

Historical Research References

60th Armored Infantry Battalion, 9th Armored Division
U S Army 1944 – 1945 used for the documentary

***“The High Price of Freedom:
PFC Harold B. McCarn”***



Compiled during 2011

by Mr. James T. Weatherly

2nd cousin of PFC Harold B. McCarn

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Introduction

July 4, 2011

The pages below were compiled as the historical reference material during my research into the combat history of my 2nd cousin, PFC Harold B. McCarn. Harold was killed in action on 16 March 1945 east of the Rhine River after crossing the bridge at Remagen. He is buried at the Henri-Chapelle American Military Cemetery in Belgium. According to his grave marker, Harold was a member of the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, 9th Armored Division.

There was a fire in the National Personnel Records Center on July 12, 1973 that destroyed some Harold's WWII military records. I have used the limited records available to me and the military history of the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, 9th Armored Division during October 1944 to March 1945 to construct Harold's combat history. I have attached all reference materials that I used to outline Harold's combat history.

Should you want to do your own research, please be warned that there was also the 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division that is frequently referred to as the "60th Infantry" in many World War II accounts. Even though both units (*60th Armored Infantry Battalion and the 60th Infantry Regiment*) at times fought in the same battles, make sure that any research related to Harold is connected to the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, 9th Armored Division.

I have spent a substantial amount of my personal time and efforts doing the research for this project. My documentary gives the most accurate historical account possible at the time of its production. In the future additional information may become available that will further refine this account.

Sincerely,

James T. Weatherly

2nd cousin of PFC Harold B. McCarn

PS – The information below is extensive. If you want to locate details specific to Harold's actions use your "FIND" feature and type in "60th Armored Infantry Battalion". You should find at least 36 specific references using your search for "60th Armored Infantry Battalion".

9th Armored Division Historical Overview

In early October 1944, the 9th Armored Division landed in France and was immediately deployed eastward to advance into Luxembourg. When the Germans began their Ardennes offensive on December 16, 1944, the "Phantom" division was deployed just north of Diekirch, a few miles east southeast of Bastogne, Belgium. As the Germans attacked U.S. positions near St. Vith on the northern sector of the front, part of the 9th was transferred to assist in defending the city. The units of the 9th Armored Division engaged in fierce combat that bought the U.S. commanders time to organize the defense of Bastogne in which became known as the [Battle of the Bulge](#). By the time they withdrew to the eastern outskirts of the town, the units of the 9th had withstood repeated attacks on the roads leading to Bastogne.

On March 7, 1945, the unit captured the Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine River at the city of [Remagen](#). The 9th continued its drive into central Germany and by war's end had advanced into Czechoslovakia.

On May 8, 1945, troops of the 9th, along with comrades from the 1st Infantry Division, liberated Zwodau and Falkenau an der Eger, both subcamps of the [Flossenbürg concentration camp](#). Both camps were located on the territory of what today is the Czech Republic. SS entrepreneurs had established Zwodau in 1944 for the production of air force equipment and, by March 1945, it housed some 1,200 female prisoners. Falkenau housed 60 prisoners.

At the time of its liberation, the camp in Zwodau held some 900-1,000 starving women prisoners. The army divisions procured food from the neighboring areas and provided badly needed medical attention to the survivors.

The 9th Armored Division was recognized as a liberating unit by the U.S. Army's Center of Military History and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993.

Casualty figures for the 9th Armored Division, European theater of operations

Total battle casualties: 3,845

Total deaths in battle: 728

SOURCE: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Link: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10006146>

9th Armored Division World War II Details

Activated: 15 July 1942.

Overseas: 26 August 1944.

Campaigns: Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, Central Europe.

Days of combat: 91.

Distinguished Unit Citations: 11.

Awards: MH-1; DSC-1; DSM-2; SS-191; LM-13; SM-11; BSM-1,263; AM-28.

Commanders: Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes (June-September 1942), Maj. Gen. John W. Leonard (October 1942 to inactivation).

Returned to U.S.: 10 October 1945.

Inactivated: 13 October 1945.

Combat Chronicle

The 9th Armored Division landed in Normandy late in September 1944, and first went into line, 23 October, on patrol duty in a quiet sector along the Luxembourg-German frontier. When the Germans launched their winter offensive, the 9th, with no real combat experience, suddenly found itself engaged in heavy fighting. The Division saw its severest action at St. Vith, Echternach, and Bastogne, its units fighting in widely separated areas. Its stand at Bastogne held off the Germans long enough to enable the 101st Airborne to dig in for a defense of the city. After a rest period in January 1945, the Division made preparations for a drive across the Roer River. The offensive was launched, 28 February, and the 9th smashed across the Roer to Rheinbach, sending patrols into Remagen. The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen was found intact, and was seized by elements of the 9th Armored minutes before demolition charges were set to explode on 7 March 1945. The Division exploited the bridgehead, moving south and east across the Lahn River toward Limburg, where thousands of Allied prisoners were liberated. The Division drove on to Frankfurt and then turned to assist in the closing of the Ruhr Pocket. In April it continued east, encircled Leipzig and secured a line along the Mulde River. The Division was shifting south to Czechoslovakia when the war in Europe ended.

Assignments in the ETO

29 July 1944: Ninth Army. // 28 August 1944: III Corps, Ninth Army, 12th Army Group. // 5 September 1944: XIII Corps. // 28 September 1944: III Corps. // 15 October 1944: VIII Corps. // 22 October 1944: VIII Corps, First Army, 12th Army Group. // 20 December 1944: III Corps, Third Army, 12th Army Group. // 21 December 1944: VIII Corps. // 30 December 1944: VIII Corps, Third Army, 12th Army Group, but attached to Oise Section, Communication Zone, for supply. // 31 December 1944: SHAEF. // 8 January 1945: Fifteenth Army, 12th Army Group. // 22 February 1945: III Corps, First Army, 12th Army Group. // 21 March 1945: V Corps. // 28 April 1945: VII Corps. // 30 April 1945: VIII Corps. // 4 May 1945: V Corps. // 6 May 1945: Third Army, 12th Army Group.

General

Nickname: Sometimes called Phantom Division.

Shoulder patch: Same as the 1st Armored with a number "9" in the upper portion of the triangle.

Publications: *Bridge*; by unit members; Carl Giesel, Bayreuth, Germany; 1945. *History of the 9th Armored Division*; by unit members; Albert Love Enterprises, Atlanta, Ga.; 1947. *The 9th, The Story of the 9th Armored Division*; U.S. Army Forces in the European Theater; Paris, P. Dupont, 1945; 31 pp.

SOURCE: *The Army Almanac: A Book of Facts Concerning the Army of the United States*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950.

LINK: http://www.lonesentry.com/usdivisions/history/armored/division/9th_armored_division.html

The Story of the 9th Armored Division

MARCH 7, 1945: High atop the hill overlooking Remagen and the majestic Rhine River, Lt. Col. Leonard E. Engeman, Redwood Falls, Minn., trained his field glasses on the valley below. The commander of the 14th Tank Battalion actually jumped with excitement when he spotted the bridge.

The Ludendorff bridge was still intact!

German vehicles were moving across the span—across the only Rhine bridge Nazis had failed to blow in their frantic withdrawal from the hammer-like blows of the mighty Allied war machine.

It was apparent that Americans—this task force from Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division—had arrived before they were expected. Otherwise, the Germans would have allowed more time for their remaining vehicles and troops to escape across the river.

But even if the Germans had waited too long, there was no assurance they would make the capital mistake of failing to blow the bridge. Col. Engeman reasoned the enemy probably would wait until his tanks roared into Remagen and then would cheat them of the prize by setting off the charges.

He acted quickly. After summoning a platoon of the 14th's Pershing tanks—new tanks with 90mm guns that could handle anything the Germans had—Col. Engeman gave instructions to Co. A, 27th Armd. Inf. Bn.:

Go down into the town. Get through it as quickly as possible and reach the bridge. The tanks will lead. The infantry will follow on foot. Their half-tracks will bring up the rear. Let's make it snappy.

With their long-barreled 90s pointed down into the valley, the Pershings clattered over the winding road toward Remagen. Infantrymen, accustomed to working with tanks, trotted along behind.

Tanks and doughs moved swiftly against spotty resistance, mostly from snipers. Prisoners were taken from houses on the outskirts of the town. Quizzed about the defenses in the town and at the bridge, one PW volunteered the information that the bridge was scheduled to be blown at 1600.

Early that afternoon, similar information was obtained by the 52nd Armd. Inf. Bn. at Sinzig, several miles away. Civilians there corroborated the report that the Germans were to set off the blasts at 1600.

These reports were relayed to Brig. Gen. William M. Hoge, Lexington, Mo., CC B commander,

who sent the following message to Col. Engeman at 1515:

You've got 45 minutes to take the bridge.

Checking the progress of the task force immediately, Col. Engeman radioed Lt. John Grimball, Columbia, S.C., commander of the tanks:

Get to the bridge as quickly as possible.

The lieutenant reported:

Sir, I am already there.

The Pershings wheeled into firing position near the west end of the bridge, prepared to smash any opposition across the river. One of the first targets was a locomotive which pulled a string of freight cars along the east bank. Tanks knocked out the train.

Infantrymen, spurred on by Lt. Karl Timmermann, West Point, Nebr., dashed along the main street of Remagen toward the bridge.

Time was running out and German engineers at the bridge realized their peril. They set off a blast in the roadway leading to the west approach of the bridge, blowing a large crater which they hoped would slow down tanks and infantry.

As 9th Armd. troops forged ahead, machine gunners opened up from each tower and the tunnel on the east side of the bridge. Anti-aircraft guns blazed.

Ten Minutes To Save A Bridge

THE bridge—large and ugly—and the river loomed ahead. Floor plankings had been laid over the tracks on the bridge to convert the span from railroad to vehicular traffic. The river ran swift and deep between the towering cliffs. No one knew the strength of the enemy on the other side of the river or just when the explosions would be touched off.

Lt. Timmermann gathered his forces near the bridge, gave them instructions. It was 1550. In the face of murderous fire, the 27th Armd. doughs had just 10 minutes to cross the river if the Germans were running on schedule.

As the men started onto the bridge, a heavy blast rocked the span two-thirds of the way across. The attacking platoon halted momentarily, then took off again when it saw the three spans still standing.

Three members of the 9th Armd. Engr. Bn.—1st Lt. Hugh Mott, Nashville, Tenn.; Sgt. Eugene Dorland, Manhattan, Kan.; S/Sgt. John Reynolds, Lincolnton, N.C.—dashed onto the bridge to cut the demolition wires.

All hands, especially the engineers, worked with a speed never attained before. As the doughs rushed ahead, engineers cut all the wires below the bridge deck, preventing the Nazis from touching off a 40-pound charge planted on the crossbeams underneath.

Next, engineers raced across to the far side of the bridge to cut the main cable. Sgt. Dorland squeezed the cable with a pair of small pliers but couldn't even dent it. Without hesitating, he fired three shots into the cable with his carbine, smashing the line completely.

Ninth Armd. men later learned how close they came to disaster. Engineers located one 500-pound charge of TNT about two thirds of the way across the river. Its cap had gone off but the charge failed to explode. Lt. Mott and his two sergeants also found 350-pound charges, which had not been set off, in the piers. One of the cables leading to the main charge had been severed, possibly by artillery.

While engineers were hard at work, doughs dashed across the bridge, firing as they went. Enemy fire didn't disturb them nearly as much as the thought that the bridge might be blown up at any minute. It was a long drop to the river.

The leader of the first platoon, T/Sgt. Joseph Delisio, New York City, silenced the machine gun fire from the right tower by rushing up the stairs and capturing the two-man crew. Sgt. Mike Chinchar, Rochelle Park, N.J., assisted by S/Sgt. Anthony Samele, Bronx, N.Y., and Pfc Artus Massie, Patterson's Creek, W.Va., took care of the machine gun in the left tower. They threw the gun into the Rhine and took the gunner prisoner.

Now, infantrymen received covering fire from the towers. First across the Rhine was Sgt. Alexander A. Drabik, Holland, O., who was closely followed by Pfc Marvin Jensen, Slayton, Minn. On their heels were Samele, Delisio, Chinchar, Massie, S/Sgt. Carmine J. Sabia, Brooklyn; Pfc Martin Reed, Assaria, Kan.; Pvt. Joseph K. Peoples, Warrenton, N.C.

Reaching the east end of the bridge, Drabik and several others cut to the left. Some moved into the railroad tunnel while the remainder, led by Lt. Emmet Burrows, Jersey City, N.J., started up a steep basaltic cliff to wipe out snipers in a house on the cliff. The climb was so steep that the men used shrubbery and trees to pull themselves up. After clearing out the snipers, Burrows and his men underwent a terrific artillery and mortar shelling. The hill later was called "Suicide Cliff" and "Flak Hill."

A complicated command problem developed for Gen. Hoge at the time of the crossing. The III Corps had not yet received word that the Remagen bridge had been captured and sent down orders for the 9th to move south across the Ahr River.

By driving swiftly along the west bank of the Rhine, the 9th could link up with Third Army forces and prevent thousands of Germans from crossing the Rhine to the south.

But the division already had troops on the east bank of the Rhine and needed all its forces for the

bridgehead operation. Gen. Hoge held those troops on the east bank while he contacted Maj. Gen. John W. Leonard, Toledo, O., division commander.

The decision to hold the bridgehead will live in military history. It brought highest praise from Allied commanders. Gen. Hoge had sensed every hazard. German forces across the river were an unknown quantity. This could well be a trap. Artillery might knock out the bridge after the division had crossed over.

The reward seemed worth all risks. An Allied bridge across the Rhine would be of immense strategic and tactical importance. It might be a blow from which the Germans never could recover.

Gen. Hoge, with full confidence in his troops, obtained authority from Gen. Leonard to stick with the bridgehead and to expand it. "A moment for history" was *Time Magazine's* comment later.

While awaiting III Corps confirmation of the decision, CC B prepared to spring its might on the bridgehead as Combat Command A was ordered to relieve CC B's south column at Sinzig. On the north, the 89th Cavalry Recon Sqdn. (Mecz.), relieved 1st Bn., 310th Regt., 78th Div., which had been attached to the 9th.

Third Corps ordered an all-out fight to build up the bridgehead as soon as it was informed of the Rhine crossing. CC A was instructed to hold the bridgehead over the Ahr River.

Foot troops—doughs who could dig in and hold their positions—rushed across the bridge. A heavy fog cloaked the span that first night as the first tanks started across about midnight. They were Shermans of the 14th Tank Bn.; the roadway wasn't wide enough for the new Pershings. Sgt. William J. Goodson, Rushville, Ind., commanded the first tank to span the river.

A serious threat to the over-all operation loomed when a tank destroyer from the 656th TD Bn. slipped into a hole in the bridge flooring, then balanced precariously on two beams. Because of the delicate balance, the vehicle was unable to use its own power to extricate itself. Meanwhile, armored reinforcements, sorely needed to repel the inevitable German counter-attacks, were prevented from crossing.

Commanders worked feverishly to remove this obstacle. For a time they considered dumping the tank destroyer into the river but decided against that move because it might further damage the bridge. Meanwhile, foot troops continued to make progress.

Moving with extreme caution, salvage crews finally towed the TD from the bridge, enabling men and vehicles again to pour across the bridge in an unending stream.

Speed and Daring Pay Off At Remagen

GEN. Dwight D. Eisenhower was first to proclaim the success:

The whole Allied force is delighted to cheer the First Army whose speed and boldness have won the race to establish the first bridgehead over the Rhine. Please tell all ranks how proud I am of them.

Reported the New York Sun:

The Germans misjudged by a fateful ten minutes the speed at which the 9th Armored Division was moving... To all who utilized that ten minutes so advantageously goes the deepest gratitude this country can bestow.

Ninth Armd.'s movement to Remagen possessed a story book flavor. First Army's capture of Cologne was hailed as one of the major successes of the big Allied drive. But the Hindenburg bridge at Cologne went the way of all Rhine bridges. As the right flank of the Army, troops of the 9th Armd. struck swiftly towards the Rhine.

As its tanks roared through Euskirchen, the 9th gained speed. The closer the division got to the river, the faster the columns moved. Near the end of the historic dash, half-tracks crowded with infantrymen were streaking through town after town.

The speed of the advance so startled the enemy that he was caught off-balance. Pay-off of that speed and daring was the capture intact of the Ludendorff bridge—the bridge that became a dagger pointed at the heart of Germany. Before two months had passed, that dagger was plunged to the hilt in the German heart.

The German press and radio remained silent about the crossing for two days, but the full import of the disaster did not escape the Nazis. Field Marshal Kesselring, rebuking his troops for the costly failure at Remagen, said: "We have suffered unnecessary losses and our present military situation has become nearly catastrophic."

But while the United Nations cheered, the fight to hold and enlarge the area raged with intensity. The enemy quickly turned the bridgehead into a crucible of crashing bombs and bursting shells. Precious reserves of planes and self-propelled guns were expended with reckless abandon in the savage fight to knock out the bridge.

This was one of the war's hottest spots. German artillery shells whistled in from the Rhine hills. Nazi planes sneaked up to the sector from behind the hills, made fast runs for the bridge. Enemy pilots, ordered to "get the bridge" at any cost, paid a tremendous toll.

No sooner was the order given to exploit the bridgehead than Remagen became an MP's nightmare. All roads leading to the bridge were clogged for miles with vehicles and men. Amid magnificent confusion, traffic continued to flow across the Rhine under the direction of Col. Walter Burnside, Columbus, O., commander of Combat Command R.

Confusion was rampant on the east side of the river as well. Germans were in such a hurry that their convoys sped through the night with headlights blazing. The Americans had gambled and won a bridgehead. The Germans were gambling to erase an error.

The bridgehead was crowded. American flak wagons were banked bumper to bumper. Artillery of every caliber lined up in the hills west of the Rhine and fired over the river with telling effect.

Luftwaffe pilots who braved the murderous ground barrage to drop bombs on the bridge usually paid with their lives.

Enemy artillery was particularly accurate. When work was begun on a ponton bridge downstream from the railroad bridge, German guns zeroed in on it. One shell after another crashed into the target. But engineers continued their hazardous work.

Civilians were moved from Remagen to reduce the enemy's chances of getting reports on the effectiveness of the artillery fire.

Engineers toiled day and night on the railroad bridge to keep it in operation. Holes caused by air and artillery attacks were quickly sealed. Officers and men of the 9th Armd. Engr. Bn. sweated out heavy fire to keep traffic moving.

As soon as they could rally their forces and send reinforcements from the north, Germans counter-attacked savagely with tanks and infantry. The Nazis employed every stratagem and trick in the book to get at the bridge but were thwarted in every attempt.

They sent a barge carrying explosives down the river but the craft was captured. They filled the river with floating mines, but these were picked off by riflemen. Especially trained swimmers in rubber suits who towed floating explosives drowned or were captured.

Finally, the bridge which had stood for 10 days despite bombs and shells, toppled into the Rhine. The framework had been weakened by enemy fire and by the terrific loads carried across. But when the span gave way, March 17, Americans didn't need the bridge any more.

Ponton bridges already had been thrown across the Rhine and now were carrying the full load of men and materiel.

The Ludendorff bridge had served its purpose well. The men who had died to keep it in operation had performed a mighty task. A storm of annihilation was about to break over the Wehrmacht.

Heroes Step Forth In The Ardennes

TROOPS of the 9th Armd. Div. felt somewhat like Gen. Omar N. Bradley did about the Ardennes. They welcomed a German counter-attack but they didn't want it to be so big. Gen.

Bradley since has spoken of the Remagen bridge seizure and the Ardennes campaign as two of the turning points of the war. The fortunes of the 9th were strongly interwoven with both.

The Ardennes gave the 9th its first opportunity to show what it could do in a major battle. Its baptism was a bitter defensive action fought under the most difficult conditions. After the Ardennes, combat came much easier.

Gen. Leonard sent his troops into the front lines for the first time along the Luxembourg-German frontier in October, 1944, soon after they had arrived in the little duchy. Although 9th Armd. technically was in VIII Corps reserve, the division commander wanted the men to get the feel of combat. Because it was a comparatively quiet sector, he obtained permission for the units to relieve other troops in the line for periods of conditioning.

The 9th underwent this battle training for nearly two months. Troops operated in an historic invasion area. The Eifel Hills had been selected by von Rundstedt for his classic blitz in the spring of 1940. But this was 1944; it was winter and the Americans were here now.

Gen. Eisenhower and Gen. Bradley paid the division a visit at Mersch, Luxembourg, in November. Infantry outfits were strung out along a wide sector of the front. The 9th was backing them up.

Dec. 16, 1944: VIII Corps' sector came to life with a terrific roar. German artillery opened up all along the front. Infantry divisions in the line were the 106th, a new, untried outfit to the north, and the 28th and 4th, to the south, both of which nearly had been exhausted by recent action.

Von Rundstedt hardly could have picked a more propitious time and place to strike the blow that stunned the Allied world and carried the American forces close to disaster. He smashed his juggernaut into the weakest sector of the line and moved his panzer reserves behind the front with such cunning that the Nazis war machine was rolling at high speed before the Americans realized what was happening. Sheer guts saved the Allies in the Ardennes. Ninth Armd. men are quietly and deeply proud of their part in that heroic defense.

