

Here I am, on this fine sunny day in **September**, crossing the Schuylkill River bridge. I can see Kelly Drive and Ridge Avenue that leads to Manayunk, my home town. I could be there in ten minutes, but I'm on a troop train with the rest of the men from the 10th Armored Division. We left Camp Gordon at 1300 Hours on **4 September 1944** and are on our way to Camp Shanks, N.Y. the demarcation point for overseas duty. Home is so close and yet so far. I thought, I may not see Kelly Drive or Manayunk for months or years or ever.

We arrived at Camp Shanks **05 September** 2300 Hours, settled in our bunks and went to the mess hall for a long anticipated meal.

The next day, the first order of business was a G.I. haircut - - That's no problem. There were about ten barbers or more and forty or more G.I.'s, but regardless of the size or shape of your head, everyone got the same style haircut - - very short and very fast. Later we practiced boarding and disembarking a ship with the use of rope ~~nets~~ took care of other details, even though it might be possible to receive a two or three day pass to visit our families, but that afternoon the Captain announced that anyone and everyone could get a pass to visit New York City that evening.

I, with a couple of friends, took in the sights and even had time to visit the famous Jack Dempsey restaurant. (He was the world heavyweight boxing champion in 1919 who always stood by the door, greeting and shaking the hand of every patron who walked in.)

On **11 September** we left Camp Shanks by rail and ferry transport and embarked on the U.S. Army Transport Edmond B. Alexander for overseas movement.

On **12 September** at 0300 Hours we pulled up anchor. I looked out the port-hole and could see nothing but the black sky.

When I awoke the next morning I expected to see nothing but sky and water, but when I got close to the port-hole and saw the tall buildings at the skyline and heard loud sounds like tug-boats, it wasn't long before I learned that the Edmond B. Alexander ran aground and hit a sand bar. The tug-boats tried pulling, then pushing her in one direction then another, but could not break her loose. In the meantime the convoy left as scheduled without us.

Headquarters learned that the U.S.A.T. Brazil, a former Bermuda luxury liner, converted to a troop carrier, just returned from Europe,

The ship's commander immediately recalled the crew, restocked the ship with food and other supplies and we were transferred, in the rain, on harbor boats from the Edmond B. Alexander to the U.S.A.T. Brazil.

On 13 September, with just a destroyer on a zig-zagging course escorting us, we set out for Europe.

After three or four days at sea, when it was still dark, I went on deck for some fresh air. It was so refreshing. The smell of salt water and the waves slamming the sides of the ship. Now the sun was slowly rising and as night was turning to day, suddenly right before my eyes, as if by magic, appeared this armada with troopships in the center, freighters and warships on the outside and we were right in the center of the convoy. Because the freighters were slower, I could tell we were doing fewer knots, but it was a relief to have some company. On the 19 September I could hear depth charges exploding, but I couldn't see anything. Evidently they were quite a distance away, but I later learned that the convoy was attacked by enemy U Boats, but were driven off by Navy destroyers Depth Charges - - - but not before they had succeeded in torpedoing one of our convoy's cargo ships.

On 22 September 1944 we were nearing the English Channel. I could see some ships veering off to the left in the direction of the British Isles, but we continued North and on 23 September at 1530 Hours, the

U.S.A.T. Brazil dropped anchor at the port of Cherbourg, France, Because all the docks and piers were destroyed by the Germans, we waited and then at 2030 Hours we were transferred, under darkness and in the rain to L.S.T.'s and guided through the obstacles at the Normandy shores. Seems as though we just hit the Autumn Rainy Season. Many of the obstacles were thick iron rods and mines buried under the water. After we landed on the sandy shore, we marched 18 miles to a bivouac area in an apple orchard 1 mile South of Pierre Eglise. We were immediately told not to pick any apples from the trees because they could be sprayed with poison. 24 September to 27 October we waited for new tanks, artillery guns and other vehicles to arrive from the United States, but before we could use them, the cosmoline had to be removed with solvent and the guns calibrated and the aiming instruments sighted.

It rained almost every day, Soon the bivouac area became a mud hole. We didn't receive our rubber overshoes, so we had to change our shoes every day while the other pair was drying - out over the fire rack. Most of the men were detailed to remove the mud from the road fronting the bivouac area. They had to be kept busy, but I was excused from the detail. On Sundays some of us would walk to the Saint Pierre Church, sit in the choir loft and listen to the Mass in French. One time the Chaplain was hearing confession in English, I was taught in Polish at school. The Chaplain said, "That's O.K. say it the way you know, it will be fine." So I can say, that's the only time I said my confession in Polish, to an English Chaplain, in a French Church.

A couple of my buddies and I got to know a French family in the village who had a young boy about the age of five or six. We would visit them when we had some free time and of course we always took our little French and English booklets and some candy, chewing gum or cookies for the little boy. We would amuse him by showing him some card tricks while his father would go to the barn and return with a tin-pitcher of apple cider. ~~We would sit around the table and practice our English and French, then the little boy would show us the new dance he learned in school.~~

We would sit around the table and practice our English and French, then the little boy would show us the new dance he learned in school. It was getting late and time for the little boy to hit the sack but everytime, before we are about to leave, the Frenchman would go out to the barn and returns with a bottle of calvados. (a French brandy made from apples in the Northwest part of France.) Immediately, we could taste the difference. Now the Frenchman begins to tell us stories about the town and how glad all the people were when the paratroopers dropped into their village on "D" day.

28 October 1944 we departed St. Pierre Eglise, France and motor marched East to Falaise then Danville, Begeres and Chamblor, France.

2 November 1944 the 10th Armored Division was committed to battle. The target was "METZ". One of the most heavily fortified areas on the European continent. All the advantages were on the side of the enemy, who was fighting from steel and 7½ ft. of reenforced concrete, knew every yard of the ground, and held the main heights which gave observation over the whole area. Ft de Queuleu, Ft. Privat, Ft Driant, Ft Diou, Ft de Bois, Ft de Plesinos, Ft De Guis, these were some of the thirty seven forts that encompassed the city of METZ. Artillery was futile in dealing with these enemy fortifications. Planes and heavy bombs were needed and without them the infantry could make no further progress. Forts were connected to each other via underground tunnels with steel doors. Forts were surrounded with dry moats, some thirty feet deep and forty feet wide with barb-wire entanglements and land mines in front of that. An 18ft. high wall surrounded the fort with 100mm and 150mm guns and sharpshooters on top of the walls.

Gen. Patton's plan was to surround the smaller forts, cut off supplies of food and ammunition thereby forcing them to surrender and prevent them from supporting the larger forts when they were attacked.

4 November 1944 we were ordered North of Metz and West of the Moselle River to provide supporting fire in conjunction with the 90th Infantry Division mission of cutting supply lines to the smaller forts North and East of Metz. It was decided that "Jump Off" day would be between 5 and 6 November, Depending on the weather. November 5 was not a lucky day, heavily overcast, so the Jump-Off was postponed. However, late in the after-noon the bombers were able to take off from their bases. The U.S. Eighth Air Force sent 1,476 heavy bombers to blast fortified towns East of the bridgehead area like Fort Driant and other METZ strongpoints, with hundreds of tons of explosives. It also rained on the 6th and 7th November. After the briefing that morning, Patton said, "Tomorrow we attack, no conditions and no doubts". The Jump-off caught the enemy by surprise. Weather and terrain conditions were so adverse, the Germans did not expect a large-scale assault. XII Corps jumped off first. Comprising the 26th, 35th, and 80th Infantry Divisions and 4th and 6th Armored Divisions, the Corps' mission was to clear the southern portion. The XXCorps jumped off the following day, 9th November. Comprising the 5th, 83rd, 90th, and 95th Infantry Divisions and 10th Armored Division; The Corps' mission was to clear the northern portion. I was the liaison and served in this corps. Before we began moving from Chambley to our gun position near Leudelarge, we were under complete blackout orders. That meant no phone or radio communications, all Division markings on the vehicles were painted over and the Division patch on our uniform had to be removed. When we arrived at the gun position, the Captain realized the Forward Observer and his crew were not accounted for. The next morning when I filled out the Morning Report, according to Army Regulations, the members of the crew had to be recorded as missing in action. The Colonel ordered our Captain and his crew, including me, to replace the missing crew. The Captain and his crew in the radio- equipped half-track and the Jeep-driver and me in the Jeep. We proceeded down the road till we came to a couple of tanks and infantry from the 10th Armored Division.

