite side of the valley. We started plunking mortar shells in on them and they in turn threw some at us. The whole battalion staff was on that hill, but not one was hit. Company "I" made a pincer attack on Obbach, One platoon went in one end of town and another platoon went in the other. The two platoons met in the middle of the town after a running gunfight and using firing movement. As in the old gangster days of Machine Gun Kelly, we searched the town house by house until we got all the Krauts.

In our fighting before Wurzburg the towns were usually deserted. At Obbach the civilians were all over the place. They all agreed readily that Hitler was "Kaput". After we were satisfied that Obbach was secure, Company "I" got up on the high ground and gave us some covering fire, then some smoke to hide us from the 88 observers and we attacked Kutzburg. The only thing that happened besides almost walking into our machine gun fire was that Pfc. Shanks (John) got knocked over by the concussion from one of our T.D.'s that were firing.

"One more town and we'll call it a day." We were skeptical about that statement. Company "K" was to attack a town about a kilometer north and "I" Tribe was to attack the town of Kronungen. Kronungen was situated straddling the railway connecting Schweinfurt with Bad Kissinger. It was also necessary in the big picture for the surrounding of Schweinfurt.

The town was down in a little valley across the railroad from us and was, unfortunately, situated such that we had to cross about 1000 yards of open space. We started moving out across the field. The dispersion of the men came automatic since we knew about and had a lot of experience with Jerry and his 88's. The second platoon went around to the left and the first went straight across the open field. Everything was going along fine, the second platoon was almost half way to the town, but then there was a long burst of Jerry machine gun fire and the left flank of the second platoon had been hit. The call for litter bearers came back, then the tracers started coming into the open field, shells started landing about 50 yards from us. The ground would quiver and dirt would shoot up into the air like a geyser, even the flak guns were in on the firing.

Normally we would have hit the ground, but instead we started hollering, shooting and following the platoon leaders, who were doing a bang up good job (later praised for it.)

Pfc. Ruben Turner was wounded, Pfc. Charles Myrick, Pfc. James Lynd, Pfc. Norman Kemp, and Pfc. Donald Gage all from the second platoon lost their lives, but their spirit and heroism saved the lives of many of their comrades. Also wounded at Kronungen during the battle were Pfc. Steve Opozda, and T/5 William Pierce of the first and third platoons respectively.

The machine guns were pumping lead into the town, the mortars were throwing shells, the T.D.'s were firing, the riflemen were really doing a killing job and everything was going full blast. The riflemen knocked the Jerries out and away from their holes and sent them high tailing across the town and up the other side of the valley and into the fire of the T.D.'s and mortars.

Meantime the Jerries had blown up the railroad underpass right on top of the advancing platoons, the men will never forget that terrific explosion. The pieces of rail that went up in the air came hurtling down sounding very much like our old friend the artillery dud. By the time the Jerries had all been killed or captured the town was a blazing inferno with trapped squealing pigs slowly roasting in the burning sheds and barns. The battle of Kronungen ended a day of almost perfect field manual operation. We all wished that there had been some good photographers around as they would have seen and taken some pictures well worth having, of a perfect company "I" attack.

The next morning we went north into the Third Division area in order to get in a better position for the big attack on Schweinfurt. Our objective was to drive down through a forest and split the enemy defenses to the north of the city. The forest was lousy with Krauts and Kraut machine guns so we took the high ground (as usual) and set up a perimeter of defense just as darkness fell. That night Jerry would fire long burst of machine gun bullets. We would answer with our own. A machine gun duel is not especially conducive to sleep or anything that's good, but we weren't on a picnic.

Our attack was aimed at the town of Dittlebrunn at the edge of this forest. The company captured and killed about ten Krauts before we took the town. It was here that our forward observer (Lt. Ficara) scared the devil out of us. Lt. Ficara was trying to get support for the attack. He was sitting next to the mortars calling for artillery. He gave the coordinates of the town and said, "Send us a smoke shell," a couple of minutes passed and - WHAM!! a smoke shell landed about twenty yards in front of us. Lt. Ficara calmly observed that the boys back at the battery were pretty accurate that morning. He called over his radio, "That last round was 50 yards under" and about 30 seconds later here comes a high explosive shell passed by so low that one could hear the sound and almost feel the wind from the shell. Trees in front of us keeled over like they had been hit by a big machete, we wondered...