Widely spaced along the front, the 9th's three combat commands were forced to fight separately. CC B was at Faymonville, Belgium, 20 miles north of St. Vith, preparing to join the 2nd Inf. Div. in capturing the Roer dam when enemy artillery rumbled over the ridges and buzz bombs roared over the town. A platoon from the 811th TD Bn. took off immediately for St. Vith, key town in German plans and the center of a road network that von Rundstedt wanted badly. When reports came in that the 106th Inf. Div. was engaged in a fierce fight east of St. Vith, the entire command moved south.

Clattering through St. Vith at dawn, CC B received orders to attack and destroy enemy forces at Winterspelt. By this time, the Nazis had overrun the 106th's front and were driving up to St. Vith from the south. The 27th Armd. Inf. Bn. struck this advancing German force with such power that it succeeded in pushing the Nazis back across the Our River.

Without flank protection, CC B was forced to pull back from the Our that night. This was the first

of a series of disappointments for the command in the St. Vith action.

Next morning, a task force was sent north of the city to beat back an enemy armored column. One medium tank company of the 14th Bn. knocked out six tanks. CC B kept German forces out of St. Vith until relieved late Dec. 18.

German forces surged forth again in an effort to knock out the command's stronghold. In addition to the 1st SS Panzer and 62nd Volksgrenadier Divs., Nazi units included elements of the 116th Panzer and the 18th Volksgrenadier Divs.

Despite ammunition and food shortages, the lack of air support and the constant threat of being cut off completely, CC B continued to smash the relentless attacks. An abandoned dump was located, rations salvaged by the men as they fought. Troops of the 9th Armd. Engr. Bn. and the 89th Cav. fought as infantrymen.

When the 27th Armd. Inf. Bn.'s CP was captured, Gen. Hoge sent tanks and doughs to recapture it; they did. Although rumors spread among the troops that they were surrounded, men stuck to their guns. A BBC broadcast declared: "The brightest spot along the western front is at St. Vith."

"If this is a bright spot," remarked one GI, "what the hell is going on everywhere else?"

German artillery, which had been shelling CC B's CP ever since the beginning of the attacks, pounded dead on the target Dec. 21. Six officers and men were killed, 20 were wounded.

Considerable heavy fighting continued before CC B withdrew from the sector and moved back over the escape route opened up by the [82nd Airborne Div.](#) CC B had kept the enemy out of St. Vith for six days. The enemy paid a high price for his failure to take the town quickly.

CC A, commanded by Brig. Gen. (then Col.) Thomas L. Harrold, Troy, N.Y., defended a front line sector near Beaufort, Luxembourg. The 60th Armd. Inf. Bn. controlled the front when the Germans unpacked their power punch and the entire combat command went into action when the magnitude of the attack was realized.

Four to five battalions of German artillery ranging from 88s to 240s pounded the sector. Telephone communications were knocked out immediately. Nazis then began infiltrating. A regiment of enemy infantry advancing southwest down Mullerthal Draw through the 4th Inf. Div. sector attempted to get behind the 60th's positions. Artillery, mortars and rockets pounded relentlessly.

Contact with the surrounded rifle companies was maintained only through a radio operated by Lt. Ira D. Cravens, Springfield, Ill., forward observer for the 3rd Armd. FA Bn.

When CC A took over, it had instructions to maintain its positions until they became untenable. The command led off with a counter-attack, Dec. 18—a counter-attack that upset the 276th Volksgrenadier Div.'s schedule for the drive on Luxembourg City.

CC A now turned to aid its isolated rifle companies. *The Stars and Stripes* gave this account of the withdrawal:

Nobody told the doughs of the 60th Armd. Inf. Bn. to pull out, so they stayed and fought until word finally got through to them. A few days later they showed up in German helmets and with blankets draped over their shoulders, their rifles slung with bayonets fixed. They walked through German lines that way... They kept right on going until they reached the U.S. lines. After that, they fought some more.

Upsetting The German Timetable

CC A held its sector in Luxembourg despite everything Germans threw at it. The 3rd Armd. FA Bn. hurled thousands of shells into enemy positions, turned infantrymen when necessary.

Tanks of the 19th Bn. broke up countless attacks while backing up the doughs. Recon men of the 89th Cav. also fought as front-line riflemen.

When CC A was relieved Dec. 26 by CC A of the 6th Armd. Div., it experienced an even more severe test. Anticipating a rest, the combat command began a long night march to Etalle. While the column was on the road, orders were received that put CC A in the fight to relieve besieged Bastogne.

Without rest and lacking time for sufficient preparation, Gen. Harrold's troopers attacked the next morning. Hooking up with the 4th Armd. Div., CC A carried on the fight until a corridor had been pounded through to Bastogne.

Still the fight continued. New Year's Eve, CC A thoroughly smashed a powerful German armored force that tried to cut Bastogne's supply corridor and isolate Gen. Patton's spearheads. Thirty-two panzers were wrecked in a tremendous battle with 9th Armd. tanks.

The third combat command, CC R, commanded by Col. Joseph Gilbreth, Columbus, Ga., perhaps had the roughest assignment of any outfit in the Ardennes. It was CC R that stood and slugged it out against the overwhelming might of the German panzers smashing toward Bastogne. Had it not been for CC R, Nazis would have taken the town before the [101st Airborne Div.](#) arrived there to make its historic stand.

Small CC R task forces of tanks from the 2nd Tank Bn. and doughs of the 52nd Armd. Inf. Bn. took up positions along the roads leading to Bastogne from the east. Their mission was to block the roads at all costs. They clung to their positions even when surrounded. Masses of German tanks rolled around them; enemy infantry infiltrated in the darkness.

There were no front lines in this melee. Artillerymen, tankers and engineers fought as doughs. The 2nd Tank Bn, encountered elements of nine German divisions. The 73rd Armd. FA Bn. fought its way out of a trap, kept its guns in action.

Although casualties were heavy and all three of its battalion commanders lost, CC R was officially credited with delaying the enemy for 36 to 48 hours east of Bastogne. When its surviving forces fell back into Bastogne, CC R was assigned to maintain a mobile reserve known as Task Force Snafu.

TF Snafu became a potent force in the ensuing battles. Organized chiefly as a trouble-shooter for the [101st](#), this unit operated on a 10-minute alert and sped to threatened areas as needed. Bolstered by armor, it proved to be an ace in the hole.

CC R received the Presidential Unit Citation for its action at Bastogne.

Because its forces were widely separated, 9th Armd.'s outstanding fight in the Ardennes didn't receive the attention it deserved until the battle was over. Then, military men pointed out the remarkable job the division had accomplished. Commendations came from two army commanders, Gen. Courtney H. Hodges and Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., from three corps and four divisions.

By training and background, 9th Armd. troops were well equipped for the furious Ardennes fighting and for succeeding roles.

Made up largely of former horse cavalrymen of the famous 2nd Cav. Div., the 9th was activated July 15, 1942, at Fort Riley (Camp Funston), Kan. One unit, the 3rd Armd. FA Bn., dates its battle record back to 1794. It fought in every major military campaign in American history.

The 9th trained for nearly a year at the Fort Riley reservation, then went to the Mojave desert near Needles, Calif., for additional hardening. Reorganized as a light armored division, the 9th participated in Louisiana maneuvers where its army commander was Gen. Hodges.

The 9th was well known before it saw combat. It put on two firing demonstrations in the spring of 1944 while stationed at Camp Polk, La. The first was for American press and radio representatives; the second for the press of Allied and neutral nations.

In August, 1944, the division sailed for England aboard the *Queen Mary*. After drawing equipment in the Tidworth area, the 9th crossed the Channel, then made a six-day march across France. Its units entered the lines in Luxembourg.

Gen. Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Walter B. Smith, assaying the value of the Remagen bridge over the Rhine said: "It was worth its weight in gold."

The time had come for the Allies to cash in on the valuable property acquired in the Remagen deal. From that toe-hold, seized by the 27th Armd. Inf. Bn., had grown a military project of great dimensions.

The story is that when Gen. Bradley informed Gen. Eisenhower of the bridge seizure, the Supreme Commander said casually: "Why, hell, Brad, put a corps across."

When the time came for the Allies to capitalize on their advantage all along the Rhine River line, the Remagen springboard already had been built, exploited. Gen. Bradley didn't stop with just one corps across.

To the north, the long-scheduled "main event" was about to come off. This was the combined operation which had been in the making so long. Preparations by the British Second and the American Ninth Armies were hidden behind thick clouds of smoke. The Germans now were off balance. The threat from the north had been anticipated, but the Remagen bridgehead had thrown such an added burden on German defenses that Nazi confusion was multiplied.

With the Remagen bridgehead already well extended toward the north, Gen. Hodges began expanding it to the south. CC B struck south along the river to Ehrenbreitstein, March 22. The division now was transferred from III to V Corps, which moved across the river to take over the southern end of the trans-Rhine sector.

While Gen. Hoge gave attack orders to CC B unit commanders, he received word from division headquarters that he was to assume command of the 4th Armd. Div. CC B troops heard the news with genuine regret. Col. Harrold took over and commanded operations until a bridgehead was established over the Weid River. Then, Col. Harry W. Johnson, Lewisburg, Pa., Division Chief of Staff, assumed command of CC B.

Col. Burnside, CC R commander, became Chief of Staff, and Col. (then Lt. Col.) Charles Wesner, Oshkosh, Wis., commanding the 16th Armd. FA Bn., took over CC R.

9th Armored In On The Kill

AS the 9th wheeled south along the Rhine, the long-hailed combined operations began in the north. Gen. Bradley's remark that First Army could break from the Remagen bridgehead any time it chose seemed to be the signal for the big push. CC B suddenly turned east in a lightning advance.

Racing over rugged terrain, CC B's tanks hit the autobahn leading toward Limburg, hooking up with 7th Armd. Div. tanks. Armor of both divisions sped abreast down the wide highway until the 7th was ordered to shift directly east. When tanks of CC B's 19th Bn. reached Limburg, the armor immediately darted across the bridge over the Lahn River. Three tanks got across. A fourth was on the span when the Germans set off Charges. The tank teetered on the far brink, then slowly pulled onto the far side. However, these tanks now were cut off and the Nazis attacked savagely with bazookas.

The tankmen were rescued when Co. C, 52nd Armd. Inf. Bn., threw a makeshift bridge across the river and infantrymen fought their way into Limburg.

Capture of the city was highly significant. Not only did it mark the complete breakout of the Remagen bridgehead, but it was the forerunner of swift armored advances across Central

Germany that put American forces in position to help seal the industrial Ruhr.

The first German prison camp was captured at Limburg and its occupants liberated. Gen. Leonard visited a Limburg hospital and met patients who had been former members of the division. "You are in good hands now," he encouraged them.

Ninth Armd. combat commands next raced in two directions. While CC B and CC A made a record advance to the north, CC R dashed south along the autobahn to link up with Third Army forces near Niederhausen.

CC B covered 67 miles one day during the drive to the north. CC A advanced 70 miles in 11 hours. German troops surrendered in droves. CC A alone took more than 1200 PWs March 29.

Considerable resistance was encountered at Fritzlar, site of a large German airport. CC A captured 15 planes and another aircraft was shot down by Cpl. Odus C. Todd, Eubank, Ky., 14th Tank Bn. A round from Todd's 76mm struck the plane in the tail assembly, promptly bringing it down.

The 9th's advance to the north helped complete the encirclement of the Ruhr. German forces struck at the steel ring in the Warburg area, but few succeeded in escaping. CC B beat off a strong counter-attack near Bonenberg, April 2. Germans hurled 250 infantrymen and from three to five tanks at the town.

CC B sent reinforcements and a large number of the enemy was caught in the open by artillery fire and direct fire from tanks. The Nazis withdrew after suffering heavy casualties.

The number of prisoners ultimately taken from the Ruhr pocket far exceeded the total anticipated. Altogether, the Allies captured 327,000. This was the first great dividend of the Remagen bridgehead. Gen. Eisenhower commended all forces involved in the Ruhr operation:

This victory of Allied arms is a fitting prelude to the final battle to crush the ragged remnants of Hitler's armies of the west, now loitering on the threshold of defeat.

The 9th now assumed a spearheading role, leading the way for First Army's drive eastward. The race through Central Germany began April 10. Division tanks smashed so deeply into the enemy's rear that Nazis became hopelessly confused. Communications were slashed, vital supply points seized.

In their April operations, the 9th's combat commands advanced approximately 280 miles—from Warburg to the Mulde River—in carrying out the encirclement of Leipzig. Attacking abreast, the three combat commands captured hundreds of cities, thousands of prisoners, knocked out scores of German tanks, guns and vehicles.

Lt. Col. Wesner and his driver, Cpl. Sam Pernicci, East Point, La., captured a bridge intact over the Saale River near Naumburg. When they removed charges from the bridge, the 9th's column rolled on without stopping.

Rugged fighting developed through the thick defense belt around Leipzig. Germans used hundreds of ground-mounted anti-aircraft guns, 500 of which were either knocked out or found abandoned by CC A.

The same combat command captured a radio-radar station at Audgast, reputed to be the most powerful in Germany, as well as seizing an airfield at Polenz containing 250 planes.

The 2nd and 69th Inf. Divs. completed the capture of Leipzig, Germany's fifth largest city, after the 9th had completely encircled the area.

The division's drive to the Mulde, in the military sense, split Germany in two. Instead of rolling eastward to link up with Soviet forces, the division was taken out of the lines for a well deserved rest.

An additional assignment remained, however, before the Germans were thoroughly beaten. When the enemy threatened a prolonged fight in Czechoslovakia, the 9th was sent on a long march south to join Third Army and help administer the coup de grace.

CC A advanced into Czechoslovakia with the 1st Inf. Div. By the time the combat command linked up with the Red troops near Karlsbad, the Germans were completely kaput.

Being in the fight until the closing moments was more than an ordinary triumph for the gallant men of the 9th Armd. The Germans had reported them completely destroyed on three separate occasions. Yet, despite bitter fighting, sometimes against heavy odds, the men of the 9th held without yielding until their mission—the destruction of the enemy—was accomplished.

Germany surrendered unconditionally at Rheims, France, May 8, 1945, two months to the day from the time the 9th seized the Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen which sped victory for the Allied Nations.

SOURCE: "The 9th: The Story of the 9th Armored Division" is a small booklet covering the history of the 9th Armored Division. This booklet is one of the series of G.I. Stories published by the Stars & Stripes in Paris in 1944-1945.

LINK: http://www.lonesentry.com/gi_stories_booklets/9tharmored/

Commanding Officer, Combat Command A

27 Aug 44	Col. Thomas L. Harrold
3 May 45	Brig. Gen. Thomas L. Harrold

Commanding Officer, Combat Command B

27 Aug 44	Brig. Gen. Edwin W. Pilburn
2 Nov 44	Brig. Gen. William Hoge
23 Mar 45	Col. Harry W. Johnson

Commanding Officer, Reserve Command

27 Aug 44	Lt. Col. Adna C. Hamilton
12 Sep 44	Col. Adna C. Hamilton
26 Nov 44	Col. Joseph H. Gilbreth
21 Jan 45	Col. Walter Burnside
23 Mar 45	Lt. Col. Charlie Wesner
28 Apr 45	Lt. Col. Farris N. Latimer

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STATISTICS

Chronology

Activated	15 July 1942
Arrived ETO	27 August 1944
Arrived Continent (D+111)	25 September 1944
Entered Combat--First Elements	23 October 1944
Entered Combat--Entire Division	16 December 1944
Days in Combat	91

Casualties (Tentative)

Killed	549
Wounded	2,198
Missing	1,194
Captured	11
Battle Casualties	3,952
Non-Battle Casualties	1,459
Total Casualties	5,411
Percent of T/O Strength	50.7

Campaigns

Ardennes
Rhineland
Central Europe

Individual Awards

Distinguished Service Cross	1
Legion of Merit	7
Silver Star	162
Soldiers Medal	12
Bronze Star	845
Air Medal	23

Prisoners of War Taken 25,628

COMPOSITION

Headquarters Company
Combat Command A
Combat Command B
Reserve Command
2d Tank Battalion
14th Tank Battalion
19th Tank Battalion
27th Armored Infantry Battalion
52d Armored Infantry Battalion
60th Armored Infantry Battalion
89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized)
9th Armored Engineer Battalion
149th Armored Signal Company
9th Armored Division Artillery
3d Armored Field Artillery Battalion
16th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
73d Armored Field Artillery Battalion
9th Armored Division Trains
131st Ordnance Maintenance Battalion
2d Armored Medical Battalion
Military Police Platoon
Band

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ATTACHMENTS

Antiaircraft Artillery

482d AAA AW Bn (SP) 2 Nov 44-8 Jan 45

482d AAA AW Bn (SP) 22 Feb 45-9 May 45

Armored

Hq & Hq Co, 12th Armd Gp 4 Dec 44-8 Jan 45

CC R (10th Armd Div) 22 Dec 45-26 Dec 44

Cavalry

18th Cav Rcn Sq 21 Mar 45-22 Mar 45

Field Artillery

400th FA Bn 28 Feb 45-13 Mar 45

667th FA Bn (155mm How)	28 Feb 45-13 Mar 45
60th FA Bn (9th Div) (105mm How)	3 Mar 45-6 Mar 45
84th FA Bn (9th Div) (105mm How)	7 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
186th FA Bn (155mm How)	26 Mar 45-20 Apr 45
Btry A, 987th FA Bn (155mm Gun)	1 Apr 45-19 Apr 45
987th FA Bn (- Btry A) (155mm Gun)	1 Apr 45-23 Apr 45
38th FA Bn (2d Div) (105mm How)	2 Apr 45-5 Apr 45
406th FA Gp	3 Apr 45-5 Apr 45
◆200th FA Bn (155mm Gun)	3 Apr 45-5 Apr 45
◆953d FA Bn (155mm How)	3 Apr 45-5 Apr 45
<i>Infantry</i>	
109th Inf (28th Div)	20 Dec 44-22 Dec 44
1st Bn, 310th Inf (78th Div)	1 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
3d Bn, 310th Inf (78th Div)	1 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
60th CT (9th Div)	3 Mar 45-5 Mar 45
2d Bn, 310th Inf (78th Div)	5 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
47th CT (9th Div)	7 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
311th CT (78th Div)	8 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
1st Bn, 60th Inf (9th Div)	8 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
309th CT (78th Div)	8 Mar 45-9 Mar 45
38th CT (2d Div)	25 Mar 45-5 Apr 45
◆Co C, 2d Engr C Bn (2d Div)	25 Mar 45-5 Apr 45
1st Bn, 23d Div (2d Div)	2 Apr 45-5 Apr 45
2d Bn, 273d Inf (69th Div)	9 Apr 45-18 Apr 45

3d Bn, 273d Inf (69th Div)	9 Apr 45-20 Apr 45
3d Bn, 38th Inf (2d Div)	9 Apr 45-21 Apr 45
<i>Tank Destroyer</i>	
811th TD Bn (SP)	14 Nov 44-8 Jan 45
656th TD Bn (SP)	22 Feb 45-still attached 9 May 45

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DETACHMENTS
(Attached to)

Armored

CC B	V Corps	12 Dec 44-16 Dec 44
Co A, 19th Tk Bn	4th Div	16 Dec 44-19 Dec 44
CC B	106th Div	16 Dec 44-21 Dec 44
2d Tk Bn	101st Abn Div	19 Dec 44-30 Dec 44
CC R	101st Abn Div	19 Dec 44-31 Dec 44
CC A	10th Armd Div	20 Dec 44-26 Dec 44
CC B	7th Armd Div	22 Dec 44-7 Jan 45
14th Tk Bn	82d Abn Div	23 Dec 44-24 Dec 44
CC A	4th Armd Div	27 Dec 44-30 Dec 44
CC B	28th Div	9 Jan 45-10 Jan 45
2 plats, 14th Tk Bn	78th Div	16 Feb 45-17 Mar 45
CC B	9th Div	3 Mar 45-5 Mar 45
CC B	9th Div	9 Mar 45-12 Mar 45
CC A	1st Div	3 Mar 45-8 May 45

Cavalry

89th Cav Rcn Sq (- Trs C & D)	8th Div	23 Oct 44-1 Nov 44
Tr D, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	2d Div	27 Oct 44-8 Nov 44
89th Cav Rcn Sq (- Trs A & D)	8th Div	1 Nov 44-10 Nov 44
Tr A, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	83d Div	22 Nov 44-28 Nov 44
Tr B, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	83d Div	22 Nov 44-5 Dec 44
Tr C, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	83d Div	28 Nov 44-7 Dec 44
Tr A, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	83d Div	5 Dec 44-7 Dec 44
Tr A, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	4th Div	7 Dec 44-13 Dec 44
Tr C, 89th Cav Rcn Sq	4th Div	7 Dec 44-13 Dec 44
<i>Engineer</i>		
2 plats, Co B, 9th Armd Engr Bn	2d Div	29 Oct 44-4 Nov 44
<i>Field Artillery</i>		
16th Armd FA Bn	2d Div	12 Dec 44-16 Dec 44
73d Armd FA Bn	7th TD Gp	20 Dec 44-23 Dec 44
73d Armd FA Bn	28th Div	24 Dec 44-29 Dec 44
<i>Infantry</i>		
52d Armd Inf Bn	8th Div	23 Oct 44-30 Oct 44
27th Armd Inf Bn	2d Div	27 Oct 44-8 Nov 44
60th Armd Inf Bn	8th Div	2 Nov 44-9 Nov 44
Co B, 52d Armd Inf Bn	83d Div	22 Nov 44-29 Nov 44
Co C, 52d Armd Inf Bn	83d Div	28 Nov 44-6 Dec 44
Co C, 52d Armd Inf Bn	4th Div	7 Dec 44-13 Dec 44
60th Armd Inf Bn	78th Div	12 Mar 45-16 Mar 45

52d Armd Inf Bn

9th Div

16 Mar 45-18 Mar 45

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ASSIGNMENT AND ATTACHMENT TO HIGHER UNITS

DATE	CORPS	ARMY		ARMY GROUP	
		Assigned	Attached	Assigned	Attached
29 Jul 44		Ninth			
27 Aug 44		Ninth		ETOUSA	
28 Aug 44	III	Ninth		12th	
5 Sep 44	XIII	Ninth		12th	
28 Sep 44	III	Ninth		12th	
15 Oct 44	VIII	Ninth		12th	
22 Oct 44	VIII	First		12th	
20 Dec 44	III	Third		12th	
21 Dec 44	VIII	Third		12th	
30 Dec 44	VIII	Third	Oise Sec Com Z (Sup)	12th	
31 Dec 44	(-)	SHAEF Reserve	(-)	12th	
8 Jan 45		Fifteenth		12th	
9 Jan 45		Fifteenth	Third	12th	
22 Feb 45	III	First	(-)	12th	
21 Mar 45	V	First		12th	
28 Apr 45	VII	First		12th	
30 Apr 45	VIII	First		12th	
4 May 45	V	First		12th	

6 May 45 (-) Third 12th

(-) Indicates relieved from assignment.