The infantry were hugging the ground in the field and the gullies along both sides of the road. I took cover behind one of the tanks, but soon learned it wasn't a very bright idea because the tanks were drawing fire from two tank destroyers on the hill to the left and a large pill-box close to the road on the right. I made a quick dash for the gutter, but the shells kept coming in. One was so close it blew the helmet right off my head. A short time later I saw Col. Browne walking across the field and up to where we were lying in the gutter. He wanted to know how we were doing. "Just stay where you are and you'll be moving up shortly," he said. For me, this was my baptism of fire, but I thought it took a lot of nerve for him to climb out of his half-track and come up to make certain we were O.K. The forward observers directed artillery fire to our battery, on both targets with good results. The enemy tank destroyers were knocked out and the pill-box was destroyed, enabling our infantry and tanks to advance. When we reached the pill-box I could see most of the roof and some of the walls were blown out. I also noticed a large tarp spread out near the pill-box. When I raised one corner I could see dead enemy soldiers and the odor almost made me sick. We were beginning to move forward again. The forward observers were zeroing their targets for the night, that means they would pick targets they would like to hit at night, but could not see. Fire one or two rounds at each target, write down the distance and elevation and at night they could fire the whole Battery at each target as many times during the night that they wish. Whether it's a building, cross-road or enemy troops. We were preparing to return to our battery position. The front windshield on the Jeep was shattered and the rear was full of shrapnel holes. On returning to our Battery I learned the missing crew was once again with us. They had a mechanical breakdown and because of the complete blackout, they wouldn't contact our Battery or even tell the mechanics, who were repairing their half-track, the name of their outfit, but now that they are with us I could gladly remove their names from the missing in action list.

Just after dark, on the night of 8 November, a small detachment of engineers crossed the Moselle in assault boats, crawled onto the east bank, and there blew a gap in the German wire and mine field with bangalore torpedoes returning to the American side of the river without casualties. At 2100 (9P.M.) the 1st Battalion of the 90th Infantry was dispatched across the river. The first wave received no small arms fire while in the boats. Then they passed through the gap in the German wire and advanced about four hundred yards to the east, then halted to await daylight and the arrival of the remainder of the battalion.

The 90th Infantry Division and the 10th Armored Division's immediate objective was to secure bridgeheads over the Moselle River in the vicinity of Thionville, and to capture the ancient city Konigsmacher and the fort that defends it. The city is an important railroad center and the fort, one of the Major outer defenses of both Metz and the Saar-Moselle triangle. It's capture was necessary for the advance on Saarburg. It could not be bypassed. It had to be taken, and quickly. Rain and snow flurries persisted day after day, grounding the American planes and slowing traffic on the roads to a crawl. More important, the smaller streams that fed into the Moselle River reached torrential proportions and the Moselle itself began to rise above its banks. The plan was to seize a bridgehead during the night with infantry crossing in assault boats, and then to expand this foothold with 10th Armored Division Artillery supporting the infantry from the west bank of the Moselle river.

Every time our Battery moved from one gun position to the new one I had to record the time we left the old position and the name of the town near our new position, the time we arrived and the distance to the new position.

The Moselle had risen steadily since the previous night. During the day it reached flood proportions, swamping its banks, inundating the road approaches and swirling along at a speed that made the flimsy assault boats unmanageable. By the night of 9-10 November the river torrent had nearly isolated the American troops on the enemy bank and it was doubtful whether they could be reinforced and provided with heavy weapons before the Germans gathered enough strength to wipe them out.

Fortunately, for the next three days, supplies were flown across the river by small liaison planes which dropped medical supplies, sleeping bags, socks, gloves, ammunition, and other necessities almost into the American foxholes. With the added ammunition and supplies the 3rd Battalion of the 90th Division moved speedily forward. They slipped past Fort Koenigsmacker before daylight and started the advance toward the high ground which marked the initial objective for the right wing of the 90th Division. On the success of this blow ~~XXXXXX~~ Companies A and B attacked, rushing up the steep hill on which the fort stood, cutting and smashing through the wire entanglements around the fort. Apparently the German soldiers were unaware that any Americans were in the vicinity: no alarm was given until A Company was already in sight of the unmanned, open trenches which lay inside the wire. Both Companies were in the trenches before the Germans could fire more than a few rifle shots. The chief and important parts of the fort lay below the surface, formed as a series of tunnels and underground rooms which were entered by way of steel and concrete observation posts and sally ports at the ground level. In the midst of bursting mortar shells and small arms fire from the superstructure a platoon of engineers and two assault teams began the systematic reduction of the observation posts and sally ports. Satchel charges, placed against steel doors, cleared a path to the stairways leading below. More charges demolished the stairs and cut off access to the surface. Ventilating ports were liberally doused with gasoline and then touched off by a

thermite grenade or a string of threaded TNT blocks. on one occasion a German was blown to the surface by the force of the explosion. All this quickly used up the stock of explosives, and as the day ended additional charges were flown in by an artillery liaison plane and dropped by parachute near the fort. By nightfall they were well established on the west side of Fort Koenigsmacker, but the fortress artillery and heavy machine guns still commanded the roads to the east and harassed the advance of 90th Infantry Division troops moving through the draw north of the fort.

By midnight the 90th had eight battalions of infantry on the enemy bank and a few light antitank guns. Seven towns had been taken and at a few points the bridgehead had been extended about two miles to the east, but the bag of prisoners had been small during the first day of the attack - - only about two hundred - - and it was apparent that the main enemy force had yet to be encountered. While all this was going on the 10th Armored Division infantry with the left flank of the 90th Infantry Division were pushing east north of Fort Kienigsmacker. The troops inside the Fort, with their machine guns and artillery still controlled the roads east of the fort. On the other flank the infantry occupying the high ground captured a three man patrol coming along the back road that led to the fort. The Germans told their captors that a relief party of about 145 men was following, en route to reinforce the men at the fort. Immediately the officer in charge deployed his men and their five machine guns in an ambush and, when the German column was only fifty yards away, gave the order to fire. Over half of the enemy were killed. The rest fled.

Back at Fort Koenigsmacker the infantry made a close penetration at the rear of the fort just as the German battalion there decided to call it quits and evacuate the position. Ringed in completely and trapped by fire on the tunnel exits to the east, the commander put out the white flag. The German main line of resistance was cracking at spots along the ridge lines.

Over five hundred prisoners were taken. Finally, the flooded Moselle had begun to recede. At midnight, tractors loaded with Jeeps, antitank guns and supplies crossed the river. With the flood waters receding so slowly, it would still be a matter of hours before tanks, antitank guns and mortars could be ferried to the 90th Infantry Division. But in the forward positions there was little to cheer the doughboy. (an American infantryman). There still were no dry clothes or blankets in which he might warm himself during the cold November nights.

Finally, at 0930 on 14 November, the 645ft. steel Thionville treadway bridge across the Moselle, the largest Bailey bridge in the European Theater of Operations was ready. On the afternoon of the 14 November, CCB of the 10th Armored Division began the move across the Moselle, head of the column winding along the east bank northward to the 90th Division sector.

The 90th Reconnaissance Troop and light tanks pushed into the unending stream of bridge traffic and swung south to establish contact with the 95th Division bridgehead. By dawn 14 November all regimental transport, three battalions of 105mm. howitzers, a tank destroyer battalion and the vehicles of the engineer battalion were across the river. For the first time in six days and nights the troops in the bridgehead had overcoats, blankets, and dry socks.

CCB began the 10th Armored Division drive on the early morning of 15 November, advancing under flurries of rain and snow along the road east of Kerling. Progress was slow. The reconnaissance units and the platoon of medium tanks at the head of the column were forced to halt again and again to deal with the German road blocks, antitank guns, and pillboxes blocking the highway. (The pillboxes were part of the Maginot Line) The enemy forces stood their ground where they could on 16th November, but the Armored Columns now were well into the German positions and about 250 prisoners were bagged.

To make maximum use of the few poor roads, on 17 and 18 November the 10th Armored Division fanned out in splinter task forces. The Germans no longer had much cohesion, but a few small groups tried to check the American armor with bazooka fire and antitank guns. More than six hundred of the enemy surrendered to the tankers and the armored infantry. For the first time in days the skies had cleared, permitted the XIX TAC (Air Force) to bomb and strafe in force. On 18th November one detachment from CCA reached the Nied River, just across from Bouzonville, but found the bridges blown. A few tanks and infantry discovered a bridge near Filstroff, damaged but still usable, and crossed the Nied north of Bouzonville; night came before the rest could cross. In the meantime the north column of CCB took Launstroff, six miles west of Merzig. One task force drove as far as Schwerdorff, only four and a miles from the junction of the Nied and Sarre Rivers, on 18th November. CCB was moving very slowly as the enemy stiffened to hold the approach routes leading to the Sarre River; apparently there would be no dash to seize the Sarre crossings. But the 10th Armored Division had completed its mission, insofar as the XX Corps envelopment of Metz was concerned; the infantry divisions on the inner rim of the circle had clamped tightly around the city by the morning of 19 November, and there was little probability that the enemy had the reserves available for an attack from the east to relieve the Metz garrison. Specific objectives were no longer assigned. The general mission, however, remained the same: to close the gap east of Metz and join hands with the 5th Infantry Division advancing from the south. The infantry moved forward in trucks when they could, and marched when trucks were lacking or when blown bridges and craters cut the roads. Often the speed of the advance overran the rear guard German demolition details before they could blow the bridges. At the end of the first day of this pursuit the Infantry had troops across the NIED River twelve miles east of Metz, and the 90th Reconnaissance Troop held Avancy, blocking one of the main escape routes from Metz.