Company "K" was to capture the town but they ran into a lot of trouble, so Company "I" attacked the woods that lay between Dittlebrunn and Schweinfurt. The third platoon was the "spearhead". After about ten minutes, Krauts were laying all over the place. The third platoon

was in a little war of its own on the left and the second platoon hit the main body of the Krauts. Our mortar section rapidly went into action firing through the tree tops at a range of 300 yards. The Krauts didn't have any love for the mortar rounds as they weren't dug in. The rifle men of the second platoon brought the Krauts out of the woods with their hands above their heads and yelling!! Kamerad!! Kamerad!!

With the capture of Dittlebrunn, Schweinfurt was just a few of thousand yards away. News came down that Schweinfurt was cleared by the 242nd Inf. Regiment, so "I" Tribe settled on the hill outside of town and took a well deserved rest and went back to Obbach for a day.

Again, we hopped on trucks and took off down to Wurzburg to catch up to the 12th Armored which had driven almost to Neustadt. We jumped off the trucks and wearily prepared for another attack. The attack turned out to be a problem--Yes, a problem believe it or not-(Camp Gruber style tactics only three miles from the lines)-The real thing came when the third platoon attacked a town single handedly, and lost a minimum of men. The main body of the company was hugging the high ground in a generally southeast direction and the third platoon was securing the little villages as we went along.

At this particular town, the third platoon ran into a bunch of Krauts. S/Sgt. John Barker and Pfc. Luke C. Meis were injured. In taking the town, the company got a bird's eye view of the attack. The B.A.R.'s and M1's smacking the houses sounded like the town was being ripped apart, rafter by rafter. Everything was so business like, for instance: Two Jerries were running along a fence, one bit the dust, the other one kept going: one slug hit on his left, one on his right and the third downed him...Yes, the third platoon was very methodical that way.

The next morning we went into Neustadt and held it while Engineers repaired a bridge. A few hours later, the 12th Armored Division came tearing through town on the way to Nurnberg. For hours on end the rumble of tanks and half tracks could be heard. We watched from our positions with mixed feelings of envy and admiration. As the 12th Armored went toward Nurnberg., we cut south of Neustadt to take care of a pocket created by the drive on Nurnberg.

These were fast moving days for we were paced by tank destroyers and Recon-cars. One platoon would pile on the T.D.'s while other men would hop on jeeps for scouting and reconnaissance. It was pretty hard on the foot sluggers but we knew that keeping on Jerry's tail was of utmost importance in the big picture. Whenever the jeeps or T.D.'s found Krauts, we would deploy and find out what the trouble was.

We ran into our first resistance about 15 miles from Nurnberg It seemed that five jeeps from the 14th Armored Division were making a reconnaissance down our area. We had deployed near this little town and were waiting for the signal to attack and these jeeps came barreling down the road. They wanted to know why we didn't just walk into the town. They were quite certain the town was unoccupied. They took off towards the town and Jerry machine guns opened up. The jeeps came back in reverse as fast as they went forward.

We attacked the town and found to our pleasant surprise that some Negro infantry from

the 12th Armored had already taken one end of the town. The company kept right on going until we got almost to Cadolsburg. (The home of Julius Streicher the Nazi Jew- Baiter). We ran into beaucoup trouble. As the company made its way up a mountain near Cadolsburg, bullets started singing all around, clipping branches off the trees. We kept right on going until the Jerries who dug in on the crest of the mountain made it too hot for us. While B.A.R. men and riflemen sneaked up to within 150 yards of the Krauts a couple of men from the weapons platoon went around to the right flank and captured the Jerry C.P. The B.A.R.'s got almost a whole company and a couple of Rank Happy Officers who kept telling us they were officers and therefore entitled to more respect. We couldn't see it their way.

On April 20th, Company "I" became part of the ever tightening ring around Nurnberg. The company made a night infiltration down a few miles south of the city in an effort to seal off the German escape route to Munich and points south.