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COMMAND POSTS

DATE	TOWN	REGION	COUNTRY
31 Jul 44	Tidworth (Adv)	Wiltshire	England
28 Aug 44	Tidworth (Main)	Wiltshire	England
23 Sep 44	Dorchester	Dorset	England
25 Sep 44	Weymouth	Dorset	England
28 Sep 44	Ste-Marie-Du-Mont	Manche	France
6 Oct 44	Pont L'Abbe- Picauville	Manche	France
7 Oct 44	Ste-Marie-Du-Mont	Manche	France
13 Oct 44	Falaise	Calvados	France
14 Oct 44	Damville	Eure	France
15 Oct 44	Gargan	Seine-et-Oise	France
16 Oct 44	Bergeres les Vertus	Marne	France
17 Oct 44	Verdun	Meuse	France
18 Oct 44	Mersch		Luxembourg
20 Dec 44	Walferdange		Luxembourg
23 Dec 44	Etalle	Luxembourg	Belgium
30 Dec 44	Guignicourt-sur- Vence	Ardennes	France
12 Jan 45	Bockange	Moselle	France

14 Jan 45	Ennery	Moselle	France
22 Feb 45	Sprimont	Liege	Belgium
28 Feb 45	Gey	Rhineland	Germany
2 Mar 45	Soller	Rhineland	Germany
4 Mar 45	Zulpich	Rhineland	Germany
6 Mar 45	Euskirchen	Rhineland	Germany
7 Mar 45	Stadt Meckenheim	Rhineland	Germany
10 Mar 45	Bad Neuenahr	Rhineland	Germany
23 Mar 45	Rheinbrehl	Rhineland	Germany
25 Mar 45	Neuweid	Rhineland	Germany
27 Mar 45	Elz	Nassau	Germany
29 Mar 45	Rechtenbach	Hessen	Germany
1 Apr 45	Volkmarsen	Kurhessen	Germany
2 Apr 45	Marburg	Kurhessen	Germany
9 Apr 45	Nieder Scheden	Hannover	Germany
10 Apr 45	Grossbruchter	Saxony	Germany
11 Apr 45	Westerengel	Thuringia	Germany
12 Apr 45	Steigra	Halle-Messenburg	Germany
13 Apr 45	Hohenmolsen	Halle-Messenburg	Germany
15 Apr 45	Breitingen	Halle-Messenburg	Germany
16 Apr 45	Bad Lausick	Saxony	Germany
21 Apr 45	Lobstadt	Saxony	Germany
30 Apr 45	Apolda	Thuringia	Germany
4 May 45	Munchberg	Thuringia	Germany

5 May 45	Wernberg	Bavaria	Germany
6 May 45	Weiden	Bavaria	Germany

[pages 504 (through 6 Mar 45)-505]

SOURCE: U S Army Center for Military History

LINK: <http://www.history.army.mil/documents/eto-ob/9ad-eto.htm>

The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge by Hugh M. Cole

CHAPTER IX

The Attack by the German Left Wing 16-20 December

Hitler's hope of victory rode with his two panzer armies. He was confident that the Allies would not be able to react in a forceful way until these armies were across the Meuse and it would appear that he expected this reaction to take the form of a counterattack somewhere on the west bank of that river. Under no circumstances was he prepared to diminish the main striking force in order to build up strong protection for the German flanks during the advance east of the Meuse. The assignment of four infantry divisions to cover the southern flank of the assault armies was as far as he would go, nor could the numerous pleas advanced by his field commanders for additional strength in the south alter his decision one whit.

Despite the poverty of forces allotted Brandenberger's *Seventh Army*, the Fuehrer was prepared, as always, to expect the impossible. At one point in the planning period Hitler envisaged these four divisions as forming a blocking line all the way from the German frontier to Charleville on the Meuse. Both Jodl and Model resisted this idea, but when the counteroffensive began there were still rather vague plans afoot for employing the *Seventh Army* in a push west and south to form a position based on Luxembourg City, Arlon, and Neufchâteau. Hitler likewise attempted to intervene in the initial assault plans of the *Seventh Army* by directing that the attack would start as a pincers move in which one prong shot west out of Trier and the other penetrated northwest of Echternach. Jodl and Model again acted as a team in killing this idea, pointing out that the *Seventh Army* had neither the troops nor the guns to support two separate attacks. It is clear that throughout the planning phase Jodl took a realistic view of the limited capability of Brandenberger's army. After the war he admitted that the *Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab* would have been satisfied to see the *Seventh Army* advance only half the distance between Echternach and Luxembourg City.¹

When Brandenberger and his chief of staff, Generalmajor Rudolf Freiherr von Gersdorff, finally were allowed to map their own scheme of maneuver they settled on a containing mission for the two infantry divisions in the left corps (General der Infanterie Franz Beyer's *LXXX Corps*), and an advance by the two infantry divisions on the right which comprised General der Infanterie Baptist Kniess's *LXXXV Corps*. Beyer's troops, in this final plan, had the mission

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of establishing a bridgehead at Echternach on the Sauer River, then undertaking a limited advance to the southwest. The *LXXXV Corps* was given orders to cross the Our River, north of

its juncture with the Sauer, and advance on a westward axis parallel to that of the *Fifth Panzer Army*. If all went well one of the two divisions would come to a halt in a blocking position around Arlon, south of Bastogne.

Brandenberger would have to rely in the main on his artillery if the *Seventh Army* was to hold its position at the shoulder of the counteroffensive against any strong attack from the south. One of the first objectives, therefore, would be to neutralize or destroy the American artillery groupments, and for this purpose the army was given a few batteries of the new, long-range 120-mm. guns. The total artillery strength available in the army was 319 guns and 108 rocket projectors. When it came to close and mobile support for the assault Brandenberger's divisions would be in a bad way; there were only thirty assault guns in the army and half of these were with the *5th Parachute Division* on the right wing.

At 0530 on the morning of 16 December the guns and rocket projectors of the German *Seventh Army* opened fire, signaling the attack across the Our and Sauer Rivers. The sector in which the *Seventh Army* would advance, as flank guard for the two panzer armies carrying the weight of the main counteroffensive, was weakly held. Only small local reserves were at hand to reinforce the vastly outnumbered American troops facing the four divisions under General Brandenberger's command. The northern limit of the *Seventh Army* attack coincided with the north boundary of the 109th Infantry Regiment (28th Infantry Division) near Stolzembourg; its southern limit was roughly the same as the southern boundary of the 12th Infantry Regiment (4th Infantry Division) near the confluence of the Sauer and Moselle Rivers.

Along this winding front, a distance of some thirty miles, the opponents would be matched at the first shock approximately as follows. On the north wing of the *Seventh Army* the *5th Parachute Division* would cross the Our and strike the 2d Battalion of the 109th Infantry. The boundary between the 109th and 110th ran obliquely, however, and in consequence the *5th Parachute Division* would shortly engage troops of the latter regiment. Next in line on the Our the *352d Volks Grenadier Division* would cross into the zone held by the 3d Battalion of the 109th. South of the village of Wallendorf, where the Our flows into the Sauer, the *276th Volks Grenadier Division* would push into the narrow segment of the Sauer front held by the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion of the 9th Armored Division (-), then fan out against the left flank of the 12th Infantry. The *212th Volks Grenadier Division*, acting as the southern pivot for the entire German counteroffensive, would cross the Sauer in the Echternach sector and drive head on against the 12th Infantry. ² ([Map V](#))

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*The 109th Infantry Defense on the Sauer and Our Rivers
16-20 December*

The 109th Infantry, led by Lt. Col. James E. Rudder, a former Ranger commander, was close to full strength, although, like the rest of the 28th Division, its rifle companies were filled by replacements with limited experience and training. The division commander had considered that

the enemy might make a "distracting" attack toward Diekirch and Ettelbruck, in an attempt to cut the road and rail lines running north from the city of Luxembourg, and had disposed the 109th accordingly. On the division south flank, the 3d Battalion (Lt. Col. Jim H. McCoy) was allotted a four-mile front, but had concentrated men and weapons in an almost continuous 3,000-yard defense line along the heights in the triangle formed by the Our and Sauer Rivers which overlooked the valley road west to Ettelbruck. On this road the 1st Battalion (Lt. Col. H. R. Williams) lay in reserve at Diekirch, with two field artillery battalions, the 107th and 108th, emplaced close to that town. The 2d Battalion sector to the north was over five miles in width. In this weak portion of the line, defense was based on two strongpoints of rifle company strength, one on a ridge road about a mile and a half west of Vianden and the Our River, the other at Führen about a mile from the river. These strongpoints were nearly two miles apart; behind them the third rifle company was located in reserve at Brandenburg with one howitzer battery to give support. Some distance back from the river the 2d Battalion (Maj. William J. Maroney) maintained a series of seven outposts watching the German fortifications on the eastern bank.

During the two nights prior to 16 December the *5th Parachute Division* moved its regiments into these east bank fortifications and the extensive woods which lay just to the rear. The *5th Parachute Division* had its full complement of officers and men, but lacked its antitank battalion (which had lost much equipment to air attack en route from Holland) and its mortar battalion. Colonel Heilmann, who had recently taken over the division, was not too sanguine as to its ability or state of training as a unit. He relied on the *15th Parachute Regiment*, the *5th Parachute Engineer Battalion*, and the attached *11th Assault Gun Brigade*, which were well trained and motorized, to furnish the main striking force. The division artillery lacked the motors to accompany a rapid advance, and fire support would be given by the assault guns and a regiment of *Volks* artillery. The latter was horse-drawn but expected to motorize with captured American vehicles.

Only a few days before the attack Heilmann warned Model that the *5th Parachute Division* was only a Class IV outfit, but Model, who by now must have been surfeited with complaints on lack of equipment and insufficient training, merely replied that success would be won by the paratroopers' "usual audacity."

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Perhaps Model did not care to recognize that the paratroopers in this once elite division had been replaced by meagerly trained Luftwaffe ground troops and Navy battalions. Lacking experienced fighting men and the heavy weapons requisite for close support, Heilmann instructed his line officers to avoid pitched battles for defended positions. After all, the goal to be reached by the night of 16 December was near the town of Wiltz some ten miles west of the Our. Therefore the *5th Parachute Division* plan called for a quick and unopposed crossing at the Our; a bridge to be in at Roth by midafternoon of the first day; a rapid advance past the villages where the weak American forces were located; and a lightning stroke to force the crossing sites near Wiltz.

If this plan were successful the *5th Parachute Engineer Battalion* would ferry the assault companies across the Our, then join the advance and reach the Wiltz sector with ferrying equipment by the end of the first day. The *14th Parachute Regiment* had orders to cross the Our in the north near Stolzenbourg, drive past Putscheid and seize a crossing point on the Wiltz someplace west of Hoscheid. To the south the *15th Parachute Regiment* was intended to cross the Our at Roth (named as the main divisional bridge site), seize the high ground near Vianden, then establish a bridgehead over the Sure at Bourscheid. The task of erasing such American units as might be left in the towns and villages was given the *13th Parachute Regiment*, which had no transport and would be brought forward with the bulk of the heavy weapons once the Our bridge was in. Since the *Seventh Army* had ordered each of its divisions to commence the attack with only two battalions, spearheaded by single shock companies, the initial transfer to the far bank of the Our would be a gradual process (and would, as it proved, lead the Americans to believe that the first Germans across were only patrols). Nonetheless, Heilmann hoped that the vehicles of the *15th Parachute Regiment* and the self-propelled 75-mm. guns of the *11th Assault Gun Brigade* would be across the Our River before the close of the first day, for he counted on these two units to lead the advance to the division objective south of Bastogne.

The second German division assembled opposite the 109th Infantry was the *352d Volks Grenadier Division* (Col. Erich Schmidt). The boundary point between the latter and its northern neighbor was fixed about a half-mile south of Roth, but for some reason the precise extension of the boundary line west of the Our had not been settled. As a result complications would arise once the *5th Parachute Division* and the *352d Volks Grenadier Division* advanced beyond the river. The *352d* had full ranks, mostly from the Luftwaffe and Navy, but lacked training and veteran noncoms. Its artillery regiment contained four battalions, but was mostly horse-drawn and woefully short of radio equipment. There were only six assault guns in the divisional company. On the night of 12 December the *352d* pulled out of the long line between Stolzenbourg and Bollendorf which then comprised the division front and re-formed in the woods east of the Our, leaving only a small security force to screen the movements of the divisions moving up on the right and left. When the 109th Infantry sent a large combat patrol across at Vianden on the morning

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of the 14th, the Americans therefore found no enemy.

The night before the attack the *352d* marched back to the new and narrow sector on the river from which the jump-off would be made: the *915th Regiment* on the right, the *916th* on the left, and the *914th*, which had furnished the covering force, in reserve. Thus poised, the assault regiments would cross the Our on either side of Gentingen, with orders to bypass defended villages, seize the dominant heights in the Sauer-Our triangle, and drive as far as the Sauer bridges at Ettelbruck—all this on the first day of the attack. In total, then, two German divisions and the metal of the *LXXXV Corps'* artillery were to be thrown against the 109th Infantry and neighboring troops of the 110th Infantry in the first hours of the great counteroffensive.

There were nearly three hundred tubes and projectors in the *LXXXV Corps* groupment which opened fire at 0530 on 16 December. These pieces were laid on targets deep in the 109th Infantry zone: notably Diekirch, Bastendorf, the ridge road running north from Ettelbruck across the rear of the 28th Division, and the command posts of the two artillery battalions. It would seem that the German gunners were firing by the map (there had been numerous changes of position in this area which were unknown to German intelligence) and the opening barrage shortly dwindled away to occasional salvos without inflicting much damage or disrupting communications. With the first sound of gunfire the assault companies pushed their rubber boats into the Our, only some fifty feet wide, and the engineers began swinging the portable infantry bridges into position over the shallow but turbulent river.

The 109th outposts on the far bank of the Our could see little in the half-light of the foggy morning. Some were quietly bypassed as the German shock companies moved quickly inland. Others, closer to the crossing sites, were assaulted by small detachments. Thus the *5th Parachute Division* engineers wiped out the 2d Battalion outpost in the château ruins at Vianden before any warning could be sent out. The Americans fired flares onto the east bank in an attempt to discover the purpose behind the heavy concentration of German artillery, but no certain word of enemy troops reached the 109th command post at Ettelbruck until about 0900 when Company B reported that a 20-man patrol had assaulted the outpost near Hosdorf. This advance detachment of the *916th Regiment* had hit head on into the continuous and strongly defended right flank position of the 109th Infantry on the heights at the Sauer-Our triangle. By this time, however, the German advance parties farther north had passed through the weak outpost line and were gathering strength and momentum.

The situation in the 109th area developed as follows. The *14th Regiment*, composing the right of the *5th Parachute Division* advance, was moving along the boundary between the 110th and the 109th without much opposition. In actual fact this regiment would "lean" on the neighboring *XLVII Panzer Corps*, which had struck into the center of the 28th Division, and through most of the day lagged while the *Panzer Corps* opened the way. To the south the *15th*

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Regiment took advantage of the wide gap between the two strongpoints manned by Companies E and F of the 109th, its leading battalion marching without a fight to Walsdorf, an unoccupied village about two miles from the river. This move particularly threatened Company F, which was on the ridge road three miles north of Bastendorf (the 2d Battalion command post), and which represented the northern linchpin of the regiment. At 1000 Company G came up from reserve at Brandenburg and was put on the right of Company F.

For some reason the German force at Walsdorf did not press its advantage. The forward units of the *15th Regiment* were out of contact with the rest of the *5th Parachute Division*, and the regimental commander had difficulty in holding his outfit together. At dusk, however, a second German battalion had arrived at Walsdorf and was committed to the southwest in a drive toward Brandenburg, slipping through a wooded depression between Companies F and G. Colonel

Rudder dispatched Company C from the reserve battalion at Diekirch to check this penetration. But the company reached Brandenburg shortly before midnight without encountering the Germans.

The *15th Regiment* drive through Walsdorf marked the most extensive penetration of the 109th Infantry positions on this first day. Farther south battle had been joined in bitter but inconclusive fighting. Company E, in Führen, was bypassed by the German first thrust to Walsdorf. This crossroads village lay athwart the main road leading west from the Roth bridgehead and furnished observation for the American batteries firing on the crossing site. About 1100, detachments from the *15th Regiment* in the north turned and brought Führen under small arms fire. Radio communication with the menaced company was lost three hours later, but direct assault failed to dislodge the Americans.

Company E was further isolated by the interposition of the *915th Regiment* between Führen and the 3d Battalion. The *915th* had crossed the Our near Bettel and moved swiftly and unopposed up the draws through the 2,000-yard gap between Rudder's 2d and 3d Battalions. Shortly after 1000 the German advance guard was firing its burp guns into Battery A, 108th Field Artillery, east of Diekirch. An hour or so before, the American gunners had seen figures moving through the fog but mistook them for Americans. By noon the *915th Regiment* held Longsdorf and Tandel, the latter two miles from the Our, and had patrols to the south only two thousand yards from the main supply road linking Diekirch and Bettendorf on which the 3d Battalion, deployed facing the Our, depended.

Colonel Rudder called on the meager armored reserve allotted him by Cota (the 1st Platoon of Company C, 707th Tank Battalion), sending it north from Diekirch about 1300 to check the *915th* thrust. With the tanks went Company A, shortly followed by Company B, the last of the reserve battalion. The fight through the afternoon was hard and the Americans made little progress, but shortly before nightfall the counterattack forged ahead; Company A and the medium tanks came to the edge of Longsdorf and Company B occupied the high ground between that village and Tandel.³

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While the American counterattack pushed in against the south flank of the *915th* that regiment continued to work its way southwest through the darkness, establishing an advance position on the ridge overlooking Bastendorf. The ex-sailors who comprised this regiment had moved fast and gained ground, but their commander had been wounded, their flanks were open, and communications with the rest of the *352d* were uncertain. In fact this leading contingent of the *915th* had shot its bolt and for the next couple of days would take little part in the battle. Nonetheless the *Seventh Army* commander was well pleased with the advance made by his right wing.

The *916th Regiment* found the going much more difficult than its northern sister regiment. Its opponent, the 3d Battalion, was deployed on what for this sector was a narrow front, well dug in

on the heights overlooking the Our and with its right flank protected by the Sauer. The initial German assault near Hosdorf had provided the 109th with the first confirmation of an enemy advance west of the Our, but accomplished little else. From excellent observation on the heights the 107th and 108th Field Artillery Battalions brought the howitzers positioned near Diekirch into play, pinning the German shock troops to the river bank where they remained for the rest of the day. True, one arm of the *352d* was reaching north of the 3d Battalion, but the latter still blocked the Sauer valley road and the direct approach to Diekirch and the Ettelbruck bridges.

The 109th Infantry had held its positions in this first day, and Rudder saw no cause for alarm since he occupied good terrain. The hard fact remained that the German infantry, masked by the accidents of the rugged Our country, had achieved considerable success in exploiting the gaps between the village strong-points. Also, the German armored vehicles and heavy weapons, which had been observed just at dark assembling across the river facing Führen, had yet to be encountered. The 109th commander, under orders from General Cota that "nobody comes back," now had to restore contact between his companies and get his regiment in position to meet the next enemy move. The regiment could expect little aid, for most of the slim reserves of the 28th Division would go to the hardpressed 110th Infantry in the center. But the 109th had one paramount advantage in that the solid anchoring of its right flank on the natural barrier provided by the Sauer permitted some freedom to concentrate on restoring the situation to the left. Colonel Rudder's reserves consisted of Company A, 103d Engineer Battalion; Company C, 707th Tank Battalion; the towed 3-inch guns of Company A, 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion; and his regimental antitank company. By midnight a platoon of engineers and some tank destroyers were moving up to reinforce the attack through Longsdorf to relieve the company at Führen. An additional tank platoon was ready to add weight to a second thrust toward Führen by way of Tandel.