Through the night the U.S. troops fired on the exit roads with every weapon they could bring to bear. The cavalry alone counted thirty enemy vehicles destroyed and took more than five hundred prisoners. On 19th November the 359th battalion cut still another of the Metz exit roads at Les Etangs, after an advance in which planes of the XIX TAC worked directly with the infantry, swooping down as close as one hundred yards in front of the U.S. patrols to strafe the fleeing enemy. From the 17th through the 19th November good flying weather prevailed; General Weyland was able to commit all of his five flying groups. As usual, the presence of the fighter-bombers cheered the U.S. ground troops. The Third Army Diary notes on 18th November "This was the best and biggest Air day that the Third Army has had for a long time. God in all His wisdom having given us a clear day. For most of the enemy who were trying to find a way out of the pocket all hope of continuing the battle was gone; pounded by planes and guns, they surrendered willingly. About 1030 on 18 November the 90th Reconnaissance Troop, from the North, met the 735th Tank Battalion and the 5th Infantry Division, from the South and the envelopment of Metz, and the forts around it had been successfully completed, but the support troops coming from the East had to be dealt with. General Patton's orders were for the 90th Infantry Division and the 10th Armored Division to attack in the north easterly direction toward Merzig and the Sarre River. There were two man made barriers. They were the Orscholz Switch Line (also known as the "Siegfried Switch") and the West Wall fortification composed of field works, anti-tank barriers, and reinforced concrete pillboxes and bunkers. On 17th November the German Infantry began a withdrawal to the north under pressure by the 90th Division and the 10th Armored Division. This was an orderly movement, and by 19th November the Germans were established in the Orscholz line. The balance of the German division retreated to the east and there deployed northwest of Merzig on the near bank of the Sarre River.

Sarre River. As the Germans retreated, we moved up. On 18 November we left our gun position 2 miles east of Kerling, France at 1600. Arrived at our new position 2 miles SW Lounstroff, Germany which is 5 miles west of Merzig at 1645. During this time, patrols from the 43rd Reconnaissance Squadron ~~XXX XXXXXX~~ had established observation posts on the hills near Mittel, from which the U.S. troops looked down draws to the Sarre River approximately five thousand yards to the east. From our gun position near Lounstroff we could support all the troops with artillery, facing north, northeast, east, and southeast. We fired to stop counter-attacks, support 90th Infantry Division, support the 10th Armored Division, to destroy pill boxes, fortifications, to harassing the enemy and all the time our gun position was fired on, some days every hour during the day or every hour during the night.

On 22 November 1944 - all resistance at Metz ceased, but the drive into Germany was still on and Merzig was the objective for Combat Command "B". LAUNSTROFF, BETHINGEN, BUDINGEN, HALSTROFF, SCHWERDORF all were captured and COMBAT COMMAND "B" was only 1½ miles from MERZIG. Through most of the month of November the weather was either cold and rainy or cold and cloudy. This ended the phase for Combat Command "B". General Morris on December 2 brought in Combat Command "A" to relieve Combat Command "B" who trudged back to the vicinity of Perl, Germany, for maintenance, re-equipping, reorganization, and cleanup of equipment and self. At last we were able to take that long awaited shower, change into clean clothes, get some sleep, clean our guns and howitzers and restore our gas, ammunition and food supplies.

After participating in the XX Corps' capture of Fortress Metz, the 10th Armored Division joined the Corps effort to break the Siegfried Line in the Saar-Moselle Triangle. While in position near Perl, Germany the 420th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was selected to organize and perform a demonstration of the new, then secret, VT or POZIT fuze. All available Field Officers, particularly Artillery men of XX Corps, were to attend. On 6 December, 1944 the Battalion Commanding Officer and an advance party strong in Survey, Fire Direction and Communication moved out to select a "Demonstration Area" suitable for this mission.

The next day, 7 December, the Battalion, followed, cutting across the Main Supply Routes of the three Divisions in contact and covering the forty three mile move in four hours. The nearest town on the maps was Bionville, France on the southern edge of XX Corps. The journal entry reads "Departed Perl, Germany at 1045 on mounted motor march to Bionville, France, arriving at 1500. Distance travelled 43.6 miles. Weather cold and rainy. Morale good.

An "impact area" of rolling, varied terrain was picked. Shot-up vehicles and farm equipment were placed as identifiable targets in the valley, on the slope, and even on the crest, to best illustrate the standard height of burst of this new fuze. Survey and registration took place as others were laying communications for ourselves and to tie into Corps lines should higher Headquarters need to reach any of the attendees. The usual "demonstration" services for the real VIP's were set up: warming tents; parking areas; hot coffee; mess tents with hot meals; and yes, extra field glasses; a public address system; and some folding chairs. I was with my Captain at the "Demonstration Area". We had a phone line connected to our Battery and I was my Captain's phone operator relaying any messages or information, but none of the VIP services were available to me. The day of the "shoot", 10 December dawned cold and rainy but happily not foggy, as a result visibility was good.

The firing went well. The targets have been placed to show that the fuze would burst the shells uniformly above the target, whether it was on flat ground or on the slope, up hill or down. All guns in every Battalion had the opportunity to fire their guns, from the 75mm to the 5 inch and 8 inch guns, and in each instance the shells burst about fifty feet above the target. The forward observers did an excellent job, but it also illustrated that with the POZIT or MAGNETIC fuze it took all the guess work out of the fuze timing and in every instance the shell burst exactly over the target with the full force of the shrapnel. Following the shoot, hot meals and coffee were available to the Officers and Dignitaries of the U.S. Military and Foreign countries like England, France, Poland and other allies. Those interested had the opportunity to talk to the Fire Direction and Survey crews and to the gun crews as well. The remainder of the day was spent "cleaning up the battlefield" by the clean-up crews. The next day, 11 December our "vacation" was over. We left Bionville, France at 0915 arrived in new position 1½ miles North of Wehingen, Germany 1435. Distance traveled 50 miles to fire for Task Force Polk, 695 Mechanized Cavalry. XX Corp. Weather cloudy, rainy, and cold. Since the weather has been so bad the last few weeks and we are now in Germany I thought I would take advantage of the fact and occupy one of the houses just at the edge of Wehingen. In France, since they are our allies, we would ask for permission just to sleep in the barn, but in Germany we were going to occupy his home and he would have to stay with his relatives or friends. I don't know what he was doing there anyway since most of the men were in the military. He spoke in German and I didn't understand him, but from the tone of his voice and the expression on his face I could tell he didn't approve of the idea, so I just pointed my carbine at him, pulled back the bolt and told him in a commanding tone, "Mach schnell" (make it fast) He looked at my carbine, then he looked at me, did an about face, and walked out the door.

11 December 1944 - My friend Cohen, who was standing close to me said, "The next time you are confronted with an arrogant ass-hole like this, shoot the bastard."

I would never loot any of the homes whether French or German, but I just wanted to see the kitchen and basement, the bathroom and how many bedrooms. When I went up to the bedrooms I looked into the clothes closets of the master bedroom. To no surprise, it was full of top quality men's clothing and in the back were complete sets of black SS troop uniforms. On the chest and sleeves of the uniforms were sewn or pinned various ribbons and medals. I don't know what they represent, but he must hold a high rank in the SS. I immediately called down for Cohen to come up stairs and pointed out the uniforms to him. He wasn't surprised either.

On 14 December Patton went to Luxembourg, for a final conference with General Bradley regarding the planned offensive. Elaborate planning had already been in progress for weeks for the momentous Siegfried (or West Wall) assault. The important points of Patton's plan was to drive the Germans out of the strong Siegfried defenses, force him to fight out in the open, where there were few main roads, where the terrain was flat and unobstructed and would greatly favor Third Army and the tanks would have easy rolling.

Preparations for the assault were detailed and elaborate. Thousands of multi-colored maps were compiled and distributed. Every unit, down to squads and sections, had its own set of maps showing not only every feature of the terrain, but the location of every enemy position and obstacle. This great amount of information was secured from aerial photography and one P.O.W. in particular. He was a German Major General. He commanded a division in France until captured late in the summer. During his captivity he came to the conclusion that Germany lost the war and it was his duty, to the German people, to do every thing he could to bring the war to a speedy end. He pinpointed hundreds of emplacements, also the details of their construction, the weapons, their strong points, and weak-spots. He supervised the construction of a key section of the West Wall that the Third Army was to attack. Attired in his own uniform, repaired and cleaned for the occasion, he briefed Corps and Division Commanders on where and how to attack the Line. He gave this lengthy report in English, which he taught himself during captivity. Of course, there is always the other side of the story. To get him to cooperate, G-2 (intelligence officers) would entertain him with apple pie, sweets, American food, coffee and cigarettes, all of which he would acclaim as "WUNDERBAR!"

The plan for the ground assault to the Rhine consists of the 10th Armored Division attacking in the Saarlautern area, the most heavily fortified portion of the entire West Wall.

16 DECEMBER 1944 - dawned with the Third Army poised and ready for the attack on the West Wall. Regrouped and rested in our hard-won positions, we were all set. The gas tanks were all full, the ammunition trailers were full, we had cases of food rations, and small ammunition. Once again, everyone was weather conscious. The outlook was not too promising, but there was a chance for fair flying weather by 19 December. That was all the Third Army asked.

A group of men and I were hanging around in a house in Wehingen, Germany. Our battalion was firing harassing fire in support of Task Force Polk, XX Corps. 695TH ARMORED F.A.BN. They were firing harassing fire on enemy positions just to make them think we were preparing for a major attack and make them move troops from other areas to this area.