The next morning we found ourselves all alone. Krauts were in every direction, things really looked bad for us as our only source of communications was the radio, and all of us were running short of ammunition. We spent the morning going from one side of town to the other to engage the Krauts. We made attacks in three directions to put Jerry in a precarious situation, the Germans were even more surprised and puzzled. Finally about five that afternoon help got through to us.

Nurnberg was officially captured the next day and we turned south. There was a lot of talk going around about the possibilities of the Germans setting up a southern Redoubt in the Alps and Bavaria or Austria. We were really sweating this situation out.

We began a long march toward the town of Spaltz, but we were stopped before we got there. It was raining, the wind was blowing we were soaking wet and chilled to the bones. A Jerry burp gun opened up and got one of our men. We deployed in the woods and then made a dash through swamps to the town. Colonel Galloway was there and got soaked the same as the rest of us men.

The second battalion ran into a lot of artillery fire and we went down to help them out. The Jerries threw a concentration a few hundred yards from us. T/Sgt. Joe Smigiel (now Mr.) practically tore down a fence getting to cover. We pushed on, crossing blown bridges and muddy plowed fields until we captured high ground overlooking the town of Spaltz. Captain Miller, T/4 Miller and Lt. Holmes went forward with F.O. Section, down the forward slope of this hill to make a reconnaissance and look for possible artillery targets. Instead of finding targets they became the targets for some unusually conscientious sniper. They got back by the sheer Grace of God. Lt. Holmes told us that we almost had a new platoon leader. Bullets continued to crack around us but we just shivered (from the cold of course) and wearily began the attack. We captured about 25 or 30 prisoners, a half track, a flak gun and a small artillery piece.

The next day the company marched all day and all night securing town after town until

we caught up with the main elements of the almost "Kaput German Army". We were told that there were about a thousand Jerries in the vicinity of Monheim. The 45th Division came into our sector to pull a pincer movement to the Jerries north of the Danube. They fought all afternoon trying to bring their lines up even with ours. In the meantime some Me 109's came over strafing- the Second battalion got it--- we were lucky.

From Monheim we attacked straight for the Danube. It was dark and cold and everyone looked like Indians all covered up with blankets. The company made an attack on the village of Itting early that next morning. The first and third platoons flanked the town while the second platoon and the weapons platoon went in for the kill. As we went down the forward slope of the hill entering the town, a Jerry machine gun started up---The bullets sounded hollow and eerie as they thudded in the soft ground. We really sprinted to get out of the line of fire for we must have looked like ducks in a shooting gallery to the Jerries. When the Jerries took off, they became the shooting gallery and our riflemen started picking them off. The same day we captured a huge 120mm mortar, complete with ammunition, and we met the 20th Armored Division.

The next day the company crossed the swift Danube in assault boats and made a bridgehead. We pushed along parallel to the Danube until the bridgehead was long enough and then we waited. The Germans started an artillery barrage to stop the engineers and to wipe out the bridgehead. That morning 120 mm mortars, rockets and all kinds of artillery came in on us. Then our artillery took up the challenge. Everything clear back to Corps and Army artillery blasted the Jerries. As soon as the Jerry artillery quieted down a little we crossed another river. The Krauts got caught with their pants down. They weren't expecting us to cross the river so fast. They must have been plain stupid in their retreat for they took off across an open field that was at least two miles across and flat as a pancake. We had been told that this town of Rain would get us a rest. It would have taken a whole Kraut division to keep old "I Tribe" out.

With that attack on the town of Rain on April 27th, Company "I" for all practical purposes, quit fighting in the European Theater of Operations. The engineers got some substantial bridges across the Danube and the Armor started rolling across and into town. The next day Battalion pushed us out of town. The Regiment pushed Battalion out. Division came along and pushed Regiment out and Corps pushed Division out and finally the Seventh Army pushed Corps out. Our biggest surprise was seeing S.H.A.E.F. Headquarters, complete, with typewriters and WAC's. We went through Dachau to the outskirts of Munich. A little artillery was pounding the center of Munich, that was all. On April 30th, Munich was captured and we went in for security and rear echelon duties.