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At 0240 on the morning of 17 December the division commander phoned Colonel Rudder and made an unexpected demand on his reserves. What had happened was this. On the previous evening the force from the *5th Parachute Division* which had been moving along the boundary between the 109th and 110th reached the primary ridge road (known to the Americans as the Skyline Drive) which extended laterally across the 28th Division sector from Weiswampach to Ettelbruck. The 5th Parachute had rafted some light field pieces and vehicles over the Our and a few self-propelled guns that had negotiated a way across on top of a weir near Vianden were sent down the road to Hoscheid. Meanwhile the left battalion of the *14th Regiment* had been ordered to take Hoscheid. This movement in the dark appeared to pose a threat to cut off the 109th with an attack straight south to Ettelbruck.

General Cota ordered the 109th commander to get a platoon of tanks, mount an infantry platoon on them, and "help out up north where things are getting hot." Rudder immediately dispatched this force, plus a few engineers, northward on the Skyline Drive. In the meantime, however, the *2d Battalion* of the *14th Parachute Regiment* had cut the road south of Hoscheid and the relief force was checked within a thousand yards of the village by enemy fire concentrated on a sharp

bend in the road. Hoscheid was garrisoned by part of the 110th Infantry Antitank Company, six medium tanks mounting 105-mm. howitzers (which the 707th Tank Battalion had organized as an assault gun platoon) and three regular mediums. Through most of the 17th the defenders held on against infantry attack from the west and German assault guns attacking from the north on the Skyline Drive. Finally, about 1530, the Hoscheid garrison received orders to fight its way out and join the relief force. These orders came too late, for an hour and a half earlier this task force had been ordered to the aid of a battery of the 107th Field Artillery north of Diekirch. In Hoscheid the tanks were running low on ammunition. When night fell they loaded on the foot soldiers and made a dash south to the 687th Field Artillery command post at Lipperscheid, where they found that the batteries were in process of displacing across the Wiltz River. The Hoscheid defenders joined the withdrawal westward and subsequently reached the town of Wiltz, there taking part in the defense of the 28th Division command post. The fight at Hoscheid, German prisoners later reported, had cost the assaulting battalion at least a hundred dead but, more, it had helped delay the *14th Parachute Regiment* advance to the Wiltz River.

In the 109th sector proper the battle during 17 December turned on attempts to relieve Company E (Capt. R. W. Cureton) at the crossroads in Führen. The enemy was determined to take this village, located as it was on the boundary between the *5th Parachute Division* and the *352d Volks Grenadier Division*. Führen was attacked during the day by troops of the *15th Parachute Regiment*, the *915th Regiment*, and the *914th Regiment*. As might be expected there was little coordination in this assault; furthermore the Germans were forced to divert much strength to meet the twin-pronged American counterattack moving

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on Führen from the south. At daybreak Company A and its tank platoon resumed attempts to break through Longsdorf and open the road to Führen, but by 0845 mortar and machine gun fire had pinned down the infantry five hundred yards short of Longsdorf. Company B, now missing the platoon sent with the Hoscheid task force, moved a short distance along the road between Tandel and Führen but likewise was checked. The commander of Company C, 707th Tank Battalion, took two of his tanks from Longsdorf to aid the infantry beyond Tandel, but a strong German patrol slipped through a draw lying between Companies A and B and ambushed the tanks.

This German force, finally amounting to a battalion of infantry and two tanks, moved south during the morning until it met the 109th Antitank Company, which was dug in with a few engineers and a single 40-mm. Bofors where the Tandel and Longsdorf roads met. The American 57-mm. antitank guns scored "many hits" on the German tanks, but as usual without effect, and two of the guns were lost. The enemy infantry proved more vulnerable, twenty-five being captured and a large number killed.

Although the penetration was checked, the dual attempt to relieve Führen made no headway. On the east road Company A dwindled under bitter fire. By midafternoon it numbered only twenty-five men and an artillery observer commander as the single officer left. Company B again started

up the Tandel-Führen road, but the Germans swept the road with bazooka and burp gun fire from the ridges on either side forcing the company to withdraw to Tandel and ask for more infantry. All this while Company E had been under attack in Führen, but with its own fire greatly thickened by accurate artillery concentrations the company held the enemy at bay. Late in the day Company E radioed for ammunition and rations. Colonel Rudder ordered a patrol sent from Tandel under cover of night to bring ammunition, but it failed to reach Führen.

At other points the enemy strength increased as the day wore on. The *352d Volks Grenadier Division* succeeded in crossing a few tanks and assault guns, as well as more light artillery. With these heavy weapons the advance guard of the reserve regiment, the *914th*, appeared on the west bank to take a hand in the fight. On the north flank of the 109th Infantry a tank platoon attack east of Brandenburg had restored the connection between Companies F and G early in the morning. But as the day wore on German infantry and assault guns-poured into the Our bridgehead and across the open flanks of the two companies. Company F knocked out two assault guns in a *5th Parachute* column with bazooka fire. Near Brandenburg the American tank platoon destroyed four assault guns belonging to the *352d*. But the German march to the west continued.

In the 3d Battalion sector, on the extreme right flank, the enemy achieved little success during the day and German reports speak of "bloody fighting." Having failed to take the heights by frontal assault, the *916th Regiment* started a flanking attack along the south bank of the Sauer, moving for this purpose into the zone of the *276th Volks Grenadier Division*, which thus far had been held in check around Reisdorf and

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Bigelbach. Although there were no American troops in the Sauer valley, observers on the heights were able to follow every move of the *916th*. One infantry officer, 1st Lt. E. L. Peer, Company L, adjusted the fire of the supporting howitzers "so effectively that an estimated enemy infantry battalion was destroyed." With good wire and radio communication, excellent observation and a wealth of targets, the two artillery battalions were able to fire 3,123 rounds on 17 December, contributing particularly to the defense of Führen and the checkmate of the flanking movement by the *916th*.

As the day progressed, however, the enemy spread through the rear areas of the 109th and menaced the gun positions west of the Diekirch-Hoscheid road. Battery A, 107th Field Artillery, for example, had been harassed by fire from small groups of Germans since the previous midnight. By midafternoon the *2d Battalion* of the *915th Regiment*, which had bypassed Bastendorf earlier, was pressing in on that battery and Battery A, 108th Field Artillery, emplaced nearby. The gunners, fighting as infantry, first beat off the approaching Germans while a neighboring battery blasted the woods east of the road in which the enemy assembled.

Hard pressed as the day wore on, the gunners were relieved by a series of friendly sorties. Two motor carriages mounting quadruple .50-caliber machine guns (the M16) from the 447th

Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion were put on the Diekirch-Hoscheid road. One was crippled by enemy fire, its driver and loader wounded by a rifle grenade when it drove squarely into the files of German infantry on the road, guns blazing; but the other fought its way north to the beleaguered batteries. Lt. Col. James C. Rosborough, commanding officer of the 107th Field Artillery, meanwhile gathered a scratch force and with it fought through to the howitzer positions. (Rosborough was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry in this action.) About the same time the tanks which had been in the Hoscheid task force were ordered into the fight and rolled from the north in on the enemy. The batteries were saved, but the positions from which the gunners had given such heartening support to the 109th were no longer tenable.

At the close of the second day the 109th still was holding tenaciously but against increasingly heavy attack. All its reserves were committed, and the larger part of the attached company from the 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion had been called away to defend the 28th Division command post at Wiltz. The gap between the 2d and 3d Battalions in the Longsdorf-Führen area had been widened while the enemy column in the north had driven deep between the 109th and 110th.

The German attacks suddenly gained strength on the night of 17 December. For two days the *5th Parachute Division* had operated with only such heavy weapons as could be ferried across the Our or maneuvered over the Vianden wier, because for two days trouble had dogged the bridge builders at Roth. The selection of this particular site had been forced upon the German commander because it was the only point at which the river had moderate banks that could be reached by a passable approach road. On the east side of the river, however, American bombers had

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left a large bomb crater in the road close to the Our. No work could be done to fill the crater until the attack actually began on 16 December. Bridging equipment promised by the *Seventh Army* had arrived late and inexperienced engineers had further delayed the construction. American artillery and mortar fire also played its part in harassing the bridge builders.

Finally, in the early evening of 17 December, the bridge was completed, and the bulk of the assault gun brigade, the antitank battalion, and the vehicles of the *15th Parachute Regiment* began to roll, the division artillery and trains lining up to await their turn. The *14th Parachute Regiment*, badly disorganized in the series of village fights at Hoscheid and elsewhere, was pulled together and sent marching to the Clerf River. Here, during the night, the *14th* made a crossing near Kautenbach, opening the way to Wiltz and the west for the main forces of the division. The higher German headquarters no longer expected any concerted resistance in front of the *5th Parachute Division* and attached its immediate reserve, the *13th Parachute Regiment*, to the neighboring division on the south.

This division, the *352d Volks Grenadier*, also had met obstacles at the Our River. Bridge work at Gentingen went badly on the first day. Men and matériel were lost when American howitzers and

mortars found the range. Handling bridge sections in the swift current and on the muddy river bottom was difficult enough without this steady fire. The approach roads on both sides of the river were steep, curved, and mud slick. The *352d* had been promised a *Todt Brigade* for work on the roads and at the bridge, but the labor brigade never appeared. A wooden support bridge was finished at Gentingen late on 17 December, but the transfer of artillery and motor vehicles would be very slow and only a portion of the division's heavy weapons were west of the river by the next morning.

Troops of the *914th Regiment* had arrived in the bridgehead late in the day with orders to form a link between the *915th* and *916th*, now widely separated, and to mop up the pockets of American resistance wherever found. But there was no contact between the three German regiments when daylight ended. The chief problem, however, was not so much that of establishing a homogeneous front as of jarring the Americans loose from the heights at the Sauer-Our triangle. The defenders at this point not only had stopped the left regiment of the *352d Volks Grenadier Division* but also had helped check the right regiment of the neighboring *276th Volks Grenadier Division* by laying fire across the Sauer valley.

Resupply and evacuation were the chief concern of the 109th Infantry on the night of 17-18 December, particularly the problem of getting ammunition to the tanks and Companies E and F. Carrying parties were used and tanks employed to bring up supplies and evacuate the wounded. The 2d Platoon of the 707th's Company C, supporting Companies F and G of the 109th, was refueled and resupplied during the night. But the 1st and 3d Platoons could not be reached because of enemy patrol activity.

When day broke on 18 December the 109th Infantry was no longer in contact with its northern foe, the *5th Parachute*

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Division, because this division, under peremptory orders from its commander, had continued the westward advance through the night, the forward troops defiling into the Kautenbach bridgehead. The *352d Volks Grenadier Division* was still on hand; it was approaching full strength west of the Our and for the first time could employ a number of its heavier supporting weapons in the attack. At dawn the *916th Regiment* launched the strongest assault yet leveled at the 3d Battalion position on the 109th right flank, striking hard under cover of smoke to break through at the left of the battalion northwest of Hosdorf. Early in the assault a platoon from Company K was captured when its ammunition gave out. Company E, which had served to deflect some pressure from the 3d Battalion by its stubborn defense at Führen, was no longer in the fight. No word had come from Führen since 2300 the previous evening. Company B, sent up the Tandel road to reach Führen, had paused at about the same hour only a short distance from the village.⁴ The next morning a patrol with a tank and a jeep reached the edge of Führen, but found the company command post burned and no sign of American troops. The loss of Company E and the platoon from Company K made the 3d Battalion position precarious. Meanwhile the twenty-five men left in Company A had withdrawn from the Longsdorf road under cover of indirect fire laid down by

two tanks which formed a rear guard. The tankers were shown how to give indirect fire by a forward observer from the 107th Field Artillery Battalion. The remnants of Company A joined the regimental antitank company at road junction 206, the avenue by which enemy vehicles had to move to cut the supply road to the 3d Battalion, with orders to "hold that road." But in the north there was no longer any question that Companies F and G could hold on, isolated as they were, along the road beyond Bastendorf. About 0900 the division chief of staff gave Colonel Rudder permission to withdraw the two companies for use as a reserve. Under cover of the attached tank platoon roadblock at Bastendorf the companies fell back to Diekirch.

During the afternoon the situation of the 109th Infantry rapidly deteriorated. At 1300 two Mark VI tanks appeared on the Longsdorf road and with infantry assistance attacked the vital road junction 206. In the fight that followed the antitank company lost all six of its remaining 57-mm. guns, one of the three tanks left with Company A was knocked out by a direct hit, and a breakthrough threatened momentarily. At 1410, while the fight was in progress Colonel Rudder asked for and received permission to pull his regiment together on the high ground around Diekirch; this withdrawal, however, already was in progress. Forty tons of supplies and the hospital units were moved first. At 1300 the tank platoon at the battery positions on the Hoscheid road hooked up the artillery pieces and started south. By then the 2d Battalion was moving from Bastendorf, under small arms fire "from all directions." The 3d Battalion, last out, made its way west along the Bettendorf road, which already was under fire. During the late

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evening the assembly of the regiment at Diekirch was completed, the 3d Battalion and engineers blowing the bridges at Bettendorf over which the enemy might pass to the south bank of the Sauer. With the river momentarily secure at its back the regiment dug in along an arc facing out from Diekirch.

But the 109th was no longer strong enough to man a continuous defensive line. Five hundred officers and men had been lost in the three-day battle; of the heavy infantry weapons only one section of 81-mm. mortars and four sections of heavy machine guns were left; the antitank company had no pieces; the tank company badly needed fuel and maintenance. But in these three days the regiment had held the enemy short of the Ettelbruck crossing and prevented the planned concentration of the *352d Volks Grenadier Division* south of the Sauer. That the 109th had used every weapon at its disposal is shown by the ammunition expenditure for these days: 280,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 5,000 rounds of mortar, 3,000 grenades, and 300 bazooka rounds. That the 109th had disrupted the German plans is witnessed by the fact that the commander of the *352d* was unable to get his division in hand until 19 December, while the attack in force could not be resumed until 20 December.

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The 109th Infantry, however, had been forced back fanwise away from the rest of the 28th Division. Its closest friendly forces were those of CCA, 9th Armored Division, now south and east of the 109th across the Sauer. Colonel Rudder, still under orders to fight for time and space, was enjoined by General Cota on the morning of 19 December "not to recoil any further than the Sure [Sauer] River." The 109th, fortunately, was given a few hours to rest and better its defenses before the enemy continued the advance to wipe out the Diekirch-Ettelbruck bridgehead.

Early in the afternoon German guns opened up on the Diekirch positions (the artillery regiment of the *352d* had just come into position west of the Our), and those elements of the *915th* and *916th Regiments* which the *352d* commander could personally gather were thrown into a series of piecemeal assaults. For two hours the fight went back and forth, ⁵ involving the 2d Battalion on the Diekirch-Hoscheid road and the 3d Battalion aligned on the ridge east of Diekirch. Schmidt, the German division commander, tried to lead his troops forward and was seriously wounded. When night came the fight flared up once more, small groups of the enemy probing for weak points while artillery fire and searchlights were employed to guide the attack and distract the defenders. Colonel Rudder phoned the 28th Division chief of staff about 2000, told him that the 109th might be cut off and surrounded, and suggested that he should pull his regiment back to the southwest across the Sauer to cover the left flank of the 9th Armored Division. General Cota agreed that a further withdrawal could be made but instructed Rudder to stay in his own zone of action, that is, to make a withdrawal to the west.

Fifteen minutes later the 28th Division commander got in touch with General Middleton, the VIII Corps commander, and presented the alternatives now facing the 109th Infantry. The 109th "could fight it out . . . and that would be the end"; the regiment could tie in closely with the 9th Armored force and withdraw to the south; or the 109th and the 9th Armored force could be pulled back toward Bastogne. General Middleton had just finished speaking to Maj. Gen. John W. Leonard, the 9th Armored commander, and had promised a battalion from the incoming 80th Infantry Division to fill the gap between Leonard and Rudder. (General Bradley or Maj. Gen. William H. H. Morris, Jr., the provisional corps commander, later canceled this move so as to keep the 80th together.) Middleton therefore told Cota that the 109th was to hold, but if forced back it should retire to the west behind the Alzette, a stream line directly south of Ettelbruck. These orders were passed on to the 109th. However the final instructions to Rudder recognized the need for reliance on the commander on the ground; he was to "act according to the situation." In point of fact the 109th already was on the march west through Ettelbruck. General Leonard still expected that the 109th would fall back to the south and join the 9th Armored (the 109th was

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not yet under his command), but Rudder was in contact with the enemy and could not risk the disorganization attendant on a change in plans at this point.

The withdrawal itself was a success, despite the intense interdiction fire laid down by the Germans, fire that cost thirty-four casualties from shelling alone. The 107th and 108th Field Artillery Battalions, emplaced near Bissen, answered the enemy guns and gave what protection they could to the marching infantry. Engineer parties laid mines on the main roads and blew the last bridges at Diekirch. The rear guard, formed from the attached tank company, stayed on in Diekirch, where the first platoon captured 107 prisoners. By midnight the 1st and 3d Battalions were west of the Alzette, strung along the west-reaching line of hills which began just south of Ettelbruck and anchored near Grosbous. Here the 109th faced north, forming the westernmost segment of the still firm south shoulder of the VIII Corps line. General Leonard ordered the 2d Battalion, reduced to half strength, over to the east side of the Alzette to offer some infantry protection for the 9th Armored tanks in the Stegen-Ermsdorf area. In Ettelbruck demolition parties remained at work until the morning of 20 December; then they withdrew, blowing the bridges behind them.

The troop withdrawal from Diekirch was followed by a mass exodus of the civilian population. When the Germans first shelled the town on 16 December, the citizenry had started to leave Diekirch but had been halted by American officers and local officials so as to keep the supply roads open to the 109th. Rumors of the American withdrawal on the 19th brought the people of Diekirch out of their cellars and into the streets. They were particularly apprehensive because members of the local *gendarmerie* had fought alongside the Americans and taken a score of German prisoners who now were housed in the local jail. Finally it was agreed that the civil population would evacuate the town at midnight on the 19th following the main troop movement. So, in freezing cold, some three thousand men, women, and children set out on the road to Mersch, leaving behind four hundred of the townspeople who refused to abandon aged relatives or property.⁶

All during the day of the 20th the 109th Infantry was out of touch with the enemy. The *352d Volks Grenadier Division* had assembled two of its regiments west of Bastendorf during the previous night, leaving the *916th Regiment* to occupy Diekirch as the Americans left. Strict orders had arrived from the *Seventh Army* headquarters, located at Ingendorf (a little village southwest of Bitburg), that the *352d* must start the attack rolling once more and take possession of the vital crossings at Ettelbruck. To make success certain, General Brandenberger, the *Seventh Army* commander, sent army artillery and rocket projectors to join the *352d* artillery battalions in creating an "artillery center of gravity" at Bastendorf. The shortage of bridging equipment continued to plague the *Seventh Army*, but Brandenberger's staff scraped together an impromptu bridge train and started it

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CAVE REFUGE FOR CIVILIANS

toward Ettelbruck. Fortunately for the *Seventh Army* drivers, gunners, and pontoneers, the skies remained overcast and the columns moved freely along the roads. At Diekirch the *916th Regiment* found that one bridge had escaped complete destruction and could bear infantry and single heavy weapons; so the regiment moved across the Sauer, its intention to take Ettelbruck from the rear. The German center, and the bridge train, converged on Ettelbruck. Meanwhile part of the *352d Volks Grenadier Division* crossed the north-south branch of the Sauer and marched west to the Wark Creek, apparently intending to envelop the open American flank from the left.

*Elements of the 9th Armored Division Battle at the Sauer
16-20 December*

Only six days prior to the German attack, troops of the 9th Armored Division (General Leonard) had been assigned a 3-mile sector on the VIII Corps front between the 28th Infantry Division and the 4th Infantry Division. This sector fronted on the Sauer River south of the junction with the Our and earlier had been held by a battalion of the 109th

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WALLENDORF, VIEWED FROM REISDORF *on the western side of the Sauer River*

Infantry. The bulk of the 9th Armored Division, a unit with no prior battle experience, was held in the west as the VIII Corps reserve, but just before the German attack CCB was transferred to V Corps. The new sector was manned by the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion

(Lt. Col. Kenneth W. Collins), supported by the 3d Armored Field Artillery Battalion at Haller. As was customary the armored infantry had been placed in line in this quiet sector for combat indoctrination, and in the first few days the Germans on the opposite bank of the Sauer showed so little inclination to disturb the prevailing quiet that Collins was concerned lest his battalion secure no combat experience whatever. He need not have worried.

Across the river a fresh German Division, the *276th Volks Grenadier* (Generalleutnant Kurt Moehring), had just come in from Poland and was dispersed in the little Eifel villages between Echternach and Bitburg. Units of the *276th* were moved frequently in the week before the attack, companies exchanging billets to mislead both the local populace and the American intelligence. Finally, in two night marches the division concentrated on the east bank of the Sauer, its zone of attack defined in the north by Wallendorf (at the junction of the Our and the Sauer) and in the

south by Bollendorf. The *276th Volks Grenadier Division*, then, generally faced the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, but it should be noticed that the tortuous gorge of the Schwarz Erntz lay in the zone of the *276th* and would be used to gain entry to the left flank and rear of the 4th Infantry Division.