The next morning, 17 December, while we were having our breakfast, wouldn't you know it, the Germans started shelling our area. The shells were flying in and I hit the ground. A short time later the shelling stopped. Fortunately no vehicles were hit and only one man was hit by shrapnel and that wasn't serious. Unexpectedly I hear "March Order", "March Order" with total blackout. That means we have to paint over the Division markings on all vehicles and tanks and remove our Division patch from our sleeve. Everyone is asking the same question, "Where are we going?", but no one knows the answer. Our Division gets underway within an hour after receiving orders and we have road priority. That means all other traffic has to clear the road to allow us to pass through. We leave our firing position in Wehingen, Germany which is about ten miles south of the Luxembourg border at 0920 Hours heading north, in cold and foggy weather.

The top speed that we can make with our tanks and half-tracks is about 20 miles per hour and that would be on solid hard surface roads, but with the snow-covered roads it takes longer. As we pass through the small towns of Luxembourg many of the people come out to greet us. Many of them are tossing flowers and apples. The young girls especially, cheering and taking advantage of their knowledge of the English language, shout "How Do You Do" "How Do You Do"? and we respond with a cheer and a wave.

It's Great! It feels good to see a friendly people.

We continue north till we come to a concealed bivouac area near Cossingen, Luxembourg which is close to the larger Luxembourg City. We arrive at 1645 hours. Distance traveled 70 miles. Weather rainy and cold. It's here we learn that the sky is falling in the north, but no other details.

The next day, 18 December we leave Cossingen, Luxembourg at 1100. Weather is rainy and cold. Going further North in Luxembourg and entering Belgium the situation is altogether different. There are so many people, adults and children coming down the road, but they aren't cheering and waving. They are going south, pushing hay wagons, carts, baby carriages, anything with wheels loaded with boxes, bags, bundles, all of their possessions. They have that look of desperation and fear in their eyes and the children are holding hands and at times running just to keep up. The people are taking some of the road which forces us to reduce our speed. We still don't know where we're going and why. Then I begin to see some soldiers intermingling with the civilians. One without a helmet, one without his weapon, but all with that glassy look in their eyes. Some of the American troops that were in the front lines when the German assault began have little combat experience. As a result, when some of their officers or leaders are wounded or taken prisoner, the soldiers become confused, lost or frightened and are wandering around like the ones I saw on the road. ~~When our Col. Brown sees them, he immediately rounds them up, places them with officers or leaders who need them and are just too happy to get them.~~

Why are we going north when everyone else is going south? Soon we turn off the road and onto an open, snow covered field on our left. X Immediately we go into a firing position facing east. As soon as each tank comes to a halt the gun crew goes into action.

The No.1 man checks the minimum elevation. The No.2 man checks the breach-block and the lanyard. The No.3 man (or the gunner) checks the sight and indicates to the No.4 man, by way of arm movement, where to position the two aiming poles and the No.5 man jumps out and begins unloading the ammunition from the ammunition trailer. All this action, after hours and hours of practice back in the states, takes us only seconds. ~~Less time than it takes me to type this.~~ As soon as we receive the coordinates from the forward observers we begin firing. It is **18 December** 1815 hours when we arrive just east of Bastogne, Belgium and we traveled 41 miles in rain and cold. While we are firing at the attacking German forces, Col. Roberts created three teams supported by the artillery positioned behind them. First he ordered Col. James O'Hara to take 500 men and 30 tanks and block the road from the southeast that led to Bastogne from the town Wiltz. Col. Cherry was packed off with a similar force toward Longville, directly east of Bastogne. Col. Roberts told Major William Desobry to take the third task force to the northeast and to hold the town of Noville. Desobry was just 26 years of age and Col. Roberts was just like a father to him. Col. Roberts put his arm around Desobry's sholder and offered him some fatherly advice. "By tomorrow morning," he said, "you'll probably be nervous. Then you'll probably want to pull out. When you begin thinking like that, remember I told you not to pull out." These towns are about ten miles apart on hard surface, key roads leading into and out of Bastogne and are extremely important to the Germans as avenues of attack for their panzer forces.

Bastogne is a market town with a population of slightly over four thousand. It stands on a plateau at 1,600 feet elevation. It lacks the vast expanses of forest and the rough terrain of most of the Ardennes; much of it is pasture land amid rolling hills with occasional wood lots of evergreen trees. Bastogne had been a bastion of considerable military importance, primarily because of its central position astride the high plateau and its number of roads. Five major and three secondary highways plus a railroad.

on a shop-lined square near the southern edge of town. It is the roads plus the railroad that makes Bastogne important to Americans and Germans alike. I remember vividly the first gun position we had was right along the railroad tracks. From there we could reach Team Desobry, Team Cherry and Team O'Hara with our artillery shells. Bastogne is surrounded with small farm villages with sturdy brick and stone buildings providing solid defenses for tanks or personnel.

We are finally getting information in bits and pieces for the reason we are moving north. If you recall, on 16 December we were poised and ready for the attack on the fortified Siegfried Line or West Wall. Then, suddenly out of the blue, the sky is falling in the north. There are reports of an enemy attack, but the reports are indefinite and give no indication as to the strength or power of attack. Because of the snow, the rain and the fog, the Cavalry, the ground and air forward observers are unable to detect enemy troop movements and what noise they hear during the night could have been replacements moving in or out. NO! this is Hitler's all-out, last effort to recapture Western Europe. His plan is to divide or split the American armies by sending two Panzer Armies toward the Meuse River to capture Namur and Liege, then capture Antwerp and Brussels. Liege and Antwerp are two big supply depots. Its capture would give the German Army immense stores of urgently needed gas, and other supplies. With Liege and its huge stock in their possession, the Germans would be in a powerful position to capture Antwerp, only 70 miles northeast.

A total of 25 Divisions (10 of them armored) are in place, divided into three armies. In the north, SS General Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army is to advance on Antwerp. In the center, General Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army is to attack towards Brussels. In the south, General Brandenberger's Seventh Army is to protect the south flank. with more than 275,000 troops and nearly 1,000 armored vehicles available, the German force is formidable.

Facing it are about 83,000 U.S.G.I.'s. They are supported by no more than 450 armored vehicles. The German attack began early on 16 December with a short artillery bombardment. We can do little to prevent a breakthrough because of the overcast skies, we are denied aircover. We are firing all night. There is certainly no shortage of targets.

Suddenly I hear a loud cry, "I lost all my men, I lost all my men." I can't see him because it's dark and the fog, I don't know if he's a Commissioned or NonCommissioned Officer, but I can tell from the sound of his voice that he's pacing back and forth and is in a hopeless situation. I never did hear what happened to that soldier. I just prayed for him.

We begin setting up outposts around the perimeter of our gun position. I and two other men are picked for our outpost. That means we have to dig an outpost big enough for three men to move around freely and deep enough to reach our shoulders when standing up. Two men handling a .30 caliber machine gun and me with my carbine. The toughest part is digging through the snow and the top layer of frozen ground. Another group of three men alternate with us on a two hours on and off shift. That is not only at night, but day and night in the event the roadblocks cannot hold.

Word begins to circulate throughout the area that the 101st Airborne Division is coming tomorrow 19 December. That is certainly good news. We can use all the help we can get.

18 December 1944 - We arrived at Bastogne on 18 December 1944. Our first gun position was East of Bastogne City. The German winter offensive was well under way and the situation at Bastogne was already critical. The Battalion immediately went into position. Forward observers were sent out to Team O'Hara, Cherry, and Desobry. Each Forward Observer registered with each Battery. Only one gun would fire at a target picked by the forward observer. Adjustments would be made until the forward observer's commands bring the shell right on target, then when the forward observer gives the command to fire for effect, all six guns fire at the target. Just when the Battery was finished registering, enemy mortars, light and medium artillery shells came landing right in our position. Mine fields were laid in front of the Battery position and infantry and bazooka squads were formed by each Battery. Our Battalion was firing missions to the North, East and South. We were alerted to expect an enemy attack at any time led by Sherman tanks and Germans dressed in American uniforms.

The next morning 19 December 1944 I keep looking up to the sky for any sign of the paratroopers jumping out of planes and hitting the ground in our area. Because of the foul weather, the paratroopers were not coming by plane, they were coming by truck.

At a time when much of the German army was still horse-drawn, the Americans had thousands and thousands of trucks and trailers in France. They were being used to haul men, materiel, and gasoline from the beaches of Normandy to the men at the front lines. They were ordered to drop whatever they were doing and start hauling the reinforcements to the Ardennes. The response can only be called incredible. The process began as darkness fell on December 17. By 0900 on December 18, the first trucks and trailers began arriving at the rest camp. The last of the 380 trucks needed for the movement of 11,000 men of the 101st Paratroopers arrived at the camp at 1720. By 2000 the last man was outloaded. The trucks had no benches, and damn little in the way of springs. Every curve sent men crashing around, every bump bounced them up in the air. The trucks drove with lights blazing until they reached the Belgium border. The trucks stopped a kilometer or two outside Bastogne. The men jumped out, relieved themselves, stretched, grumbled and formed into columns for the march into Bastogne.