The Germans were beaten and were surrendering wherever they could find a G.I. Many were trudging along the roads without escort. Those were happy days for us. In that week before official V-E Day, Company "I" was in a constant state of celebration and inebriation. American G.I.s that had been prisoners of the Krauts were celebrating with even more gusto, a happier bunch of men have never been seen. Among the liberated prisoners were some which had been part of our own company earlier in the campaign. From the wreckage of Munich we went to a town on the Inn River and guarded some bridges. We were told that now you are semi-garrison

soldiers.

The war was over, the Southern Redoubt had popped like a balloon, (the redoubt theory was probably one of the worse blunders made by G 2 during the whole war) and we began to feel like human beings again. The Division moved up in the Tyrolean Alps of Austria. Company "I" was situated at two villages about ten miles from the Italian border and the Brenner Pass. Lanersbach and Hintertux. The beauty and magnificence of those Alps the quaintness of the people will always be remembered by the men of Company "I".

We are now in the old music and culture city of Salzburg, pulling guard for the Division. In conclusion, we should like to say that it would be difficult to mention everything and everyone that made our part in this stand out as a symbol of recognition of a hard-hitting, hard fighting, "Rainbow Company" known to all of us as "OLD FIGHTING "I" TRIBE"

There are some things that aren't associated with battle experiences for instance, the inexhaustible wit of Pfc. Morris Engstrom, the skill and conscientiousness of our three never to be forgotten medics: T/5 Jerry Kohn "Pfc. Wyman Mossholder" Pfc. Walter Haymann all known as ---"Doc"---to the boys---or the quiet but firm leadership of T/Sgt. John Bobick. Those are the characteristics that has made Company "I" strictly a --Bronze Star Company".

FINIS

The story that has been told by the men of Company "I" is just a small example of the many unpleasant and many pleasant times they have had together. Sweat, toil and hardships welded the men so tightly together that the same spirit will prevail in civilian life as long as the men live.

Starting with the Rainbow after activation as I look back, there are three of us that are left. T/Sgt. Ground, S/Sgt. Bossard, and myself, who came in as selectees. T/Sgt. John Bobick is still with us, but he was a part of the cadre. Being in the company for two years, one can look back and reminisce getting the big picture.

Our company commander during the first month of battle was relieved and replaced by Captain Carl L. Miller. The company was quite happy about the whole thing. Our executive officer was changed to Lt. Robert O. Ricketts and I became First Sergeant. As I pondered over the situation trying to find out ways to make things easier for the men, we were pulled back for a few days rest. My roster of the men had so many red lines on it from casualties that I put it nearly away and we started all over.

Starting on our big push from Lichtenberg, through to Munich there are many things that will never be forgotten by any man. It was the custom of Company Headquarters to follow the leading platoon, and through this action I was able to observe the fighting spirit of all of the men. The hardest time of all was waiting for attack orders. The strain of those hours or perhaps only a few minutes would make a young fellow feel years and years older. During the attack it was

different as everyone was intent on their mission. Many of these times were repeated until they became an everyday occurrence. Towns, in ruins, villages cloaked in the rotten smell of manure and filth, rivers were taken and bridges were crossed and re-crossed as we steadily pushed on relentlessly. Sure, it was hard, every man ached from the burden of ammunition and physical endurance was almost at ebb tide. Yet they pushed on and on. The theme song of the men after taking hundreds of prisoners was, "Don't Fence Me In," a song that was popular at the time.

The amount of spearheading accomplished by the company was far above any other unit. "First in the bullets and last in the Billets," was the slogan. Though very smart leadership losses were low compared to other companies. The incidences of action are so many it would be futile to speak of them all.

A humorous one occurred while crossing a stream seeing S/Sgt Bossard up to his neck in water with a machine gun held above. In Darnstein where every man had a horse to ride and T/Sgt. Smiegiel had a cow that would follow him around. Pleasant days were spent. As I look back on our travels, it doesn't seem possible – more as a dream – sometimes bad, sometimes pleasant.

In closing, may I add a word of praise to every man living, and those no longer with us, whose action made a complete success possible. I believe it is here that I should thank Pfc. Eugene G. Ryker for writing this brief. Pfc. Ryker is one of the few who can remember every date, every village, and nearly every incident worth remembering and in behalf of the men of "I Tribe" say, Very well done, Gene."

/s/James Turner