Moehring's division had been reconstituted during the autumn following almost complete destruction in Normandy and the retreat across France. Rebuilt around wounded veterans who had returned from the hospitals, the division was fairly young in terms of the conscription classes it represented and was at full strength when it moved west from Poland. The *276th*, however, could not count on accompanying gun support for its infantry since no assault guns had been supplied. In addition the divisional artillery and train were horse-drawn. In the *Seventh Army* plan this division formed the right wing of the *LXXX Corps*. The *276th Volks Grenadier Division*, which with the *212th Volks Grenadier Division* constituted this corps, had no distant objective such as those assigned the *Fifth Panzer Army* formations on its right. The only definite mission given the *276th* was to gain the high ground across the Sauer, dislocate the American artillery positions around Haller, and form the western extension of the blocking line which the *LXXX Corps* was to present to any American thrust aimed at the southern pivot of the great counteroffensive. Once the western Sauer heights between Wallendorf and Bollendorf were in hand, the advance of the *276th* would turn toward the southwest, moving alongside the *212th*. In case the opportunity offered, advance contingents might push as far as Mersch and the area north of Luxembourg. This last maneuver, however, was not a mandatory part of the *Seventh Army* plan.

On the morning of the attack the *LXXX Corps* artillery broke the long quiet on the Sauer River as six battalions and a rocket projector brigade divided their fire to reinforce the divisional artillery of the *276th* and *212th*. The initial concentration in the 9th Armored Division (-) sector, estimated by the Americans at about a thousand rounds, was aimed principally at Beaufort, the largest town in this area, and the batteries around Haller. Damage was not extensive but the forward telephone lines were shot out. The thick fog and early morning darkness must have been as much a problem to the German assault units as to the American observers looking out toward the river. In any case there was considerable confusion and delay on the east bank, and few or none of the rubber assault boats landed on the American side before 0630. Once across, the German assault troops moved rapidly up the draws, masked from view by the fog and the heavy woods.

The main crossing was made by the *986th Regiment* near Wallendorf. Part of one battalion circled into the sharp valley where the Our and Sauer meet, intending to seize Hill 402 (southwest of Bigelbach), which offered the best observation in the vicinity. These troops succeeded in wiping out a squad of armored infantry that had been stationed to watch the valley, but soon mortar and machine gun fire from the 3d Battalion, 109th Infantry, watching from the heights north of the Our, stopped the Germans in their tracks.

The second battalion of the *986th* moved cautiously up the draws and ravines toward Bigelbach. This village lay on a slope and had not been occupied, although American patrols moved in now and then at night to check suspicious lights. As a result the *986th* was able to report that it had made gains on its left and "taken" Bigelbach. For some reason the Germans did not push on and Company C, holding the hills and crests south of Bigelbach, engaged them in a desultory, long-range fire fight for the rest of the day.

The center German regiment, *988th*, made its crossings near Dillingen, aiming in the direction of Beaufort and Haller. Here Company A was deployed in the woods above the Sauer with observation on the river but with insufficient strength to block the numerous ravines running up the wooded heights. By noon the attack threatened to overrun the company and infiltration had taken place at several points, the German movements hidden by the dense pine. Colonel Collins committed Company B, in reserve at Beaufort, to attack through Company A in an effort to restore the position and drive the Germans back over the Sauer. The reserve company ran up against units of the *988th* which had penetrated between the two forward companies but moved fast and reached a position abreast of A and C. All this while the batteries around Haller had been shelling the enemy crossing points; the cost to the Germans must have been high, but they kept coming.

In midafternoon General Leonard dipped into his reserves to support the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion. Since the 9th Armored Division was in this sector with a force equivalent only to a combat command, Leonard's reserves consisted of one tank battalion (the 19th), a company from the divisional engineers, a battery from the 482d Aircraft Artillery Battalion, most of the 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, a company of self-propelled tank destroyers, and two reconnaissance platoons belonging to the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion. These units would fight as a combat command, although the sector was not turned over to Col. Thomas L. Harrold and CCA headquarters until the next morning. One troop was taken from the cavalry and given to the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion; the armored cars moved forward and spent the night of 16-17 December outposting Beaufort and patrolling the road which ran from the town into the Schwarz Erntz gorge.

This deep, thickly wooded gorge posed a constant threat to both CCA and the 4th Infantry Division. As yet the enemy made no attempt to utilize the natural sally port, but in the 4th Division sector German infantry surrounded Berdorf, which controlled a lateral road descending into the gorge. In the 9th Armored sector three lateral draws debouched west from the gorge toward Haller, Waldbillig, and Christnach. In the late afternoon Company A, 19th Tank Battalion, joined the 12th Infantry (4th Division) as a mobile reserve in this area. Troop B, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, came up to reinforce Company B, 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion, whose 76-mm. self-propelled guns covered the Waldbillig and Christnach draws. The right flank of the 9th Armored, although none too secure, at least was outposted. During the late afternoon the enemy, who earlier

had been stopped on the left flank worked closer in toward Reisdorf using the cover of the woods. This threat as yet was not too serious, but the light tank company of the 19th Tank Battalion was dispatched north of Ermsdorf to watch the road which angled from Reisdorf behind the left flank of the position occupied by the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion.

The *276th Volks Grenadier Division* had failed to seize control of the Sauer heights. Although assault parties had made successful penetrations in undefended sectors, some as deep as one and a half miles, stubbornly defended strong-points had checked any coordinated advance. The deeply incised terrain had given tactical advantage, but this had been canceled by communications failures brought on by the poor performance of the German radio sets on the deep-pocketed ground. Furthermore, the *276th* lacked the artillery so necessary for close infantry support in this type of terrain and had been forced to parcel its two howitzer battalions in small sections along the east bank. On the whole the *Seventh Army* command was far from pleased by the day's performance, pressing General Moehring to continue the attack through the night.

Infiltration tactics began to bear fruit as day came on 17 December. In the center of the 9th Armored sector the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion headquarters at Beaufort discovered that the enemy had cut in between the headquarters and the three companies of armored infantry in the line.⁷ Six armored cars counterattacked and cleared the high ground north of Beaufort but were unable to drive the Germans from the woods behind the isolated companies. The enemy meanwhile bore in on both flanks. On the south the *987th Regiment*, thus far missing in American identifications of the *276th Volks Grenadier Division*, appeared during the morning. One of its battalions marched unopposed through the Schwarz Erntz gorge and occupied Müllerthal, the point at which narrow, wooded defiles led out to Waldbillig and Christnach in the 9th Armored (-) zone, and to Consdorf in the 4th Division rear.

About 1330 Troop B, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and four tank destroyers from the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion, launched a counterattack from Waldbillig to regain Müllerthal. The leading tank destroyer was set afire by a German *Panzerfaust*, effectively blocking the narrow road. The dismounted cavalry encountered accurate small arms fire as they attempted to work ahead and the acting commander of Troop B was killed. The unseen enemy, firing behind the cover of huge boulders and trees, had the upper hand; at dark a platoon of cavalry assault guns laid down a protective barrage and the American task force withdrew to the hills flanking the exit from the Waldbillig-Müllerthal defile.

German efforts to achieve a real penetration on the left flank were less successful than on the right. Advance troops of the *2d Battalion, 986th Regiment*, worked their way through the crossfire coming from the 109th Infantry and the

60th Armored Infantry Battalion and briefly occupied Eppeldorf, only to be run out by the light tanks based on Ermsdorf.

The chief German success on 17 December came at the close of day, with an attack by the *1st Battalion, 988th Regiment*, on Beaufort. Here, during daylight hours, the attackers had literally been "blown all over" (as American observers reported) by the howitzers firing from Savelborn and the guns on three headquarters tanks. But at dark Germans seeped into the town from assembly points in the woods, only some fifteen hundred yards distant, and ambushed an 81-mm. mortar platoon when this shifted to meet the assault. Colonel Collins ordered the headquarters of the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion back to the motor park near Savelborn and committed Troop A, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, to fight a rear guard action in Beaufort. The cavalry unit, led by Capt. Victor C. Leiker, held on until 2030, by which time the German infantry controlled all the street corners, then fought its way south to Waldbillig. This rear guard stand cost Troop A 16 jeeps and 7 of its 12 armored cars as well as 43 casualties.

While the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion headquarters withdrew to Savelborn, the 3d Armored Field Artillery Battalion moved its batteries west from Haller to the Savelborn-Medernach road. Despite continuous counterbattery fire, the gunners had given steady and effective support whenever called upon, expending about 4,000 rounds during the two-day action. When the batteries displaced, forty artillerymen, with four half-tracks, and Battery A of the 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion remained behind to block any German penetration through the cross-corridor of the Schwarz Erntz which led past Haller back into the Savelborn position. By midnight, then, the 9th Armored line was re-forming, from Waldbillig (still held by cavalry and tank destroyers) to Ermsdorf, where the light tanks continued to patrol. Contact with the three line companies was lost, but they fought on in their original positions, under orders from the battalion commander to hold their ground. With company fronts a mile wide, the fight became a series of squad actions as the enemy infantry filtered through and behind the American "line." Each attempt to relay a telephone wire or carry forward an ammunition case became a major tactical effort.

Although the *276th Volks Grenadier Division* had driven a number of wedges into the 9th Armored sector during 17 December, the *Seventh Army* commander was very dissatisfied with the division performance. The *276th* was still hung up on the Sauer River. A part of its infantry and nearly all supporting heavy weapons remained on the east bank waiting for a bridge to be completed at Wallendorf, where American shells had smashed much equipment and killed many engineers. Brandenberger sent word to *OB WEST* that a new commander was needed for the *276th Division*. But General Moehring did not live to greet his successor en route in his staff car from Beaufort to Müllerthal he was killed by machine gun fire.

The fighting armored infantry had so successfully contained the German main forces on 16 and 17 December that the infiltrating units which first made headway in the Beaufort area were relatively

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BELGIAN WOMAN SALVAGING GRAIN IN GUTTED BARN

small. The 9th Armored intelligence estimates set the enemy strength to be encountered here at approximately three companies. Against this supposedly limited force the CCA commander mustered his remaining men, assault guns, and armored vehicles for a counterattack to reestablish contact with the three isolated companies "and drive the enemy into the river." Colonel Harrold's available force now included only Company B, 19th Tank Battalion; a platoon of Company D's light tanks; a cavalry assault gun platoon; the I and R platoon from the 60th; and Company A, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion (a part of which was loaded in half-tracks) .

The counterattack was to be made by two task forces. Task Force Hall (Capt. John W. Hall) would lead from the Savelborn assembly area north to Berens and then drive north to Company C while the second task force, Task Force Philbeck (Maj. Tommie M. Philbeck), attacked to the east and northeast to reach the other two companies. Before dawn on 18 December the I and R platoon started in its jeeps along the narrow road to Berens, reconnoitering in advance of the main column. Fire suddenly

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poured in from all sides, killing the platoon commander and cutting the unit to pieces in a matter of minutes. Task Force Hall, continuing the advance in daylight, reached the thick Eselbour woods, but there took the wrong turning at a crossroad. The light tanks, forming the advance guard, had moved only a few hundred yards when the Germans opened fire with bazookas, knocking out the lead tank and blocking the road. Captain Hall, the leader of this task force, was wounded but manned an assault gun and cleared the enemy from the road. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Shortly after noon Task Force Philbeck passed through Hall's position, only to lose more tanks. The Americans lost seven tanks before the order finally came to withdraw.

The American setback had stemmed from the last act of General Moehring as commander of the 276th. Moehring had collected a battalion of the 986th Regiment and an antitank company armed with fifty-four *Panzerfausts* for an attack across the Savelborn-Ermsdorf road to seize Medernach. During the night of 17-18 December this force assembled in the cover of the Eselbour woods, waiting to jump off at dawn. There it lay, with perfect cover for close-in work with the bazooka, when the American advance began. Lacking sufficient infantry to clear the woods or defend the tanks, the Americans had been unable to profit by their superiority in heavy weapons.

The situation on the flanks in the CCA sector also was unfavorable to the Americans. At Ermsdorf, which had been the linchpin on the northern flank, elements of the 1st Battalion, 986th Regiment, brought up mortars and attacked. The light tanks beat off the Germans but were forced to give up their screening activities in this area. On the right flank Troop C of the cavalry made a dismounted assault from Haller with the intention of retaking Beaufort. The troopers were supported by six halftracks from Company A, 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, mounting the deadly quadruple .50-caliber machine guns, but the half-tracks found it impossible to maneuver in the heavy woods. The Germans ahead laid down mortar fire; the cavalry were hard hit and could not maneuver, the half-tracks could not close with the German mortar crews, and the attack was abandoned.⁸ In fact the American force was too slight to hold the original position on the high ground north of Haller, and it withdrew to the new defensive position being formed by CCA as an aftermath to the reverses suffered during the day. In the course of this withdrawal the armored field artillery batteries were hard beset and had to beat off the enemy at four hundred yards range. Two batteries actually took new firing positions in front of the rifle line. After dark CCA reorganized on a line running roughly northwest from Waldbillig to Ermsdorf, thence west to the high ground around Stegen, the latter about two and a half miles south of Diekirch where the 109th Infantry was in the process of assembly. The Germans finally had opened the western Sauer valley and driven an entering wedge between the 9th Armored Division and the 109th Infantry. The gap between Stegen and Diekirch could be closed to the enemy

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only by roadblocks and roving patrols, but the Germans failed to follow up their advantage on the night of 18-19 December.

There was no longer thought of relieving the three armored infantry companies still behind the enemy lines. Colonel Collins sent word to withdraw, via a radio which a forward observer from the 3d Field Artillery Battalion had repaired and by officers from the isolated companies who previously had made daring dashes by jeep through the Germans to bring out wounded and carry forward ammunition. During the next three days volunteers led back nearly 60 percent of the armored infantry but the three-day fight had cost the 60th an estimated 231 casualties.⁹

Across the lines the psychological lift which might have been given by the appearance of the new commander, Col. Hugo Dempwolff, and the successful attack against the 109th Infantry by the *352d Volks Grenadier Division*, which had finally shaken the *276th* north flank loose, was offset by General Moehring's death and the failure to provide a bridge in the division bridgehead. So short was bridging equipment in the *Seventh Army* that the initial losses at Wallendorf could not be immediately replaced.

On the night of 18-19 December, the divisions on the right and left of the *276th* permitted artillery, some rocket projectors, and supplies to move across their bridges to the *276th*. As yet the company of assault guns which the *Seventh Army* had promised was nowhere in sight.

Colonel Dempwolff, taking stock of conditions in his new command, found that losses had been high (ascribed by the unit commanders to the continued absence of assault gun support) and that spirits were low. He determined to continue the attack, nevertheless, this time using the newly arrived supporting weapons to bring his left and center regiments together in a coordinated thrust against Waldbillig, the anchor position for the south flank of the 9th Armored Division. On 19 December, then, Dempwolff reorganized his regiments, moved artillery and rocket projectors forward, and gave his troops food and rest. At Bollendorf his engineers finally completed a bridge over the 40-yard-wide river, lessening somewhat the pinch on the *276th*.

CCA took this much needed breathing spell to prepare roadblocks and demolitions in front of its new 7-mile-long main line of resistance. At best this position amounted to a thin screen with numerous gaps; so a slim reserve was created consisting of two engineer platoons and a dozen assault guns. During the morning, contact with the Germans was lost. Patrols that went out to the front and flanks found nothing in the dangerous gap between Ermsdorf and Diekirch but drove off a German patrol which was moving south from Eppeldorf, not west into the gap. At the right end of the American line patrols discovered a

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large group of Germans in a farmhouse. After a platoon of tank destroyers shelled the house, a volunteer squad of seven noncoms from Battery A, 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, made the assault with Tommy guns and hand grenades. A corporal killed three Germans with a blast

from his Tommy gun, after he himself had been shot in the stomach, and fifty-nine Germans gave up the fight.

The 9th Armored Division could report on the night of the 19th that the situation on its right flank was satisfactory, and on the left flank too as far as Stegen; beyond Stegen the situation was "obscure." General Leonard borrowed the 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (less three troops) from the 4th Infantry Division zone, where a part of its parent organization, the 10th Armored Division, had initiated counterattacks the previous day. But the gap between the 9th Armored Division and the 109th Infantry was too large to be covered by a minimal cavalry screen. Worse, the gap widened during the evening as the 109th withdrew from Diekirch en route to the Ettelbruck-Grosbous line. The compromise solution that moved one much depleted battalion of the 109th southeast to make contact at Stegen gave General Leonard's tanks some badly needed infantry protection but could hardly deflect any determined enemy thrust around the left flank of the 9th Armored Division. In this instance, however, the military axiom that a commander who is worried about the enemy may reflect on the worries besetting the enemy commander, was proven by the event. While General Leonard voiced concern to his corps commander over the gap between the 9th Armored Division (-) and the 109th Infantry, Colonel Dempwolff was plagued by the thought of the widening gap between the *276th Volks Grenadier Division* and the *352d Volks Grenadier Division*. But he had a clear order from General Brandenberger: the *276th* must contain as many American troops as possible. This mission in Dempwolff's judgment required a continuation of the attack southwestward toward Waldbillig and Christnach where American reinforcements already had arrived to help the 4th Infantry Division.

Late on 19 December word reached the *276th* that its missing assault gun company had detrained at Trier. The planned attack against the 9th Armored right flank was therefore postponed until the guns could reach the *988th Regiment*, which had been assigned the main role. In midafternoon on 20 December the weapons remaining to the company, apparently not more than three or four, joined the *988th* at Haller and the attack against Waldbillig commenced. Twice the American 76-mm. tank destroyers and supporting batteries of the 3d Field Artillery Battalion drove off the Germans. But when night fell Dempwolff brought the *987th Regiment* through Müllerthal and into the gorge running west to Waldbillig. Menaced from two sides by superior strength, the American tank destroyers and cavalry were ordered to withdraw to the ridge south of the village.

The capture of Waldbillig on 20 December marked the high-water mark of the *276th Volks Grenadier Division* advance. The division now had a bridge at Bollendorf, its weapons were west of the Sauer, the division command post had been moved across to Beaufort, and the center and left regiments had made

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contact at Waldbillig. The *276th*, however had paid heavily for the restricted success achieved in the five days' attack, success more limited than that gained by any other division in the *Seventh Army*.

SOURCE: U S Army Center for Military History, *The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge* by Hugh M. Cole

LINK: http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/7-8/7-8_Cont.htm#toc

9th Armored Division was on Secret List During the Bulge.

From Supreme Headquarters
Allied Expeditionary Force (Censored)
(Public Relations Div)

For Immediate Release

January 4, 1945

With the 9th Armored Division: - The 9th Armored Division, recently removed from the secret list, had a flaming introduction to battle. It crashed head-on into German armor in the current Rundstedt offensive and emerged with the admiration of even the enemy himself.

The Germans, finding combat teams of the 9th Armored fighting on such widely separated sectors of the front, gave the American division a name. German prisoners spoke of the 9th as the "*Phantom Division*". It was everywhere, they said, and they never could tell where its blows would be felt.

Utilizing its immense firepower to the utmost, even sending rear echelon men into forward positions, the 9th Armored gave an admirable account of itself. In the vital sectors of the front, Bastogne, St Vith, Echternach, there were 9th Armored Combat teams fighting.

At one time in the battle two bulges in the German lines stood out on the maps. They were at Echternach and St Vith. In each one of these bulges there were 9th Armored men, beating off violent German charges and even counter-attacking. When the 9th's tanks were unable to get at the enemy armor, foot troops repulsed German tanks with bazookas.

The 9th is commanded by Major General John W. Leonard, who won the Distinguished Service Cross in the last war as commander of an infantry battalion. He was wounded at Verdun (France) and received the Purple Heart and two French decorations.

One combat team of the 9th fought a battle just east of Bastogne, that made the successful defense of that position possible. Tanks, artillery and infantrymen of this combat command stood and slugged it out against all the assault power the Wehrmacht could offer. Meanwhile American airborne forces and other armored units were gathering behind the 9th's combat command to defend the city itself.

After blunting the enemy spearhead and checking the headlong German onrush westward, the 9th's combat command fell slowly back into Bastogne itself and continued to help defend the city. There were heroes of all ranks and positions in this combat team.

A second 9th Armored combat command, after a speedy march from the north, struck the Germans below St Vith soon after they began their offensive. They smashed the Nazis back only to find that its flanks were exposed. It then became necessary to fight a holding and delaying action.

The effect of this determined stand below St Vith split the wedge the Germans had driven into Belgium and sapped the force of their efforts to wheel northward and capture vital Belgian cities.

Still a third combat command, operating on the southern flank, had a major part in confining the German steamroller to the northern areas of Luxembourg. This combat team defended the area around Echternach. The armored infantry battalion in this line-up frequently found itself fighting behind the German lines. It was a confused melee throughout.

In the battles of St Vith, Bastogne and Echternach, the 9th Armored Division wiped out large numbers of hardened German troops. It captured hundreds of prisoners and destroyed many German tanks.

When the German offensive began, the 9th Armored Division was the most powerful fighting unit present to oppose the initial onslaught.

Men of the 9th first faced the enemy in October in the hills of Luxembourg. General Leonard sent units of the division into the lines at that time so they could become battle-conditioned, even though they were technically in reserve. The Germans definitely were not facing green troops.

The 9th Armored was activated at Camp Fuston (Fort Riley), Kansas, July 15, 1942. After months of training there, it went through the California desert grind and participated in the Louisiana maneuvers. The 9th contains large numbers of former horse cavalymen from the old 2nd Cavalry Division. There are other famous fightint units in the 9th. One, the 3rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion, dates its origin to 1794.