That's when I saw them marching toward us, in single file, on both sides of the road. Because they boarded the trucks in a hurry and with whatever gear they had available there were many items they had no time to bring with them. Some have no gloves, some have no warm jackets, some have no gloves or sox, some even have no amunition, so we quickly pull out all the equipment and food rations we have and pass them out to the paratroopers. They continue their march to reinfoce the front lines.

19 December 1944 - This morning the Captain told me I would be put on burial detail. That's one detail I really didn't favor, but a few hours later he came to me and said to forget about the burial detail and told me to accompany him to the first-aid station to visit some of our men. The Aid-station is just a short way to the rear. It's a stone, one room school - house with a four or five foot stone wall surrounding it. We went up the stone walk and entered the school-house. Most of the men were sitting or lying on the floor. The men with minor wounds are tended to, then returned to their units. The men with more serious wounds are tended to, then sent to the make-shift hospital in Bastogne for additional treatment. A Belgian by the name of RENEE LeMAIRE, who speaks both French and English is a volunteer nurse from the western side of Belgium. The Belgians from the Eastern side speak German. I also notice, written on the blackboard, in French, the story of St. Nicholas coming to visit all the good boys and girls at Christmas. Some of the paratroopers are talking, it must be something funny because they are laughing and joking. We talked to the men from our outfit and wanted to know if there was something they needed or if there is anything we can do for them. Of course, the family will be informed of the situation. The paratroopers are really a Band of Brothers. We are familiar with them and they know us because we both were stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, except we were housed in the Sand Hill area and the paratroopers were housed in the Main Post area where the towers they used for parachute jumping were located. Columbus was our liberty town. Macon was close by, but that was off limits. A few times, when we were in Columbus, walking down the Main Street, we'd see a paratrooper running out of a restaurant or some other building then hear a loud yell "Geronemo, Geronemo." That was the code word for "Situation Critical, Situation Critical ". Before you knew what was happening, there would be five to ten other paratroopers around to help him. That's how they were trained: To work together and help each other.

20 December 1944 - The winter fog was so thick that I could see a thing in front of me. By this time the entire 101st Airborn was now on the scene along with Col. Roberts combat command "B" of the 10th Armored Division. Also there was the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, a crack outfit armed with new high-velocity 76mm guns that could knockout any enemy tank. All of these forces were deployed in a defensive arc around Bastogne and in the center were stationed the artillery(including us)-- seven battalions strong, including three battalions of long-range howitzers. The artillery could lob shells far enough to reach German forces anywhere around Bastogne, not The last road was closed the night of 20th December. Bastogne was now surrounded, forming a lumpy circle about five miles in diameter. Being surrounded did not worry the men in the circle, the paratroopers were accustomed to it. What did worry us was the lack of supplies. Ammunition, artillery shells, food and gasoline and medical supplies were dwindling fast and had to be rationed. Medical facilities were dangerously scarce. The 101st Airborn's medical unit,including most of its surgeons and equipment had been captured by a roving German force on 19 December. The wounded were being cared for in a makeshift clinic, nursed by a few doctors and medical corpmen and some Belgian volunteers. Virtually the only pain-killer on hand was Brandy. Fortunately, it was in generous supply. Anytime the paratroopers needed Artillery support they'd call on the Armored Division or if they needed German tanks destroyed they'd call on the Tank Destroyer Outfit for support.

Later that afternoon the fog lifted and it began snowing. At night the Germans would turn on the floodlights and point them to the clouds in the sky, thereby reflecting the light beam to the ground and exposing our troops on the ground.

21 December 1944 - General Brandenberger's 7th Army cannot capture Bastogne so they continue West, but they never reached the Meuse River because they ran out of gas. Since this road, leading into Senonchamps and Bastogne is the only-one still open, the Germans decided to put up road-blocks and eventually surround Bastogne completely. The defense of Bastogne here will be passed on to the 420th Armored Field Artillery.

The defensive ring around Bastogne is getting smaller and tighter. We have to move our gun position southwest of Bastogne close to Senonchamps in order to reach the targets in every direction and at the same time keep our howitzers safe from any German attack. The Captain, the Jeep driver and I start out in the Westerly direction. We find a fairly good position where the other artillery battalions are located, then the Captain calls our Executive Officer on the phone and tells him we are located near Senonchamps and how to reach us since the new position is only two or three miles away. Thirty minutes went by and there is no sign of the Officer and the Battery. The Captain decided to wait a while longer, but another thirty minutes passes and the Captain says to me, "Solarz, go and see if you can find them".

That seemed a little strange to me because every other time when the Captain and I found a new gun position that was closer to the target, I remained at the new position alone and that was an eerie feeling. Always looking in every direction suspiciously while the Captain returned to the battery, led them to the new position, then I took over and directed six Self-Propelled howitzers to their new gun position. The faster I ran through the snow, ice, the muddy fields, the faster the howitzers followed. At the same time by means of arm and hand signals I indicated the direction of the target, the formation of the guns either straight line or hexagonal and when to cut engines. Back in the States, during practice or maneuvers each member of the gun crew had his assigned task. Each gun section was timed from the moment the howitzer stopped to the moment the gun was ready to fire. Speed was imposed on every section and every section member.

19 December 1944 - As the battle for Bastogne raged, it caught the attention of the world. The daily front page maps showing Bastogne surrounded. The legend of the 101st was aided by those maps "showing one spot" holding out inside the rolling tide.

But the 101st was not alone inside Bastogne. A combat command team of the 10th Armored Division was there, along with supporting units from the combat engineers, anti-aircraft units, and more. What stands out about the defense of Bastogne was not so much infantrymen in foxholes holding off the German tanks as the combined-arms approach the GIs used. It was something to learn for the paratroopers, who had in Normandy and Holland fought pretty much on their own. When they were on the attack, as they were in Normandy and Holland, they would jump from planes, but miles behind the front lines. Form teams, squads or pairs, depending on their mission and capture bridges, major crossroads, villages and prevent the enemy from using them in their effort to retreat from the American troops attacking them. But now the paratroopers have the support of the tanks and armored artillery, but no advance knowledge of the techniques of infantry fighting with tanks. Even as the battle raged, Col. William Roberts CO of the 10th Armored Division, circulated among the Paratroopers giving them tips on the proper employment of, their capabilities and limits. Roberts chief criticism of the 101st was that the junior officers tended to use tanks as immobile pillboxes to block roads; Roberts told them to keep the tanks moving and to use them as a mobile reserve.

I just heard that one of our forward observers, a pilot in a cub plane, was shot down and taken prisoner.

This time, the Jeep driver (Cutter) and I drive around where we think the Battery might be, but there is no sign of them. I then think they might have gone, by error, through the city of Bastogne. As we enter the city, I notice the streets are very narrow, snow covered and chunks of concrete. Bricks and lumber strewn along the streets. Cutter had to drive with care and I had to look out for the Battery. The buildings are old, one right next to the other with it's own fairly large doorway and three or four or more stories high. Suddenly I hear a loud, screeching noise of artillery and mortar shells crashing into the walls of the buildings near us. Immediately I run for cover, to the first doorway I see and the driver runs in the opposite direction. The shells explode, then shrapnel, mortar, stone comes raining down. I think we'll be buried in all the rubble and the weird sound of the artillery and mortar shells was enough to scare the hell out of me. The shelling stopped after about five or ten minutes that seemed like eternity. When the dust settled, I carefully made my way to the Jeep and yelled for Cutter that the shelling was over. As soon as he returned, we continued looking for the Battery. I then suggested we take the wider street to the right, it looks like one that Armored Artillery tanks would take. Nothing in sight, just some civilian cars. We are about to give-up then I tell the driver to take the next street on the left. As he's turning left I see it's covered with rubble like the last one, but lo and behold our Artillery Battery is parked down the street. Just then I hear the same sound of screeching artillery and mortar shells. The same sound of shells exploding, bricks and concrete raining from above. Immediately, for cover, I run to the first doorway I see. The moment I got there I raised my head and almost collided with the elderly couple standing in the doorway. "What shall we do, where shall we go?" the woman asked in fairly good English but a frightened tone. "The best thing is to go down to the basement and stay there until the shelling stops," I advised her. The shelling did stop shortly after.

Cutter drove up to where the Battery was parked. I see only the Lieutenant at the front of the column. I shouted to the Lieutenant to turn the column ^{and} around follow me. The Lieutenant cried out "March Order". Immediately the men came running out from all the doorways and onto their vehicles and tanks. I told Cutter to take the lead and I got on-to the first vehicle after the Jeep because it's higher and I could see the whole column including the Lieutenant in the last half-track. I guided the column out of Bastogne and on the way to the new gun position. On our way one of the men in the half-track said "Solarz, are you sure you know the way"? and I replied, "Yes, I know the way". It was then he told me about "Joe Malaka" who was hit by a piece of shrapnel right through his steel helmet during the last shelling.

21 December 1944 - When we were coming into our new gun position our Captain was so happy he greeted us with a big smile. He immediately signaled the firing formation and the line of fire. In just a few seconds the Battery was ready to fire although we were running low on ammunition and some Batteries were rationing theirs. The next priority was the placement of men that were not in gun crews, in groups of two or three to dig fox holes around the Battery for protection. It was hard digging through the snow, ice and the frozen ground. Whenever we moved to a new gun position we always dug new foxholes. This time, I was assigned with two other men. Me with my carbine and the two with their .30 cal. machine gun. We'd alternate every two hours with another team. At night, especially if there was a thick fog or heavy mist, like tonight. I keep my ears and eyes open for every sound and motion. When I concentrate or focus my sight on a particular tree or bush, after a short time, it looks like the tree or bush is moving. If the wind blows some leaves or branches your not certain if that's the enemy trying to infiltrate your position or not.

22 December 1944 - We are in a gun position near the town Senonchamps (Southwest of Bastogne) with constant shelling by enemy mortar and artillery fire during day and night. The foul weather which favored the movement of the German blitz, continued its pattern of snow and heavy fog. Our Battery position is being attacked by enemy infantry, but with the help of 101st Airborn and a Platoon of our own 54th Armored Infantry Battalion, we are able to successfully repulse the attack. The 50. caliber machine-guns on the top of each self-propelled howitzer (that's six) and the 30. caliber machine guns on the right side of the driver, (that's six more) gives us a good amount of fire power.

Senonchamps is of considerable importance to the defense of Bastogne, for from it run two secondary roads leading to the Bastogne-March highway, one of them joining the highway only a mile from the first buildings of Bastogne. In mid-morning, Kampgruppe Kunkel renewed its attack. Three more times during the afternoon the Germans tried to break into Senonchamps while their infantry worked through nearby woods to get at our howitzers. Our Main Line Of Resistance is getting smaller and tighter. The Germans keep shelling our gun position, but we can't retaliate. Our ammunition supply is running low, forcing us to ration our supply and become selective on the targets we choose. Our food and medical supplies are getting smaller. Our wounded soldiers can't be evacuated to hospitals because we're surrounded. The only thing we can do is pray for clear and dry weather to bring out the Air Force fighters and bomber. The Germans brought one of their tanks to break through our infantry and get to our artillery. At the same time I could hear a tank, from the 705th Tank-Destroyer Battalion coming down the road so slowly and so quietly. I could almost touch it as it went by in the direction of the front line. It was just a short time later that the same tank-destroyer was returning and going in the same direction he came from.

22 December 1944 - Later that day, as we were standing in the chow line some of the men from the Infantry Battalion told us a German tank was firing shells that exploded above the infantry, forcing them to retreat and leave the artillery in the open with no protection. The first shot the tank-destroyer fired, hit the track on the German tank. The tank spun around in circles but could not get away. Two of the tankers jumped out and dashed into the forest. The tank-destroyer fired another round. This one hit the turret, causing it to jam. Now the tank couldn't fire another round. The remaining crew abandoned the tank and ran into the forest like the first two.

22 December 1944 - That morning, a thick white mantle covered the somber buildings of Bastogne, giving the town an air of peace and security. All the men in the foxholes and in lonely out-posts on the edges of the defense circle felt a growing confidence too, but for a different reason. When word spread that we were surrounded, rivalry among the various units was suddenly forgotten. The paratroopers now grudgingly admitted that the 10th Armored Division teams had put up one hell of a fight and had saved the bacon during the first two days. The sharp rivalry among the regiments of the 101st also ceased. Of course no self-respecting 501st man would want to be in the Five-O-Deuce, the 504th, or the 327th Glider, but those were pretty good outfits to have on your side. Even the stragglers, Team Snafu, had finally caught the spirit. They had stumbled into town exhausted, shocked in mind and body, but several days of sleep and food had revived them.

In the northwestern outskirts, at McAuliffe's command post, there was an atmosphere of confidence. An encouraging message had just arrived. It read, "Hugh is coming". This meant that General Hugh Gaffey's 4th Armored Division was making its final drive north to relieve Bastogne. General Patton had kept his vow to move three Divisions, the 4th Armored, along with the 26th and 80th Infantry Divisions out of the line in the south (Saar Region) and get them into action up north (Luxembourg and Belgium) in less than 72 hours. At night I could see the muzzle-blast of the 4th Armored Artillery. To me it seemed that they weren't advancing very much, but every yard they advanced was hard fought. I didn't know the terrain was like a roller-coaster; it had deep hollows and ravines; it was heavily wooded. The 4th Armored Division was using the new Posit Fuse artillery shells that our Battery and others were using during the demonstration we performed for American and Foreign Military Commanders on or about 2 December near Perl, Germany.

It's not unusual to hear someone firing into the shrubs or trees, with no enemy there. Just last night an officer from one of the other batteries was making the rounds, checking on the outposts in his area making certain everything was in order and the men were awake. The next morning they found him dead, but they're not sure if he was shot by a German or one of his own men. **On 22 December 1944**, it snowed, a soft, dry snow. It kept coming, 6 inches, 12 inches. The temperature fell to well below freezing, the wind came up, even in the woods. Everyone was colder than we have ever been in our lives. My boots became soggy, my socks got wet. The first opportunity I got, I changed to **dry socks** I had in my meurette bag. Many men have Trench-Foot. Up to now I'm fortunate. When my socks get wet I try to change to dry ones as soon as I can, and rubbing my feet helps circulate the blood. Every two hours my two fox-hole buddies and I would start out to relieve the three men that are now on duty. The trip out to the Outpost was always eerie. You eyed all silhouettes suspiciously. Reluctantly, you approach the C.P. The silhouettes of the men in their positions are not clear . . . Are they Germans? The suspense is always the same . . . then finally I recognize an American helmet. Feeling a little ridiculous, yet also relieved. I turn around and repeat the entire process in another two hours. In other foxholes, men talk quietly or whisper especially if they come from the same state or just want to relieve the tension. Don and I would talk about a hot meal, our families, what we would do when we got home.

22 December 1944 - That same day 22 December about 11:30 a.m. a guard from the 101st Airborn spotted a group of Germans walking up the road from the town of Aflon toward the farmhouse he was occupying. The guard quickly got on the field telephone to his command post. "There're four Krauts coming up the road", he reported . "They're carrying a white flag. It looks like they want to surrender."

The Germans - - a Major, a Captain and a pair of enlisted men - -carried a document and asked to be taken to the American commanding general. The envoys were ushered to the platoon command post, where the enlisted men were left under guard. The two German officers were then blind-folded and led to the company command post. They were held there while Major Jones carried their documents to division headquarters. When Major Jones arrived at division headquarters, he made it quite clear that the Germans had expressed no intention of surrendering. "It's an ultimatum, sir," Jones said to Lieut. Colonel Moore, the 101st chief of staff. Moore took the two sheets of type-written paper and looked at them. What does it say?" McAuliffe demanded. "They want you to surrender," Moore replied.

The ultimatum said in part:

To the U.S.A. Commander of the encircled town of Bastogne:

The fortune of war is changing. This time the U.S.A. forces in and near Bastogne have been encircled by strong German armored units.

There is only one possibility to save the encircled troops from total annihilation: that is the honorable surrender of the encircled town.

In order to think it over, a term of two hours will be granted beginning with the presentation of this note. If this proposal should be rejected, one German artillery Corps and six heavy A.A. Battalions are ready to annihilate the U.S. troops in and near Bastogne. The order for firing will be given immediately after this two hour term. All the serious civilian losses caused by this artillery fire would not correspond with the well-known American humanity.

The German Commander
Lt Gen Heinrich von Luttwitz
CG XXXXVII Panzer Corps

22 December 1944 - McAuliffe looked briefly at the message. "Aw nuts" he said. Then he dropped the papers on the floor and strode out of the room. When Mc Auliffe was reminded that the German emissaries were still waiting for a reply, he was stumped. "Well," he said, "I don't know what to tell them." Lieut. Colonel Moore replied, "That first crack you made would be hard to beat General." "What was that?" McAuliffe asked. "You said "Nuts"! McAuliffe snapped his fingers, exclaiming: "That's it" Everyone in the room burst into laughter and a sergeant typed up the answer on a sheet of 8 x 11 inch bond paper.

22 December 1944

To the German Commander:

Nuts:

The American Commander

McAuliffe gleefully handed his-one word reply to Colonel Harper, who had just arrived, and asked, "Will you see that it's delivered?" The Colonel glanced at the message and beamed. "I'll deliver it myself" He ordered the German officers to be put in a jeep and driven, still blind-folded, to the farmhouse where the two enlisted men were waiting. To the immense relief of the Germans, their blindfolds were at last removed. The German lieutenant did not understand the letter. "Would the Americans be so kind as to give them the answer from the American Commander? "The answer," said Harper, "is Nuts". The German asked "is it negative or affirmative?" "The reply," said Harper, "is decidedly not affirmative, and if you continue this foolish attack, your losses will be tremendous." "If you don't understand what "Nuts" means, "Harper continued, "in plain English it is the same as "go to hell" And I will tell you something else; if you continue to attack, we will kill every goddamn German that tries to break into this city." The German officers came to attention and saluted. "We will kill many Americans, "said Henke. This is war" "This is war." "On your way, Bud" said Harper.

The surrender demand was the work of the commander of the 47th Panzer Corps, von Lutwitz, who sent it without consulting his superior.