The 9th came overseas in August, 1944. Vehicles were drawn in Southern

England and the division crossed to France late in September.

Twice during the current offensive the German radio reported the 9th Armored Division "*destroyed*". The Germans don't mention it any more. They think they are seeing ghosts.

SOURCE: Reproduced Div.O, Hq, 9th Arm'd Div, APO 259, U.S. Army, 5 February 1945.

LINK:

http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=559%3A9th-armored-division-was-on-secret-list-during-the-bulge&catid=1%3Abattle-of-the-bulge-us-army&Itemid=6&lang=en

THE REMAGEN BRIDGEHEAD, MARCH 7-17, 1945



Remagen Bridgehead. Photographed March 27, 1948 for the Historical Division SS USA by the 45th Reconnaissance Squadron under the supervision of Major J.C.Hatlem

PREPARED BY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION DIVISION
The Armored School

PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to collect all available facts pertinent to the Remagen Bridgehead Operation, to collate these data in cases of conflicting reports, and to present the processed material in such a form that it may be efficiently utilized by an instructor in preparing a period of instruction. The data on which this study is based was obtained from interviews with personnel who took part in the operation and from after action reports listed in the bibliography. This is an Armored School publication and is not the official Department of the Army history of the Remagen Operation. It must be remembered that the Remagen Operation is an example of a rapid and successful exploitation of an unexpected fortune of war. As such, the inevitable confusion of facts and the normal fog of war are more prevalent than usual. The absence of specific, detailed prior plans, the frequent changes of command, and the initial lack of an integrated force all make the details of the operation most difficult to evaluate and the motives of some decisions rather obscure. The operation started as a two-battalion action and grew into a four-division operation within a week. Units were initially employed in the bridgehead, as they became available, where they were most needed: a line of action that frequently broke up regiments. In cases of conflicting accounts of the action, the authors of this study have checked each action and each time of action included in the study and have evaluated the various reports in order to arrive at the most probable conclusions.

FOREWORD

The following comments are included in this study of the operation for the benefit of those who will follow and who may be confronted with the responsibility of making immediate, on-the-spot decisions that are far-reaching in their effect and that involve higher echelons of command.

The details of the operation are valuable and should be studied, as many worthwhile lessons can be learned from them. In this study, which should be critical, the student should approach them by "Working himself into the situation;" that is, by getting a clear mental picture of the situation as it existed at the time it took place.

First and foremost, the operation is an outstanding proof that the American principles of warfare, with emphasis on initiative, resourcefulness, aggressiveness, and willingness to assume great risks for great results, are sound. The commander must base his willingness to assume those great risks upon his confidence in his troops.

Commanders of every echelon from the squad up who take unnecessary risks that are rash, ill-conceived, and foolhardy should be removed from command.

Hence the need and value of good training.

In this particular operation the entire chain of command from the individual soldier, squad, platoon, and on up through the highest echelon, SHAEF, saw the opportunity and unhesitatingly drove through to its successful execution.

It is impossible to overemphasize this as an illustration of the American tradition and training. Military history is replete with incidents where wonderful opportunities were not grasped, with resultant failure.

The fact stands out that positive, energetic actions were pursued to get across. The traffic jams, the weather, the road nets, the change in plans, did not deter anyone from the primary job of getting across the Rhine and exploiting this wonderful opportunity.

The results are history.

One other thought. When a reporter asked Sergeant Drabick, the first soldier across the bridge, "Was the seizing of the bridge planned?" "I don't know about that, all I know is that we took it," was his reply.

This sums it up in a nutshell. So much for the operation.

It might be well for future value to surmise what would have happened if the operation had failed. Assume for this purpose that 24 or 36 hours after the initial troops crossed, the bridge had gone down from delayed time bombs or from air bombing or the direct artillery fire, which was extremely accurate the first few days. It actually did collapse on 17 March.

Those troops already across would have been lost.

Would the commanders who made the decisions have been severely criticized?

My purpose in this question is to create discussion. My hope is that your thinking will result in the answer that they would not.

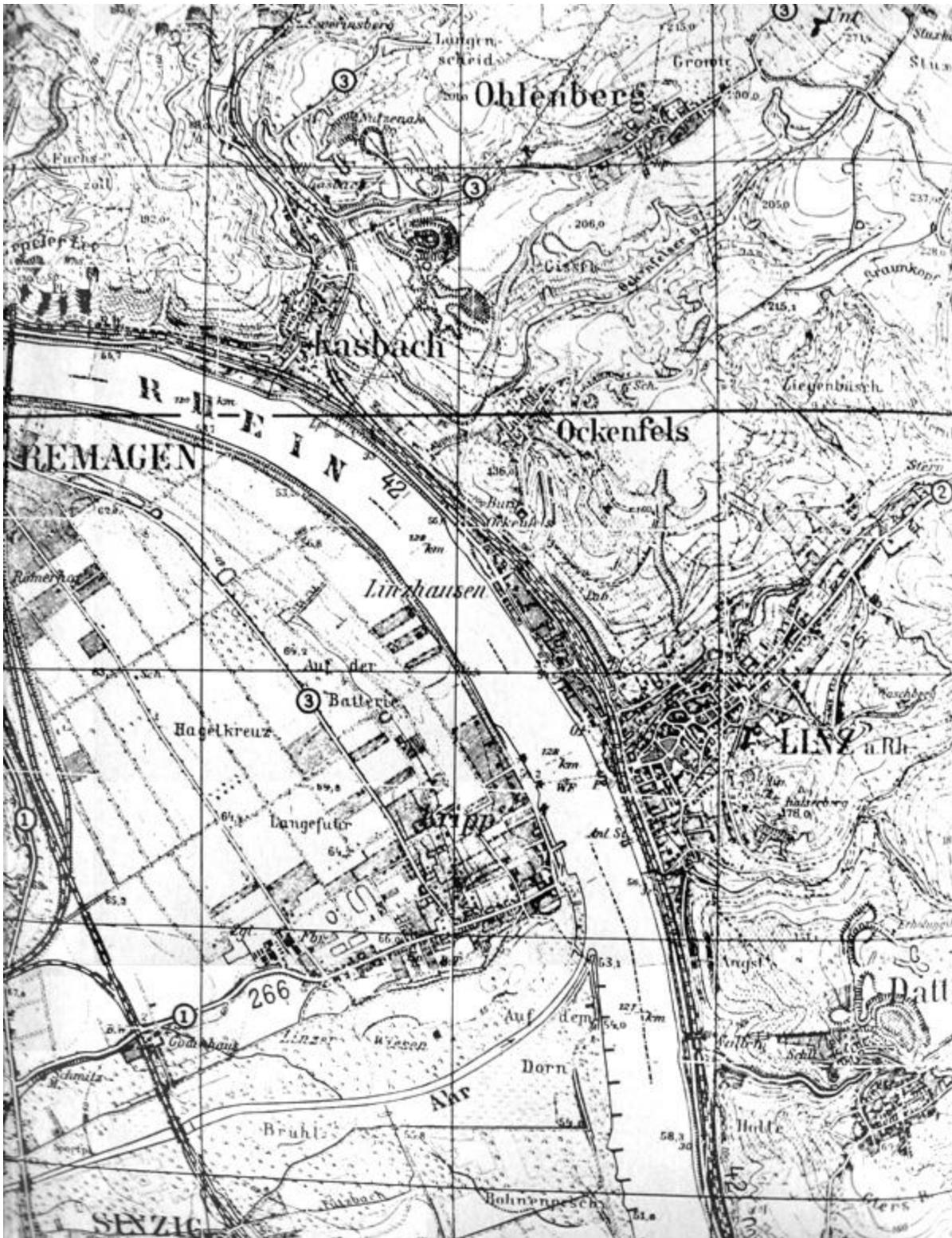
Commanders must have confidence not only in those under their command but also in those under whom they serve.

In this specific case we had this confidence.

JOHN W. LEONARD

Major General, USA
Formerly Commander, 9th Armd Div

INTRODUCTION: SEIZURE OF THE LUDENDORF BRIDGE



Remagen bridge

At 071256 March 1945, a task force of the United States 9th Armored Division broke out of the woods onto the bluffs overlooking the RHINE RIVER at REMAGEN (F645200)[*], and saw the LUDENDORF BRIDGE standing intact over the RHINE. Lieutenant Colonel Leonard E. Engeman, the task force commander, had under his command: one platoon of the 89th Reconnaissance Squadron, the 14th Tank Battalion (Companies B and C), the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, and one platoon of Company B, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion.[1] Beyond the river lay the heartland of Germany, and presumably the organized defenses of the RHINE. Lieutenant Colonel Engeman's original orders were to capture REMAGEN (F645200) and KRIPP (F670180). However, in a meeting between the Commanding Generals, 9th Armored Division and Combat Command B of that division, it had been decided that if the LUDENDORF BRIDGE at REMAGEN were passable, Combat Command B would "grab it." This information had been sent to Lieutenant Colonel Engeman.[2]

About 062.300 March the III Corps commander, Major General Milliken, had remarked to Major General Leonard over the phone, "You see that black line on the map. If you can seize that your name will go down in history," or words to that effect. This referred to the bridge.

The plan of assault as formulated by the column commander and as subsequently executed was an attack on REMAGEN (F6420) by one company of dismounted infantry and one platoon of tanks followed by the remainder of the force in route column and supported by assault guns and mortars from the vicinity of (F633204).[3] This plan obviated the necessity of moving any vehicles within the column prior to the time of attack. The plan further provided that the assault tank platoon should move out 30 minutes after the infantry, with the two forces joining at the east edge of town and executing a coordinated attack for the capture of the bridge.[3]

[*]For all map references in tis study see Maps. appendix V.

[1]Statement of Lt. Col. Engeman, CO, 14th Tank Battalion.

[2]After Action Report, 14th Tank battalion. march 1945, page 8.

[3]After Action Report, 14thTank Battalion, March 1945, page 12.

As enemy troops and vehicles were still moving east across the bridge at the time (1256), the column commander requested time fire on the bridge with the dual purpose of inflicting casualties and of preventing destruction of the structure. This request was refused due to the difficulty of coordinating the infantry and artillery during the assault on the town.[1]

Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, moved out at 1350 following the trail which runs from (F629204) to (F635204). At 1420, the 90-mm platoon of Company A, 14th Tank Battalion, left the woods at (F632204) and started down the steep, twisting, tree-lined road that enters REMAGEN at (F639201).[2] The tank platoon arrived at the edge of town before the infantry and, meeting no resistance, continued on into the town. The infantry, upon arriving at the edge of town, was able to see the tanks already moving toward the bridge, so it followed along the main road running southwest through the center of REMAGEN.1 The town appeared deserted—the only resistance encountered was a small amount of small-arms fire from within the town2 and sporadic fire from 20-mm flak guns which enfiladed the cross streets from positions along the east bank of the river.[3] The tank platoon reached the west end of the bridge at 15002 followed shortly by the company of infantry. By 1512, the tanks were in position at the western end of the

bridge and were covering the bridge with fire. At the same time, a charge went off on the causeway near the west end of the bridge, followed shortly by another charge two thirds of the way across. The first charge blew a large hole in the dirt causeway which ran from the road up to the bridge; the second damaged a main member of the bridge and blew a 30-foot hole in the bridge structure. A hole in the bridge floor which the Germans were repairing made the bridge temporarily impassable for vehicles.[4] The assault guns and mortars began firing white phosphorus on the town of ERPEL (F647205) at this time (1515) in an attempt to build up a smoke screen over the bridge. A strong, upstream wind prevented complete success, but partial concealment of the assaulting force was accomplished.[5] The use of burning white phosphorus demoralized the defenders and drove them to cover. The remainder of Company A, 14th Tank Battalion, arrived at the bridge and went into firing position downstream from the bridge. The 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, less Company A, dismounted in the town and prepared to assault the bridge.[1]

At 1520, a captured German soldier reported that the bridge was to be blown at 1600 that day. This information, which appears to have been widely known, was substantiated by several citizens of REMAGEN (F6420).

In order to evaluate properly the initial decision to establish a bridgehead over the RHINE and the subsequent decisions of higher commanders to exploit the operation, it is necessary to understand the plan of operation at the time. The mission of the 9th Armored Division was to go east to the RHINE and then cut south and establish bridgeheads over the AHR RIVER preparatory to continuing south for a linkup with the Third Army. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, was on the north and east flank of the division, charged with accomplishing the division mission within the zone of the combat command. The task force commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Engeman was, of course, one of the striking forces of the combat command. No specific orders had been issued to anyone to seize a RHINE bridge and attack to the east. The decision to cross the bridge and to build up the bridgehead required a command decision at each echelon—a decision which was not as obvious as it appears at first glance.

[1]Statement of Lt Col Engeman, CO, 14th Tank Battalion.

[2]After Action Report, 14th Tank Battalion, March 1945, page 12.

[3]Statement of Maj Cecil E. Roberts, S-3, 14th Tank Battalion.

[4]Statement of Lt John Grimball, 1st Platoon, Company A, 14th Tank Battalion.

[5]After Action Report, 14th Tank Battalion, March 1945, page 13.

It is probable that very few places along the whole stretch of the RHINE were less suited for a large-scale river crossing. From a tactical standpoint, the REMAGEN BRIDGE was on the north shoulder of a shallow salient into the enemy side of the river. The ground on the east bank rose precipitously from the river and continued rising through rough wooded hills for 5000 meters inland. The primary road net consisted of a river road and two mountain roads, any of which could be easily blocked. From a supply and reinforcement viewpoint, the bridge site was near the southern, army boundary. Only one primary road ran into REMAGEN from the west, and that road did not run along the normal axis of supply. Furthermore, there had been no build-up of supplies at the crossing site in anticipation of a crossing at that point. As previously stated, therefore, the decision was not so obvious as it first appears. The possibility of putting a force

across the river only to have the bridge fall and the force annihilated approached the probable. A negative decision which would have ignored the possibility of seizing the bridge while insuring the accomplishment of the assigned mission would have been easy. Probably the most important observation noted on the whole operation is that each echelon of command did something positive, thereby demonstrating not only a high degree of initiative but also the flexibility of mind in commanders toward which all armies strive but which they too rarely attain.

At 1550, Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, reached the east bank of the river, closely followed by Companies B and C.[1][2] The crossings were made under sporadic fire from 20-mm flak guns and uncoordinated small-arms fire from both sides of the river.[2] The guns of Company A, 14th Tank Battalion, drove the German defenders from the bridge road surface and from the stone piers of the bridge. In addition, the tanks engaged the flak guns on the east bank which were opposing the crossing.[3] On gaining the far shore, Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, turned downstream and began sweeping ERPEL (F647207). Company B scaled the cliffs immediately north of the bridge and seized HILL 191 (F645208) while Company C attacked toward ORSBERG (F652216).[4] Troops from Company B, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion, moved onto the bridge with the assault infantry. These engineers, moving rapidly across the bridge, cut every wire in sight and threw the explosives into the river.4 No effective repairs of the bridge could be accomplished until dark, however, due to extremely accurate and heavy fire from the snipers stationed on both banks of the river.[5]

As the leading elements reached the far shore, CCB received an order by radio that missions to the east were to be abandoned: "Proceed south along the west bank of the RHINE." At 1615 the Commanding General, Combat Command B, received an order issued to his liaison officer by the division G-3 at 071050 March, ordering Combat Command B to "seize or, if necessary, construct at least one bridge over the AHR RIVER in the Combat Command B zone and continue to advance approximately five kilometers south of the AHR; halt there and wait for further orders." Upon receiving this order, General Hoge decided to continue exploitation of the bridgehead until he could confer with the Commanding General, 9th Armored Division. By 071650 March, the division and Combat Command B commanders had conferred at BIRRESDORF (F580217), and the division

[1]After Action Report, 14th Tank Battalion, March 1945, page 13.

[2]After Action Report, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[3]Statement of Lt John Grimball, 1st Platoon, Company A, 14th Tank Battalion.

[4]Alter Action Report, CCB, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, page 9.

[5]Statement of Maj Cecil E. Roberts, S-3, 14th Tank Battalion.

commander directed Combat Command B to secure and expand the bridgehead.[1] Task Force Prince at SINZIG to be relieved by Combat Command A and Task Force Robinson on the north to be covered by one troop, 89th Reconnaissance Squadron; division responsible to the west end of the bridge.[2] This released for the bridgehead forces the following units:

Company C, 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Troop C, 89th Reconnaissance Squadron.

52d Armored Infantry Battalion.

1st Battalion, 310th Infantry.
1 platoon, Company B, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion.

Provisions were made to guide these units to their areas, and a time schedule of crossing was drawn up.[3]

The command post of the bridgehead force was set up in REMAGEN 200 yards west of the bridge at 1605. Combat Command B command post was established at BIRRESDORF (F580217) at 1200.

At 1855, the bridgehead commander received orders from Combat Command B to secure the high ground around the bridgehead and to mine securely all roads leading into the bridgehead from the east. In addition, he was informed that the necessary troops required to perform this mission were on the way and that the division would protect the rear of the task force.[4]

A dismounted platoon from Company D, 14th Tank Battalion, swept the area between the railroad and the woods on the high ground west and south of REMAGEN. This job, which was completed at 2040, silenced the flak guns and drove out the snipers who had been harassing the engineers working on the bridge.[3]

Late in the evening American Air intercepted a German order directing a heavy bombing attack on the bridge to be made at 080100 March. However, the bad weather prevented the German planes from getting off the ground.[2]

During the night, the two roads leading into REMAGEN from BIRRESDORF on the west and SINZIG (657164) on the south, as well as the streets of the town, became clogged with traffic; first by units of the combat command being hurriedly assembled, and later by reinforcements being rushed up by III Corps. The night was rainy and very dark, which necessitated great efforts from all concerned to keep traffic moving at all. The bridge repairs, completed by midnight, permitted one way vehicular traffic. Company A of the 14th Tank Battalion, less its 90-mm platoon, crossed successfully; and Company C, 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion, followed. The leading tank destroyer slipped off the temporary runway on the bridge in the darkness and became wedged between two cross members of the structure, thereby halting all vehicular traffic for a period of three hours. By 080530 March, when the tank destroyer was finally towed off the bridge, the traffic jam was impeding movement as far back as BIRRESDORF (580217).[5]

During the next 24 hours, the following-designated units crossed the bridge:

080015 March

Company A, 14th Tank Battalion, less one platoon, crossed and set up a road block at (F642211) and one at (F656203).

[1]After Action Report, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, pages 19, 20.

[2]Statement of Major General Leonard.

[3]After Action Report, 14th Tank Battalion, March 1945, page 14.

[4]After Action Report, 14th Tank Battalion, March 1945, page 13.

[5]After Action Report, CCB, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, page 10.

080200 March

52d Armored Infantry Battalion, dismounted, started across the bridge. The battalion established its command post at ERPEL (F647207) at 0630 and took over the north half of the perimeter from UNKEL (F634224) to (F652227).[1]

080700 March

1st Battalion, 310th Infantry, crossed and occupied the high ground south of the bridge around OCKENFELS (F673200) in order to deny the enemy use of the locality for observation on the bridge.

080715 March

14th Tank Battalion, less Company A, crossed and went into mobile reserve.² During the remainder of the day of 8 March, the 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, crossed and took up defensive positions to the east and northeast of the 27th and 52d Armored Infantry Battalions. By this time, the bridgehead was about one mile deep and two miles wide.

Following the 47th Infantry, the 311th Infantry, 78th Division, crossed the river and went into an assembly area at (F647213).[3][4]

During the night of 8-9 March, traffic congestion in REMAGEN became so bad that only one battalion of the 60th Infantry was able to cross the river. One cause of the increased traffic difficulty was the almost continuous artillery fire falling on the bridge and bridgehead, and the air strikes in the area.[5][6]

The command of the bridgehead changed twice in 26 hours. At 080001 March, the Commanding General, Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division (General Hoge), assumed command of the forces east of the RHINE. During the night of 7-8 March, he moved to the east bank all command posts of units having troops across the river, so that a coordinated fight could continue even if the bridge were blown. At 090235 March, the Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division (General Craig), assumed command of the bridgehead forces, and directed the operation until the breakout on 22 March.[7]

[1]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, page 3.

[2]After Action Report, 14th Tank Battalion, March 1945, page 15.

[3]After Action Report, CCB, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, page 9.

[4]After Action Report, CCB, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, page 10.

[5]After Action Report, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, page 20.

[6]Statement of Lt John Grimball, Company A, 14th Tank Battalion: "...the first round of German artillery fired at the bridge came in on the morning of March 8 at about 1030 or 1100

o'clock. I remember this very clearly . .

[7]After Action Report, CCB, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, pages 10, 11.

NARRATIVE: Build-up and Conduct of the Bridgehead

By the time the 9th Infantry Division assumed command of the bridgehead, it had become a major effort. The activities which then dominated the scene were threefold: (1) the close-in protection of the bridge and the building of additional crossings; (2) the enlarging of the bridgehead; and (3) the reinforcing of the troops east of the RHINE. In order to understand correctly these problems and their solution, it is necessary to hark back several days and study the progressive situation.

6 March 1945

In the 9th Infantry Division zone the 47th Infantry Regiment drove approximately three miles past HEIMERZHEIM (F4135), a gain of five miles. The 60th Infantry attacked through the 39th Infantry Regiment and also advanced approximately five miles to BUSCH=HOVEN (F4631), which was captured.