22 December 1944 - When General von Manteuffel learned of it, he was furious, for quite clearly he lacked sufficient artillery to make good on the threat. The lack of retaliation should make the German command appear ridiculous. von Manteuffel put in a call to the Luftwaffe to bomb Bastogne.

22 December 1944 - The Germans were preparing an intensive attack. The foul weather which favored the German blitz continued its pattern of heavy fog, rain, snow and freezing cold. General Patton called the Third Army Chaplain on the phone and told him to write a letter to the Almighty, which he did and copies were issued to the troops. In it he begged, "Almighty and most merciful father, we humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, to restrain these immodest rains, fogs and snow falls, with which we have to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously harken to us as soldiers who call upon thee that armed with thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen."

22 December 1944 - I'm On guard duty with my two buddies. German shells have been landing in our area, but fortunately no one was injured. Soon night will turn to day. I think I'll walk over to Sgt. Harford's kitchen and see what concoction he's up to this morning. Yesterday, because we were short of food, Sgt. Harford, two of his crew and I went scavenger hunting. We couldn't go out too far or they'd be looking for us too. We looked around with no success, but there was also a small wooded area, that wasn't checked. We didn't go very deep into the woods when we came to a fairly large one - story wood building. The door wasn't locked, so we entered with no difficulty. To our amazement, it was full of soccer balls, baseball bats, badminton sets and all sorts of boxes, cans and everything you could think of, but we finally came to the conclusion that this building was used by the U.S.O. and RED CROSS. When the German Army began their all-out offensive, the Red Cross and U.S.O. members took whatever items they could and left with such haste, they never thought of locking the door. We began looking over the items that could be of use to us. We found powdered flour and powdered milk that the Red Cross girls ^{used} to make doughnuts. Sgt. Harford could use that to make pancakes. We also found Cold Cream that the U.S.O. girls used to remove make-up from the faces of the performers . We could use it to put on our face and neck and hands to prevent chapping. There were some small items that perhaps we could use, but we thought it best to leave before some German troops drop in.

23 December 1944 - I'm on guard duty with my two buddies. German mortars are landing in our area, but fortunately no one is injured. The Germans fire shells and mortars at night just to keep us awake. Soon night will turn to day. The weather broke. The long blacked-out skies cleared. Patton's prayer for fair weather has been answered.

23 December 1944 - In position at Bastogne, Belgium. Weather clear and cold. Our most critical concern is, that our ammunition has dropped to a dangerous level, which drastically curtails fire missions. After many days of rain, snow, fog and mud, the weather cleared and the most beautiful sight appeared. This is an early Christmas present. Pilots fly continually from dawn to dark. When their guns and rocket tubes are emptied, they fly back to the nearest field, reload and roar out again. The pilots also give direct support to ground forces. On another occasion, a pilot reported a number of tanks and a large body of Germans concealed in a woods. This message was flashed to our artillery battalion, that plastered the place with "Pozit" ammunition, scoring a big kill. Four white gliders just landed with Doctors, medics and medical supplies that are critically needed. The Germans attacked us three times and every time we, with the paratroopers, were able to throw them back. Their primary target is to get at our howitzers because our artillery shelling gives them so many problems.

I could see Col. Brown standing on the hood of the half-track with his binoculars, so he could see where the Germans are advancing, and direct our artillery fire in that direction. That's how close the Germans are to our position. I didn't see it, but I was told later that Col. Brown was hit by shrapnel and was taken to the hospital in Bastogne.

Two Engineers also land by parachute and begin setting-up their equipment to mark the high ground between Senonchamps and the town Villerux. When they complet that portion of the job, they ignite a smoke bomb and almost immediately red smoke begins rising into the air. A few minutes later I could hear a low soft humming sound. Now it's louder and louder. As I look up to the sky and

23 December 1944 - right on the horizon, I see cargo planes flying in low, toward us, three abreast, aiming right for the red smoke bomb. As the big planes slowly plow through the air at little more than a thousand feet above the ground. As soon as they reach the drop zone, various colored parachutes with large bundles attached, come floating down. Immediately every man, that can, rushes down, waving his hands to get a bundle. I never saw men six feet and taller jumping with joy, waving their arms, with tears in their eyes and a big smile. Red parachutes have a bundle of medical supplies, yellow and orange bundles have food supplies, green have small arms ammunition, blue has 30. and 50. caliber ammunition. Men who could not run, watch in awe from their fox holes, from their howitzers, for what seems to be a miracle. It was difficult "not to feel a sentimental pride of country."

As the American planes followed their low course, German antiaircraft gunners, ignoring the presence of hordes of fighter-bombers flying over, opened fire. A few planes come in trailing smoke, but not a single pilot veers from his course. Wave after wave, the pilots come in low to make certain the bundles hit the drop zone, put themselves in danger. As a result, couple of the planes are shot down. (I pray they land in safe territory) No doubt this is the best Christmas I ever had, even when I was about eight or nine years of age and my parents gave me a pair of high-top shoes (just below the knees) with a little pocket on the right shoe that held a small pen-knife. The first planes were directed by a Ninth Air Force Captain, to the drop zone in front of the positions of the 502d Parachute Infantry, a battalion of the 327th Glider Infantry and us. The Germans have been building up heavily there, and because of the ammunition shortage, our artillery does the best they could with what they have.

24 December 1944 - Departed Senonchamps at 1630. Arrived at defensive position $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles West of Bastogne, Belgium at 1700. Constant enemy fire and two bombings during the night. Weather cold. Since I and the other two men in my group just finished digging our outpost foxhole, I thought it would be a good idea to take some food to the new group while I have the opportunity. I went to the chow line, got my food and when I was through with my meal I went back to the kitchen truck, cleaned my messkit, filled it with food for the other men at the outpost. Just as I started out, artillery and mortar shells began landing right in the middle of our gun position. The instant I heard the screeching sound of the first shell I dove straight for the ground, let the messkit fly and held on to my helmet with both hands. The shells kept flying in, but not for long. That's what the enemy does to irritate and keep you on edge. When the shelling stopped I raised myself from the snow covered ground, cleaned and refilled my messkit and started out for the foxhole. I'd swear some German was watching me. As soon as I started for the foxhole, the shells came flying again and I again, dove for the ground. When I got up I swore I would go one more time, but this time I'm going straight for the pill box regardless of what happens. I went through the process the third time and would you know, not one shell came in. ~~X XXXXXXXX~~ I delivered the meal and they were just too glad to receive it.

When things were quiet and no artillery or mortar shells were coming in, I'd gather up some colored parachutes, cut them into 4ft ^{squares} ~~XXXXXXXX~~ and use them as scarfs to protect the skin around my neck from the dirty, rough, shirts that I've been wearing for over a month. One of the men picked up a white parachute and thought it looked so pretty his fianc'e could use it to sew a pretty wedding gown.

I didn't see, but I've heard that Col. Brown was wounded by shell fragments as he was directing fire from the hood of the halftrack. He was taken to the hospital in Bastogne.

24 December 1944 - Around eight thirty on Christmas Eve, while I was on duty at the outpost with my two buddies, I could hear the approaching drone of a swarm of big planes, their motors sounding not like that of American planes. I looked up to the sky and the first thing I could see was flares that made the night seem brighter than day; then the bombs, a thin, shrieking whistle and a thunderous roar. The planes circled around , making two strafing runs, then I could see smoke rising to the sky, then an orange glow from the buildings that were now in flames.

I guess von Manteuffel's order to bomb Bastogne has now been carried out.

25 December 1944 - It was miserably cold, a biting wind taking the wind-chill well below zero. It was close to 0900 and I just went through the chow line. I should feel better, but then I didn't get much sleep since I was on out-post duty last night. When your in the Army, you're on duty 24 hours a day. You take naps whenever you get the opportunity. Many times some of the men will be napping on the hood of the half-track where its warm or on the rear of the howitzer where the engine is located. It's Army regulation that the driver run the engine about ten minutes every thirty minutes to make certain it starts up if he must leave immediately. When the driver, the Captain and I were riding in the Jeep, it wasn't unusual for the Captain to doze off and rest his head on my shoulder. I wouldn't disturbe him, let him finish his nap, then he'll feel 100% better.

Just as I was finishing my breakfast, an army vehicle pulled up close to our position. The driver and the Officer got out of the vehicle and began unloading items from the rear trunk. They carried the boxes and other items to a barn close by. That's when I noticed it was the chaplain and his server. They came to celebrate Christmas Mass. The word also was spread around the village because I saw two women and about four or five small children all plodding through the heavy snow on their way to hear Mass also. As I enter the barn with the other men, I see the portable table now covered with a white cloth, the missle and other items. Of course, there were no benches or chairs so we knelt on the straw covered floor. During the Mass, every time I would hear an artillery or mortar shell fly over the barn, I and all the other men hit the floor, but the Chaplain and the server just kept going through the Mass as if they heard no sound at all.

The Chaplain gave an inspiring nomily, wished us a Merry Christmas and prayed for our safety.

25 December 1944 - On Christmas Day, after Mass I got talking to some of the men about the bombing raid last night on Bastogne. In a building which served the 10th Armored Division's CCB as an aid-station, along with a number of the medics, Renée Lemaire, a volunteer nurse, who was in the kitchen. At the screech of the bomb, she either dashed into the cellar or somebody pushed her there for safety. As the bomb hit, it seemed to those who survived, as if it came straight down the chimney. The blast blew those in the kitchen out through a large plate-glass window. It buried those in the cellar. What remained in the building was soon in flames. Several men volunteered to be lowered through a window at sidewalk level into the cellar and succeeded in rescuing three wounded men before the entire building collapsed. Twenty of the wounded in the aid-station died in the bombing. Also Renée Lemaire, and our Colonel Brown. He's the officer who left his half-track, walked up to where we were lying in the gutter and encouraged us to just lie where we were and we'd be O.K. I remember that moment of inspiration, that baptism of fire, and will remember until the last day I serve in the U.S. Army. One bomb hit the Command Headquarters of Colonel Cherry, killing four Junior Officers.

25 December 1944 -

(RENÉE LeMAIRE THE BELGIAN NURSE)

The Medical Officer who worked with her, wrapped her soft, limp, tender body in parachute silk, bright and white as snow and carried her to her parents home. I don't know what he said to them, but then what can you say about this beautiful, young nurse with a heart of gold? She saw the American soldiers trod through the ice, snow and mud. = = = = = Some without gloves or heavy jackets, some with trench foot = = = = = but most of them with shrapnel or bullet wounds depending on their severity and location. How can words ever express the appreciation we all felt for this caring young Belgian, who paid the Supreme Sacrifice because she wanted to treat and ease the pain of soldiers she didn't even know. You can be certain the Angels above welcomed her with open arms.

If you visit Belgium and Bastogne, the building that was used as a hospital, has a plaque on the wall to commemorate the place where she served and died. Renée is buried in the town square and you can see a monument that is dedicated in her honor.

The day after the bombing raid, the enemy claimed they were aiming to destroy the railroad bridge located just on the outskirts of Bastogne. The raid was executed the night before.

26 December - Today, Christmas Day the 4th Armored Division was making good progress in its drive to break through the Panzer ring of steel around Bastogne. Even at the moment, an enemy attack in Division Strength with tanks was preparing to strike Senonchamps in the Northwest. So even, in the last hour of hope, I wondered if the 4th Armored would make it in time.

The 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, supported by 18 tanks, made a last do-or-die attempt to capture Bastogne. The Germans attacked about 0300 AM to avoid air detection and go as far as Hemroulle, a half mile from Bastogne. There they were stopped by tanks of the 10th Armored Division, TD's from the Tank Destroyer Battalion and infantry of the 101st Paratroopers. For the Germans it was the beginning of the end.

Five miles south at that moment, 1:30 P.M. Colonel Creighton W. Abrams was standing on a hill looking toward Bastogne. His 37th Tank Battalion was the spearhead of the 4th Armored Division driving up from the south to relieve Bastogne. He was scheduled to attack a village several miles to the northwest. But he was down to twenty medium tanks, only enough for one good assault. Should he take a chance and ask permission to blast straight north toward Bastogne? Abrams mind was made up. He returned to his tank, the "Thunderbolt 1V", and radioed Hugh Gaffey, commander of the 4th Armored Division. He asked for permission to attack straight north.

At 2:00 P.M. Gaffey telephoned Patton, "Will you authorize a big risk with Combat Command R for a breakthrough to Bastogne? he asked. "I sure as hell will!" A few minutes after 3:00 P.M. Abrams was handed a message. His face was impassive, but his eyes glinted. He shoved a big cigar into his mouth. It stuck out aggressively like another gun. "We're going in to see those people now," he said as he stood up in the turret of his tank, "Let'er roll.

27 December 1944 - Supply lines opened by 4th Armored Division.

Wounded were evacuated and supply trucks wheeled in. They also brought in the new POSIT FUZE artillery shells.

The POSIT FUZE Demonstration that our Battalion participated in and the hands - on experience stood us in good stead, for when the 4th Armored Division, Task Force Abrams broke the German ring around Bastogne our ammo train came with them, bringing in ammo with the new, now declassified, POSIT FUZE and permission to shoot it. It worked beautifully for "real". Its use up and down the front had to be one of the big factors in winding up the battle of the Bulge successfully for us. Eleven gliders landed near Bastogne. Some of them brought in Surgeons.

We are in perfect position. Our 105mm Howitzers are in the center. We can reach any target in any direction. A shell for our Howitzers is about 3ft. long and it will travel about seven miles. A shell for the M3 Howitzer, the paratroopers used, would fire about 2½ miles. They could not reach every target in every direction at Bastogne.

28 December 1944 - The weather closed in tight again with a knifing snowstorm. The Germans resumed the assault against Bastogne with increased violence. He now had nine divisions massed around the tiny wedge.

30 December 1944 - Our General Hoecker says the German battalions were "cut to pieces" The Germans could not know that the 35th Division was trying out the new POSIT fuze and they were providing the target for one of the most lethal of World War II weapons)

(LEAVING BASTOGNE)

16 January 1945 - At 13.25 we left our gun position $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles East of Bastogne, Belgium. Our destination is the Billets at Petange, Luxembourg, a distance of $60\frac{1}{2}$ miles. We are to spend the night at Petange and the next morning we are to complete our trip to Metz, France. By this time it was pitch dark, the roads are covered with ice and snow, the roads are narrow and hilly with sharp turns and progress is slow. We just came to another hill. We couldn't reach the top, so all the men dismounted and tried to push the vehicle, while the rest of the men used their helmets to gather up some of the gravel from the gutter to throw under the wheels and tracks of each vehicle and tank to coax them up the hill. While the ones ahead were trying to reach the top of the hill, I and about four or five other men from our vehicles, were just hopping up and down and moving around, trying to keep warm when people who lived in the homes by the road, came out to the street to see what all the noise was about. I could overhear them speaking in Polish, so I joined in the conversation. In a short time one woman invited us to her home to get warm. She invited us to the kitchen and we all gathered around the wood burning stove that felt so good. I took my canteen out of the holder and put it on the shelf above the burners because the water has now turned to ice. A short time later the Mess Sergeant (Kitchen Chief) went out to his truck and brought back a bag of coffee (about 1lb.) and gave it to the woman. She was so happy, you'd think it was a bag of diamonds. She had two handsome looking boys (they were her diamonds). One boy was about eleven, the other boy was about thirteen. I would kid around with them and ask them questions like how old are you, what grade are you, do you like school, do you like girls etc. Of course, I would ask them in Polish. Also when I spoke with their mother, then I translated it all to the other men, but it was too short, because it seemed like no time at all when I heard "March Order". We thanked the lady, said a quick goodbye and ran out the door to our vehicles.

We helped push the vehicles up the hill and were now on our way, but it was just a short time later that I remembered I left my canteen at the lady's home. When I wrote to her after the war, she said the boys use my canteen to take soft drinks to school. When we finally arrived at Tetange, Luxembourg we billeted for the night. The next day, 18 January we left Tetange at 1015 and arrived at billets at Metz, France 1530 hours. Distance traveled 60½ miles. The Quartermaster brought our Duffel-bags by truck, but I had my shaving articles and other personal items in my back-pack, that I kept in the Jeep. It was a mild day, so I took a leisurely walk to my Jeep, looking at the large swastika flag still hanging from the fifth floor window of the large building we were occupying, when I heard a voice call "Hey Ed", "Hey Ed". It sounded familiar to me, but not someone from my outfit. As I raised my head to look up, I couldn't believe my eyes. He's one person, I wouldn't believe, I'd meet in Metz, France. He's my ol' Pal and best friend, "Alphy". He lived across the street from me and we grew up together in Manayunk. We were inducted together and we both were sent to the 10th Armored Division, at Fort Benning, Ga. He was assigned to the Tank Battalion, but I was with the Artillery Battalion. It was only two months when "Alphy" was sent to Fort Knox, Ky. to train as a Tank Mechanic and I haven't seen him since. That was more than two years ago. The first thing he said was "Boy! you put on weight", but it wasn't the weight, it was the regular underwear, the winter long-johns, my fatigue pants and shirt, my dress pants and shirt, my sweater and jacket, my two pairs of sox, my ankle high shoes, my rubber water-proof overshoes, my wool cap, a plastic helmet liner and my steel helmet, that makes me look heavier. He looked great. He didn't put on any weight, but then he always was slim. He was serving in what we call a Bastard outfit. A small outfit not attached to a large unit like a Division or Corps.

A trainload of tanks just pulled in and it's his duty to check every one to make certain they are in A1 condition before they are released to some Armored Division or Tank Battalion. We didn't have more time to talk, but it was a pleasant surprise just to see him and learn what he's doing.

That night before I rolled out my bed-roll on the wood floor, the Division Artillery Commander told us orders have been changed only for the Artillery Battalions. Rather than spend a week in Metz for Rest and Recuperation, we are to go to ALSACE, FRANCE only about five miles from the German border and the VOSGES MTS. This was the Seventh Army Zone, but Gen. Patton said, "Stay with the Seventh Army and when I need you, I'll call you. Our duty is to fire Artillery support for the 71st Infantry. They came from the U.S. in a hurry, leaving their heavy equipment and Artillery for a latter ship. The good news was that the Seventh Army was in a holding position while all efforts were concentrated on closing the gap in the Bulge and taking as many prisoners as possible.