Both Combat Command A and Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division attacked to the southeast early in the morning, and continued the attack through the day and night to advance nine or ten miles. Although Combat Command A was held up for a number of hours at the city of RHEINBACH (F4425), it captured that place during the late morning and by midnight had taken VETTELHOVEN (F5219) and BOLINGEN (F5319). Combat Command B captured MIEL (F4230) and MORENHOVEN (F4430), and by 1530 had entered STADT MECKENHEIM (F4925).

The 78th Infantry Division's 311th Infantry, which had crossed the corps southern boundary into the V Corps zone in order to perform reconnaissance and protect the corps south flank, was relieved early by elements of the V Corps and attacked to the east. The regiment advanced up to five miles to MERZ-BACH (F4322), QUECKENBERG (F4022) LOCH (F4022), and EICHEN (F4216).

As a result of the changes of corps boundaries that had been directed by First US Army during the night 5-6 March, the direction of attack was changed to the southeast, with consequent changes in division boundaries and objectives. The 1st Infantry Division's southern boundary was moved south so that the city of BONN (F5437) fell within the division zone, and the division was directed to seize BONN and cut by fire the RHINE RIVER bridge at that place. The southern boundary of the 9th Infantry Division was also turned southeast so that the cities of BAD GODESBURG (F.5932) and LANNESDORF (F6129) became its objectives, and the 9th Armored Division was directed to seize REMAGEN (F6420) and crossings over the AHR RIVER in the vicinity of SINZIG (F6516), HEIMERSHEIM (F6016), and BAD NEUENAHR (F5716). The 78th Infantry Division was directed to seize crossings over the AHR RIVER at AHRWEILER (F5416) and places to the west of AHRWEILER (F5416), and was instructed to continue to protect the III Corps right flank. All divisions were directed to clear the enemy from the west bank of the RHINE RIVER in their respective zones, and all artillery was directed that posit or time fuses only would be used when firing on RHINE RIVER bridges.

During the night of 6-7 March, 9th Armored Division was directed to make its main effort toward the towns of REMAGEN and BAD NEUENAHR, and was informed that closing to the RHINE RIVER at MEHLEM (F6129) was of secondary importance.

By 1900, First US Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, requested the Air Force not to bomb either BONN or BAD GODESBURG. It was also requested that all the RHINE RIVER bridges in III Corps zone be excluded from bombing, although no objection was made to attacking ferry sites, pontoon bridges, boats, or barges being used to ferry men and equipment across the RHINE RIVER.

The III Corps command post opened at ZULPICH (F2333) at 1200.

7 March 1945

Corps continued its rapid advance of the preceding day and drove from five to 12 miles along its entire front to seize the railroad bridge across the RHINE RIVER at REMAGEN (F6420), as well as a number of crossings over the AHR RIVER in the vicinity of SINZIC (F6516), BAD NEUENAHR (F5716), HEIMERSHEIM (F6016), and AHRWEILER (F5416). On this day, enemy resistance appeared to collapse, and opposition was scattered with no apparent organized lines of defense. The little resistance encountered was confined to towns, where small groups defended with small-arms fire, although at HEIMERSHEIM and BAD NEUENAHR the enemy defended stubbornly.

At 1400, III Corps was assigned a new mission when Major General W. B. Kean, Chief of Staff, First US Army, visited the corps command post at ZULPICH with instructions directing the corps to advance south along the west bank of the RHINE RIVER and effect a junction with the Third US Army, which was driving north toward the RHINE at a point only a few miles south of the III Corps right flank. A message cancelling this mission was received at III Corps headquarters at approximately 1845 when Brigadier General T. C. Thorsen, G-3, First US Army, in a telephone message, directed that "Corps seize crossings on the AHR RIVER, but do not move south of the road, KESSELING (F4909)-STAFFEL (F5109)-RAMERSBACH (F5410)-KONIGSFELD (F6011), except on First US Army order." A second telephone call from First US Army at approximately 2015 informed III Corps that it had been relieved of its mission to the south, but that the III Corps was to secure its bridges over the AHR RIVER, where it would be relieved as soon as possible by elements of the 2d Infantry Division (V Corps).

In the zone of the 9th Infantry Division, the 60th Infantry Regiment attacked in the direction of BONN, while the 39th Infantry Regiment continued to attack toward BAD GODESBERG (F5932). By midnight, after advances of several miles, elements were in position to attack BAD GODESBERG and objectives to the south along the RHINE.

To the south, in the zone of the 79th Infantry Division, the 309th Infantry Regiment attacked through the 311th Infantry Regiment, and advanced from eight to ten miles against light resistance and seized crossings over the AHR RIVER.

The 9th Armored Division, having been given the mission of seizing REMAGEN and crossings over the AHR, moved out in the morning with Combat Command A on the right and Combat

Command B on the left. The mission of Combat Command A was to seize crossings at BAD NEUENAHR and HEIMERSHEIM, while Combat Command B was to take REMAGEN and KRIPP (F6718) and seize crossings over the AHR at SINZIG and BODENDORF (F6317). Combat Command B consequently attacked in two columns, one in the direction of each of its objectives, with 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry, and a tank destroyer company covering the left flank. Although Combat Command A met stiff opposition at BAD NEUENAHR, Combat Command B met practically none and captured SINZIG and BODENDORF (F6317) by noon with bridges intact, and by 1530 had captured REMAGEN, against light opposition. Upon finding the bridge at REMAGEN intact, Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Engeman, commanding the north column of Combat Command B, seized the bridge.

First news of the seizure of the bridge arrived at the III Corps command post at approximately 1700 when Colonel James H. Phillips, Chief of Staff, received a telephone call from Colonel Harry Johnson, Chief of Staff, 9th Armored Division. Colonel Phillips was informed that the bridge was taken intact, and was asked for instructions. At this time, the corps commander was at the command post of the 78th Infantry Division, and although First US Army had given no instructions regarding the capture of the bridge, Colonel Phillips gave instructions for the 9th Armored Division (less CCA) to exploit the bridgehead as far as possible, but to hold SINZIG. Colonel Phillips then relayed the information to Major General Milliken, who confirmed these instructions and immediately made plans to motorize the 47th Infantry Regiment (9th Infantry Division) and dispatch it to REMAGEN. The 311th Infantry Regiment of the 78th Infantry Division was alerted for movement to the bridgehead.

III Corps was presented with the problem of making troops available for immediate employment in the bridgehead. The greater parts of all three divisions were engaged. As an expedient, units had to be moved to the bridgehead in the order in which they could be made available. In order to achieve effective control and unity of command, it was decided to attach all units initially, as they crossed the river, to Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, for securing the initial bridgehead.

As a result, the 47th Infantry Regiment, having been motorized, became attached to Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, at 2100; and the 78th Infantry Division was instructed to have the Commanding Officer, 311th Infantry Regiment, with necessary staff officers, report to the Commanding General, 9th Armored Division. The 78th Infantry Division was told that III Corps would furnish trucks to the regiment at 080100 March, and that movement would be upon call of the Commanding General, 9th Armored Division. First US Army, on being notified of the day's developments, confirmed the decision to exploit the bridgehead. A telephone call to III Corps from First Army at 2015 included the information that the 7th Armored Division was attached to III Corps immediately, for use in relieving the 9th Infantry Division; that elements of the 2d Infantry Division (V Corps) would relieve the 78th Infantry Division and CCA of the 9th Armored Division as soon as possible; that a new V-III Corps boundary was placed in effect immediately; and that First Army was sending a 90-mm antiaircraft battalion, a treadway bridge company, and a DUKW company to III Corps.

Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck, Commanding General, 7th Armored Division, was instructed to immediately move one combat command, reinforced by one battalion of infantry, to an area MIEL (F4230)-MOREN-HOVEN (F4430)-BUSCHHOVEN (F4631)-DUNSTEKOVEN (F4333), where it would become attached temporarily to the 9th Infantry Division. In turn, the

9th Infantry Division was informed of these arrangements, and was directed that the 60th Infantry Regiment, after relief by Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, would become attached to the 9th Armored Division.

Other considerations were the need for artillery support, the protection of the bridge against enemy air action and sabotage, the construction of additional bridges, and the problems of signal communication. The signal plan had been built around an axis of advance to the south and did not envisage a need for extensive communications in the REMAGEN area.

Artillery plans also needed quick revision. By 2230, one 4.5-inch gun battalion, one 155-mm gun battalion, and one S-inch howitzer battalion were in position, ready to deliver fire. Heavy interdiction fires around the bridgehead were planned.

By 080300 March the 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion had established defense of the bridge. Assurance was given by First Army that air cover would be provided from any base on the continent or in the United Kingdom from which planes were able to leave the ground.

Visibility during the day was fair, with low clouds and scattered rains throughout. Heavy rains fell during the night.

8 March 1945

Activity on 8 March was concerned primarily with reinforcing the troops across the river as rapidly as possible, expanding the bridgehead, and clearing the enemy from the west bank of the RHINE.

East of the RHINE the enemy took no concerted action. No counterattacks were launched and no organized defenses were encountered. KASBACH (F6620) and UNKEL (F6322) were captured, and at the day's end, the 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, was fighting in LINZ (F6718). The 47th Infantry Regiment crossed the river in the afternoon and went into positions northeast of the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion.

The 78th Infantry Division was directed at 0200 to cancel all attacks which had been scheduled for this day, and to hold the AHR RIVER bridgehead until relief had been effected by the 2d Infantry Division. Major General Walter M. Robertson, Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division, had visited the 78th Infantry Division command post, and had stated that the relief could be completed no earlier than 0815 of that day.

At this time the 309th Infantry Regiment was the only regiment under control of the 78th Infantry Division which was actually engaged. The 310th Infantry Regiment had previously been attached to the 9th Armored Division, with which it was currently operating, and the 311th Infantry Regiment, having been alerted for movement on the preceding night, had been assembled and was prepared to move by 0500. Movement of the 311th Infantry Regiment began during the morning and by late afternoon the regiment closed in the bridgehead area, where it became attached to the 9th Armored Division.

At 0945, the 309th Infantry Regiment was alerted for movement to the bridgehead, when instructions were issued to Major General Edwin P. Parker, Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, directing that the 309th Infantry Regiment, upon relief by the 2d Infantry Division, be assembled and marched on secondary roads to an area designated by Major General Leonard, Commanding General, 9th Armored Division. Major General Parker, Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, was instructed that control of his regiments would be returned to him as soon as he was prepared to assume command of his zone of action in the bridgehead area. At 1755, the relief of the 309th Infantry Regiment was completed, and at that time, control of the zone of the 78th Infantry Division passed to the Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division. At 1815, two battalions of the 309th Infantry Regiment were ordered to move within seven hours, and the regiment began crossing during the night, closing in the bridgehead area on the following day.

Movement of the 7th Armored Division into the zone of the 9th Infantry Division continued throughout the day; and at 1235, Combat Command A had closed in the area and became attached to the 9th Infantry Division. The 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry, had been assembled by afternoon and had crossed the river by early morning of 9 March. Combat Command B, 7th Armored Division, became attached to the 9th Infantry Division at 1100, and was directed to move during the afternoon to relieve the 39th Infantry Regiment. At 1715, the Commanding General, 7th Armored Division, assumed command of the zone, and all 7th Armored Division elements, plus those units of the 9th Infantry Division remaining in the zone, passed to his control.

The anticipated attachment of the 99th Infantry Division made it doubly important that some agency be given the responsibility of staging and moving troops west of the RHINE. Consequently, the Commanding General, 9th Armored Division, was directed to continue to perform this function. The Commanding Generals, 9th Infantry and 9th Armored Divisions, operated as a team, one furnishing troops to the other as called for. HI Corps set up the priority for the movements of troops available west of the RHINE as rapidly as they could be disengaged, and established a tactical command post at REMAGEN to (1) expedite information to corps, (2) give advice for solution of rising problems, (3) closely supervise engineer operations, and (4) supervise traffic and control roads. A traffic circulation plan was placed in effect in which eastbound traffic moved on northerly roads, which were not under enemy observation, and westbound traffic moved on southerly routes. Thus, loaded vehicles ran less risk of receiving artillery fire. In order that bridge traffic would not be interrupted by westbound ambulance traffic, it was decided that casualties would be returned by LCVPs, DUKWs, and ferries, which were soon placed in operation.

Because of poor weather conditions—the day was cold with rain and low overcast—fighter-bombers were grounded and were unable to furnish cover protection for the bridge. However, the enemy attempted ten raids over the bridge with ten aircraft, eight of which were Stukas. By afternoon, however, the 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion had three batteries at the bridge site with three platoons on the east and three platoons on the west bank of the river, while the 413th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion (90-mm) went into positions on the west bank; and of the ten attacking aircraft, eight were shot down.

Because of the air attacks and the artillery fire, the engineers at the bridge site requested that smoke be employed, and requests were again made of First US Army for a smoke generator unit. Because none was available at this time, however, smoke pots were gathered from all available sources. The 9th Armored Group was ordered to furnish CDLs (search lights mounted on tanks) to assist in protecting the bridge against floating mines, swimmers, riverboats, etc., and depth charges were dropped into the river at five-minute intervals during the night to discourage swimmers bent on demolishing the bridge.

By the end of the day, the forces in the bridgehead consisted of the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, the 14th Tank Battalion, the 47th Infantry Regiment, the 3Hth Infantry Regiment, the 1st Battalion of the 60th Infantry Regiment, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 310th Infantry Regiment, Company C of the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Troop C of the 89th Reconnaissance Squadron, one platoon of Company B of the 9th Armored Engineer Battalion, and one and one half batteries of the 482d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion. The 309th Infantry Regiment was en route.

III Corps Operations Directive No. 10 was published, which established three objectives, known as lines Red, White, and Blue. The seizure of line Red was to prevent small-arms fire from being delivered on the bridge area; when line White had been reached, observed artillery fire would be eliminated; and the seizure of line Blue would prevent medium artillery fire from being delivered on the bridge sites.

9 March 1945

On the third day of the bridgehead operation, enemy opposition east of the RHINE stiffened considerably, as elements of the 11th Panzer Division were contacted on the front. Enemy troops had been reported moving on the autobahn with lights on during the night. Although the 311th Infantry Regiment made good progress to the north, where it made gains of from 2000 to 3000 yards, strong resistance was met in the south and center of the bridgehead, and the enemy attacked with infantry, tanks, and aircraft. Fire of all types was received, and heavy artillery fire landed in the vicinity of the bridge. During the early afternoon, a direct hit on an ammunition truck which was crossing the bridge caused considerable damage, placing the bridge out of operation for several hours.

On the west of the RHINE, all organized resistance ceased; and at 1125, the 7th Armored Division was able to report that its zone had been cleared of the enemy from boundary to boundary and to the river. Relief of the 60th Infantry Regiment was completed early in the afternoon, and at 1300, that regiment was relieved of attachment to the 7th Armored Division. The regiment, the 1st Battalion of which had crossed to the east of the RHINE the preceding day, closed in the bridgehead during the early morning hours of the 10th. The 39th Infantry Regiment, having captured BAD GODESBERG (F5832), was relieved by elements of the 7th Armored Division by 1800, and prepared to move into the bridgehead on the following day. The 7th Armored Division was directed to outpost islands in the RHINE RIVER at (F627270) and (F632270), opposite HONNEF, and to prevent movement of enemy upstream toward the bridge sites.

Of the 78th Infantry Division, all but the 309th Infantry Regiment and elements of the 310th Infantry Regiment, attached to Combat Command A, 9th Armored Division, had crossed the RHINE on 7 and 8 March. The 309th Infantry Regiment, having begun its movement across the river on 8 March, closed in the bridgehead late in the afternoon of 9 March, and at 0930, elements of the 2d Infantry Division were moving into position to relieve the 310th Infantry Regiment(-) in the AHR RIVER bridgeheads. That relief was completed at approximately 1600. By 100400 March, the 310th Infantry Regiment had crossed completely, and the only elements of the 78th Infantry Division remaining west of the RHINE at that time were the division artillery and spare parts.

During the morning the command post, 9th Infantry Division, opened at ERPEL (F647205). The Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division, was directed that elements of the 78th Infantry Division currently attached to the 9th Infantry Division would revert to control of the Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, at a time and place agreed upon by the two division commanders, and that the Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, would assume control of the north sector of the bridgehead. The Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division, was instructed early in the morning to continue the attack and to seize line White.

At 1015, the 99th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Walter E. Lauer became attached to III Corps, and during the late afternoon the division began to move into an assembly area in the vicinity of STADT MECKENHEIM (F4925). By midnight, the 393d and 394th Infantry Regiments had closed in the area, and the 395th Infantry Regiment was en route.

Instructions were issued directing: (1) that the 99th Infantry Division (artillery), with the 535th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, the 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 786th Tank Battalion attached, would cross the RHINE, commencing at 102030 March; (2) that the division would pass through elements of Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, and attack to the south; and (3) that one infantry regiment (minus one battalion) was not to be committed except on III Corps orders. This regiment, the 395th, was to move to an assembly area within one hour's marching distance of the bridge site, and was to close there by the evening of 11 March.

Elements of the 9th Armored Division, which were holding its bridgehead across the AHR RIVER, were directed: (1) to be prepared to move east of the RHINE on III Corps orders; (2) to continue to protect bridges over the AHR RIVER; and (3) to maintain contact with the 2d Infantry Division (V Corps) on the corps south flank.

The III Corps Engineer was directed to assume control of all engineer activity at the bridge site, thus relieving 9th Armored Division engineers of that responsibility. At the time, two ferries were already in operation, and a third was nearing completion. Construction had been started at 091030 March on a treadway bridge at (F648202), and it was planned that a heavy pontoon bridge would be built upstream at (F674186) (KRIPP). A contact boom, a log boom, and a net boom, designed to protect the bridge from water-borne objects, were under construction upstream from the bridge.

Early in the day, the 16th Antiaircraft Artillery Group was directed to employ all antiaircraft artillery units for the protection of the bridge, and consequently the antiaircraft defense of the

bridge site was strengthened by the arrival of two additional battalions. The 109th Antiaircraft Artillery Gun Battalion became operational on the west bank of the RHINE, and the 634th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion crossed and went into position on the east bank.

The corps command post opened at RHEIN-BACH (F4425) at 1220.

At the close of the day, the forces in the bridgehead had been strengthened by the arrival of the 309th Infantry Regiment, the remainder of the 310th Infantry Regiment, the 60th Infantry Regiment, and additional antiaircraft protection. The antitank defense of the bridgehead had been bolstered by the tank destroyers accompanying the regimental combat teams.

Although no artillery—or at best an occasional battery—had as yet moved east of the RHINE, the artillery of the divisions, as well as corps artillery, supported the operation from positions on the west side.

The day was cold, with visibility restricted by a low overcast which continued throughout the day. No fighter-bombers flew in support of the bridgehead, but medium bombers flew several missions.

10 March 1945

The expansion of the bridgehead continued against stiffening resistance. Very heavy resistance was encountered in the area northeast of BRUCHHAUSEN (F6522), and strong points which delayed the advance were encountered in the entire zone. Fire from small arms, self-propelled weapons, mortars, and artillery was received.

In the north, the 311th Infantry Regiment attacked HONNEF (F6427). The 309th Infantry Regiment, in the northeast portion of the corps zone, advanced some 2000 yards to the east after repulsing one counterattack, and in the center sector the 47th Infantry Regiment received sharp counterattacks which forced a slight withdrawal. The regiment, assisted by the 2d Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, repulsed these counterattacks, however, and during the afternoon the 3d Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, followed by the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion (attached to the 310th Infantry Regiment), attacked through the 47th Infantry Regiment and advanced up to 1000 yards. The 60th Infantry Regiment, in the southeast, attacked and gained about 1500 yards. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division (1st Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, and 27th Armored Infantry Battalion), plus elements of the 60th Infantry Regiment, attacked south and reached a point about 700 yards south of LINZ (F6718), capturing DATTENBERG (F6817) en route.

The movement of the 9th Infantry Division across the RHINE was completed at 1825, when the 39th Infantry Regiment closed in the bridgehead, in an assembly area in the vicinity of BRUCHHAUSEN (F6522). The Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division, requested that he be relieved of responsibility for the security of the railroad bridge and bridging operations at REMAGEN, and consequently the 14th Cavalry Group was directed to assume that responsibility. Instructions were issued directing the group to move to an assembly area in the

vicinity of STADT MECKENHEIM
(F4925)-ARZDORF (F5423)-RINGEN (F5419)-GELSDORF (F5021) on 11 March.

The 99th Infantry Division closed in its assembly area west of the RHINE early in the morning and at 1530 one regimental combat team was directed by the corps to move into the bridgehead. The 394th Infantry Regiment began to cross the RHINE during the night, and at 2100 the corps directed that the remaining two infantry regiments plan to arrive at the bridge on the following morning. III Corps directed that the 99th Infantry Division plan to take over in the southern sector of the bridgehead.

III Corps Artillery, reinforced by V and VII Corps Artillery, fired heavy interdiction and counterbattery missions during the day.

11 March 1945

The attack to enlarge the bridgehead progressed slowly against continuous stubborn resistance. Few gains were made in the north and central sectors. The 394th Infantry Regiment, which had completed crossing early in the morning, attacked to the south through Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, and gained up to 3000 yards, capturing LUEBSDORF (F6816) and ARIENDORF (F6814). Elsewhere in the bridgehead, some local objectives were taken and a number of counterattacks, supported by tanks, were repulsed.

The 394th Infantry Regiment, the first of the 99th Infantry Division units to move into the bridgehead, completed its crossing early in the morning and became attached to the 9th Infantry Division at 0730. At 0830, the Assistant Division Commander, 99th Infantry Division, opened an advanced command post with the command post, 9th Infantry Division. By noontime, the 393d Infantry Regiment had closed east of the RHINE. The 395th Infantry Regiment moved out during the early morning hours to an assembly area in the vicinity of BODENDORF (F6317), and at approximately 1230 its 1st Battalion had crossed the RHINE, to be followed during the day by the 2d and 3d Battalions. The division command post opened at LINZ (F6718), and at 1400 the Commanding General, 99th Infantry Division, assumed control of the southern sector, at which time he assumed command of the 393d and 394th Infantry Regiments. As the attack of the 393d and 394th Infantry Regiments progressed to the south and southeast, elements of Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, were relieved in the line and began to assemble, preparatory to going into III Corps reserve. The 27th Armored Infantry Battalion assembled in the vicinity of UNKEL (F6322). The 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, was detached from Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, and reverted to control of the 9th Infantry Division at 1200. Company A, 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion were attached to Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division. The 395th Infantry Regiment was attached to the 9th Infantry Division effective at 1200 and designated as bridgehead reserve.

The Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, assumed control of the northern portion of the bridgehead at 0900, and at the same time assumed command of the 309th and 311th Infantry Regiments, both of which were attacking. The 310th Infantry Regiment, however, remained attached to the 9th Infantry Division, in whose zone it was heavily engaged. The 39th Infantry Regiment, which was operating in the zone of the 78th Infantry Division, became attached to that division. Effective at 1100, Company C, 90th Chemical Battalion, was attached to the 39th

Infantry Regiment. III Corps directed the 78th Infantry Division units currently operating in the zone of the 9th Infantry Division, and 9th Infantry Division elements operating in the zone of the 78th, to be relieved and returned to their respective divisions as soon as operational conditions permitted. It was directed that details of relief would be agreed upon by the division commanders concerned.

The 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, which had been attached to Combat Command B, 13, 9th Armored Division, remained on a two-hour alert on the west bank of the RHINE.

The 9th Infantry Division, having turned over control of the greater portion of the bridgehead to the commanding generals of the 78th and 99th Infantry Divisions by 1400, continued its operations with the 47th and 60th Infantry Regiments plus the 310th Infantry Regiment of the 78th Infantry Division. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, and the 395th Infantry Regiment remained attached to the 9th Infantry Division.

The artillery of both the 9th and 7th Armored Divisions fired in support of the bridgehead, and the 7th Armored Division occupied the island in the RHINE at (F62S270). On the east side, the 78th Infantry Division discovered a highway bridge leading to the island at (F632270) and sent patrols to that island, whereupon the 7th Armored Division was relieved of that mission.

In the vicinity of the bridge sites, the enemy made desperate attempts to knock out the railroad bridge and prevent operation of the treadway. The treadway was opened to traffic at 0700, but because of several damaged pontoons, was able to handle only light traffic initially. Artillery fire was heavy throughout the night of 10-11 March and the morning of 11 March. At approximately 0515, the railroad bridge was placed in operation again after having been temporarily closed because of damage from artillery fire. Although it remained in operation throughout the day, the movement of traffic was hazardous because of heavy interdiction fires. During the night of 11 March, an enemy noncommissioned officer with radio was captured near the bridge.

The heavy pontoon bridge at (F673186) (KRIPP) was ready for operation at 1700, but was damaged by an LCVP, and it was 2400 before the bridge was reopened. It was planned to divert traffic to the bridge beginning at 120500 March. The DUKW company and three ferry sites continued to be employed.

The anti-aircraft defenses of the bridges were strengthened during the day. The 1:34th Anti-aircraft Artillery Gun Battalion became operational on the west bank of the river. Three batteries of the 376th Anti-aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion went into position on the west side of the river and one on the east. Heavy concentrations were instrumental in breaking up several German counterattacks.

The day was cool with intermittent rain.

12 March 1945

All three divisions attacked to expand the bridgehead in the face of very aggressive and determined enemy resistance. Opposition was encountered from tanks, infantry, self-propelled guns, and fire of all types. A number of counterattacks were repulsed. In the north, the 309th Infantry Regiment was forced to defend in position, and the 311th Infantry Regiment received

two counterattacks. At 1200, the 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, was detached from the 9th Infantry Division and reverted to control of the 78th Infantry Division. The battalion was then attached to the 311th Infantry Regiment. At 2300 the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion was also attached to the 311th Infantry because of the strong enemy pressure in the regimental zone. The 39th Infantry Regiment (attached to the 78th Infantry Division) attacked, but made little progress.

In the central sector, the 9th Infantry Division made slow progress, although the 60th Infantry Regiment attacked to the outskirts of HARGARTEN (F7120), where heavy fighting took place. The 310th Infantry Regiment (-1st Battalion), after reaching its objective, the high ground in the vicinity of (F690240), received a counterattack and was forced to withdraw.

In the south, however, the 99th Infantry Division met lighter opposition initially. The 393d Infantry Regiment advanced up to 3000 yards to capture GINSTERHAHN (F7219) and ROTHEKREUZ (F7218). On the high ground north of HONNINGEN strong resistance consisting primarily of self-propelled weapons and small-arms fire was encountered. The 395th Infantry Regiment remained in assembly areas under operational control of the 9th Infantry Division until 1500, at which time it came under III Corps control as corps reserve. The 39th Infantry Regiment attacked toward KALENBORN (F7024). The rugged terrain and determined defense prevented the regiment from reaching its objective.

At 1500, Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, was detached from the 9th Infantry Division and came under III Corps control. The 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, upon closing in the bridgehead area at 2300, was attached to the 78th Infantry Division, where it became attached to the 311th Infantry Regiment.

The 7th Armored Division Artillery, reinforced by fires from the division tanks and attached tank destroyers, fired in support of the 78th Infantry Division, while the 9th Armored Division Artillery supported the operations of the 99th Infantry Division. Up to this point in the operations, the artillery had been able to support the division operations from west of the river with excellent results, and by remaining west of the river had eased the resupply problem. On this day, four field artillery battalions, two belonging to the 9th Infantry Division and one each to the 78th and the 99th Infantry Divisions, crossed the river; and a schedule which contemplated the crossing of six additional artillery battalions was set up for 13 March.

A marked decrease in enemy artillery activity was noted during the night of 11-12 March and during the following day.

During the period 120600 to 130600 March, Uie enemy increased his efforts to destroy the bridges by aerial assault. A total of 58 raids were made by 91 planes, 26 of which were shot down and eight of which were damaged

The 14th Cavalry Group assumed the responsibility of guarding the bridge and controlling traffic in the bridging area. The 16th Battalion Fusiliers (Belgian), scheduled to arrive in the III Corps area on 13 March, was attached to the 8th Tank Destroyer Group, which had been charged with the responsibility of guarding rear areas.

At 1315, the III Corps command post moved from RHEINBACH (F4425) to BAD NEUEN-AHR (F5716).

13 March 1945

Expansion of the bridgehead continued to be slow because of extremely difficult terrain and stubborn and aggressive enemy resistance, which included several infantry counterattacks supported by armor. In the south-central sector the enemy employed an estimated 15 tanks, and in the northern area approximately 2100 artillery rounds were received. The terrain in this area consisted of steep slopes, heavily forested areas, and a limited road net, which restricted gains to approximately two kilometers.

The 78th Infantry Division's 311th Infantry Regiment made the day's greatest gains—approximately two kilometers—after repulsing a counterattack of battalion strength. The 309th and 39th Infantry Regiments made some progress, and by dusk the 39th Infantry Regiment had secured observation of the town of KALENBORN (F7024). In the center of the III Corps zone, the 9th Infantry Division attacked along its entire front and made small advances. The 60th Infantry Regiment cleared HARGARTEN (F713206) and continued to advance toward ST KATHERINEN (F7221), but the 310th Infantry Regiment (-1st Battalion), with the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion attached, met heavy resistance from tanks, mortars, and artillery and was unable to take its objective.

The 99th Infantry Division moved out early in the morning, with the 393d Infantry Regiment attacking to the east. At 1300, the 2d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, was released from III Corps reserve and reverted to division control. At 1715, III Corps was notified that the 393d Infantry Regiment was being held back because of the fear of overextending its lines. III Corps directed that the attack be pushed to secure the objective. The division was informed that an advance on the part of the 393d Infantry Regiment would assist the advance of the 60th Infantry Regiment (on its left) and that should the need arise, the remainder of the 395th Infantry Regiment would be released from corps reserve and returned to the division. This was done at 1800, although it was directed that one battalion be held in regimental reserve and not be committed except by authority of the corps commander.

During the morning, prior to the release of the 395th Infantry Regiment from corps reserve, both the 395th Infantry Regiment and Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, were directed to prepare counterattack plans for employment in any portion of the corps zone. Routes and assembly areas were to be reconnoitered, and Combat Command B was further ordered to be prepared for attachment to any infantry division through which it might pass.

In an effort to further protect the bridge against enemy waterborne attack, V corps, commanded by Major General Clarence R. Huebner, was informed at 1700 that it was vital to use the utmost vigilance along the river to prevent enemy swimmers, mines, boats, or midget submarines from moving downstream. III Corps dispatched technical experts to the zone of the 7th Armored Division, where construction of a cable across the river was under way to assist in converting that cable into torpedo boom. One platoon (four CDLs) from Company C, 738th Tank Battalion, was

attached to the 7th Armored Division, and the division was instructed to maintain observation and protection on the river and boom 24 hours per day.

The two military bridges remained in operation throughout the day, but the railroad bridge was closed in order to make permanent repairs necessitated by the damage caused by the initial attempt to blow the bridge, and subsequent damage caused by enemy artillery fire and heavy traffic. The ferry sites, DUKWs and LCVs remained in operation, but three heavy pontoon battalions were relieved of attachment to III Corps over the objection of the corps engineer, who requested that the corps be permitted to retain at least one.

At 2300, the 9th Infantry Division requested "artificial moonlight" for its operations on the night of 14-15 March, and III Corps arranged to have four lights released to the control of the 9th Infantry Division on the following morning.

The enemy again made a desperate bid to knock out the bridges. Ninety planes made 47 raids between 130600 and 140600 March. Twenty-six planes were destroyed and nine damaged. Enemy artillery activity continued light, but III Corps Artillery, assisted by V and VII Corps Artillery, fired heavy counter-battery programs.

The 400th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and the 667th Field Artillery Battalion were relieved of attachment to the 9th Armored Division and were attached to the 9th and 99th Infantry Divisions respectively. The 9th Armored Division was directed to reinforce the fires of the 99th Infantry Division. The 7th Armored Division was directed to reinforce the fires of the 78th Infantry Division.

The day was cool and clear with good visibility. Six missions were flown in close support of corps, and P-38s flew continuous cover over the bridge sites.

14 March 1945

The attack to expand the bridgehead continued, but progress was again slow because of stubborn enemy resistance and rugged terrain. Although there was no appreciable lessening of resistance, counterattacks were 6 fewer in number and smaller in size than during the past several days; and while resistance in the north was generally light during the first part of the day, opposition became increasingly heavier during the afternoon. The central sector showed a marked decline in small-arms fire, although artillery and mortar fire was particularly heavy. In the south, progress was slowed by what was described as moderate to heavy artillery fire. One counterattack by 40 to 50 dismounted enemy was broken up by friendly artillery fire.

In the zone of the 78th Infantry Division, the 39th Infantry Regiment attacked at 0630 with KALENBORN (F7024) as its objective. It was planned that upon seizing this objective, the regiment would return to control of the 9th Infantry Division. The objective was not taken, and the regiment remained attached to the 78th Infantry Division throughout the day. The attack of the 311th and 309th Infantry Regiments progressed slowly. The 309th Infantry Regiment reached its objectives (1st Battalion, the RJ near HIMBERG (F694281); 2d Battalion, high ground south of AGIDIEN-BERG (F694295); and 3d Battalion, RJ in the vicinity of

ROTTBITZE (F700276)). The 3d Battalion was driven off, but resumed the attack to retake its objective after severe hand-to-hand fighting.

In the center, the 9th Infantry Division attacked toward NOTSCHEID (F7122), LORSCHEID (F7221), and KALENBORN (F7024). Although LORSCHEID was entered and some ground was gained toward NOTSCHEID, extremely stiff resistance, which included tanks, rockets, and automatic weapons fire, prevented extensive gains. The 52d Armored Infantry Battalion received counterattacks during the afternoon by infantry supported by approximately ten tanks.

In the south, the 99th Infantry Division attacked with the 393d Infantry Regiment and advanced about 1500 yards. At 1620, III Corps released the 2d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, to division control. The 2d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, began the relief of elements of the 393d Infantry Regiment and continued the attack. At 1700, the 2d Battalion, 393d Infantry Regiment, passed to HI Corps reserve. Patrols from the 394th Infantry Regiment, which was situated on the high ground north of HONNINGEN (F7012), entered the north edge of that town.

The 7th Armored Division completed construction of a double cable across the RHINE. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, remained in III Corps reserve, and the 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron continued to maintain observation close on the west bank of the RHINE.

At 2200, information was received that First US Army was sending a barrage balloon unit of 25 balloons and 80 men to the bridgehead area to afford further protection against attacks by aircraft.

III Corps Artillery continued to support the operations, principally by firing counterbattery programs, assisted by V and VII Corps Artillery. Three additional field artillery battalions of division artillery crossed the river.

During the day, information was received from First Army that the 1st Infantry Division (VII) would cross the river through the III Corps zone commencing on 15 March. It was decided that foot troops would be ferried across the river in LCVPs while other elements of the division would cross on the bridges and ferries. First US Army further directed that at 161200 March, control of the 78th Infantry Division would be assumed by VII Corps, commanded by Major General J. Lawton Collins. At that time the boundary in the bridgehead between III and VII Corps would become effective.

Orders were issued to the 78th Infantry Division directing it to select assembly areas for two combat teams of the 1st Infantry Division, which would be occupied on 15 and 16 March.

15 March 1945

As the attack continued and the 78th and 9th Infantry Divisions neared the autobahn, enemy resistance in the central sector continued to be stubborn, although it decreased somewhat in the north and south. The 78th Infantry Division attacked early, and its 311th Infantry Regiment made advances of up to 2000 yards; while the 39th Infantry Regiment at the close of the day had advanced more than 1000 yards to capture SCHWEIFELD (F7026), where it received several

counterattacks. The 309th Infantry Regiment by the days end had advanced to within one mile of the autobahn, and had observation of that road.

The 9th Infantry Division cleared NOT-SCHEID and LORSCHIED, although the 60th and 47th Infantry Regiments encountered strong opposition throughout the day. The enemy strove bitterly to resist advances to the autobahn, employing tanks, self-propelled weapons, automatic weapons, and small-arms fire. In the zone of the 99th Infantry Division, however, the enemy showed signs of weakening, as the division made good gains and reached its objectives. HAHNEN (F7318) and HESSELN (F7317) were cleared, and advances of more than 1500 yards were made. At 1200, the 2d Battalion, 393d Infantry Regiment, was released by III Corps to division control, and the 3d Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, became corps reserve. III Corps directed that the battalion be motorized and moved to a position from which it could be readily employed.

Orders were received from the First US Army that the 7th Armored Division was not to be employed in the bridgehead. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, remained in corps reserve. The 14th Cavalry Group maintained defenses of the bridges, and controlled traffic at the crossing sites.

Both military bridges remained in operation throughout the day, and repair work was continued on the railway bridge. It was determined that a sag of from six inches to one foot had taken place, and that extensive work would have to be done before the bridge would be ready for use. The ferries, DUKWs and LCVPs continued to operate.

Enemy air activity over the bridge decreased sharply, as only seven raids by 12 aircraft were reported between 150600 and 160600 March. Of the 12 planes, two were destroyed and two damaged. Supporting aircraft flew two missions for III Corps; armed reconnaissance was conducted to the corps front, and P-38's flew continuous over the bridge.

During the day, the 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division (VII Corps), completed its crossing, closing in the bridgehead at about 1500. The regiment moved north, and it was planned that the 18th Infantry Regiment would cross the river on 16 March.

First US Army issued a Letter of Instruction, dated 15 March, which established a new boundary between III and VII Corps and designated three objectives: the initial objective; initial bridgehead; and final bridgehead. III Corps was directed to continue the attack to secure the initial bridgehead, but no advance was to be made past that point except on First US Army order. The boundary between III and VII Corps was to become effective at 161200 March, at which time control of the 78th Infantry Division was to pass to VII Corps.

As a result of these instructions issued by First US Army, III Corps published Operations Directive No. 16, which confirmed fragmentary orders already issued, announced the new boundaries and objectives, and directed a continuation of the attack to secure the initial objective. It contained these additional instructions: (1) The 60th Armored Infantry Battalion would be detached from the 78th Infantry Division effective 161800 March and would revert to the control of Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, in corps reserve; (2) Company B, 90th Chemical Battalion was relieved of attachment to the, 78th Infantry Division; (3) the 170th Field Artillery

Battalion (155-mm Howitzer) was attached to the 99th Infantry Division, effective 16 March; and (4) the 7th and 9th Armored Divisions would continue their present missions.

16 March 1945

Although enemy resistance continued stubborn in the central sector, where he resisted bitterly the advance to cut the autobahn, lighter resistance in the south permitted the 99th Infantry Division's 393d Infantry Regiment to advance some 4000 yards to the WEID RIVER. The 394th Infantry Regiment advanced approximately 2000 yards to the south and entered HONNINGEN (F7012), where house-to-house fighting took place during the night. The 395th Infantry Regiment (-3d Battalion, which remained in corps reserve) attacked to the east to secure the high ground west of the WEID RIVER, capturing three small towns. At the close of the day, the 99th Infantry Division had, on its south, reached the initial objective established by army and at one point had crossed it to secure dominating terrain.

In the zone of the 78th Infantry Division, the advance to cut the autobahn continued. At approximately 0200, the Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, requested the use of two tank platoons to be employed in his attack to the north in the vicinity of ITTENBACH (F668313). The 9th Armored Division consequently was ordered to send two tank platoons to the control of the 78th Infantry Division. The attack was successful; and at approximately 1415, the 309th Infantry Regiment was astride the autobahn. At 0930, the 39th Infantry Regiment reverted to the control of the 9th Infantry Division, at which time the III and VII Corps boundary became effective. The 60th Armored Infantry Battalion was to have reverted to command of Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division. its employment during the day prevented this, and permission to retain the battalion temporarily was requested by the Commanding General, 78th Infantry Division, and was granted by the corps. The 60th Armored Infantry Battalion and the two tank platoons were returned to Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, on 17 March.

The 9th Infantry Division in the center of the bridgehead continued its attack early in the morning. By the close of the day, it was fighting in STRODT (F7322) and had captured KALENBORN (F7024) and an objective in the vicinity of (F716238). The 39th Infantry Regiment, upon relief, reverted to control of the Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division. At 0930, the 310th Infantry Regiment reverted to control of the 78th Infantry Division.

At 2230, First US Army gave permission to have the 99th Infantry Division continue the attack to the south if III Corps so desired, and accordingly the 99th Infantry Division was directed on the following morning to continue the attack to the south.

The 18th Infantry Regiment (1st Infantry Division) closed in assembly areas east of the RHINE at about 1300.

17 March 1945

In the northern part of the bridgehead, the expansion continued, advancing from 1000 to 3000 yards against enemy resistance that maintained its stubborn attitude. In the southern part of the zone, greater gains were made against a disorganized enemy. In the zone of the 9th Infantry

Division, opposition was encountered from self-propelled guns and tanks supported by infantry, with the enemy using villages and towns as strong points. In the 99th Infantry Division zone, bitter house-to-house fighting took place in HONNINCEN (F7014), but elsewhere only small groups were encountered in towns and in isolated strong points.

The 99th Infantry Division attacked to the south, and both the 393d and 394th Infantry Regiments moved up rapidly, advancing 2000 and 3000 yards respectively. The 393d Infantry Regiment on its left secured the high ground immediately west of the WEID RIVER, while on its right it seized SOLSCHEID (F7613). Elements of the 394th Infantry Regiment were engaged in house-to-house fighting in HONNINGEN until mid-afternoon. Other elements drove south to take hills at (F753135) and (F716119). The 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was attached to the 99th Infantry Division in anticipation of a further movement south.

Due to the success of the attack in the zone, and the desire to secure the commanding terrain along the general line SOLSCHEID (F7613) ROCKENFELD (F75H)-HAMMER-STEIN (F7209), permission was requested for that objective. It was also suggested to First US Army that it would be desirable to secure the high ground in the vicinity of RAHMS (F7721). First US Army approved, and on the following day, 18 March, instructions were issued which called for a limited objective attack to the south.

The 9th Infantry Division advanced from 1000 to 2000 yards to the east, cutting the autobahn at (F732372). STRODT was captured, but the high ground to its east, although frequently assaulted, was only partially occupied. VETTELSCHOSS (F7224) was cleared during the night. As there was evidence of a pending counterattack in that vicinity, it was requested by the division that the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion remain under control of the 9th Infantry Division until the situation cleared up. Permission was granted. The enemy attempted to destroy the bridges with two as yet unused devices: Four swimmer saboteurs towing explosives tried to reach the bridges but were either killed or captured; and "V Bombs" made their appearance, six falling in the vicinity of the bridges. The 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron continued its mission of protecting the bridges.

Disaster overtook the sorely abused railway bridge at approximately 1500, when, with no warning, it buckled and collapsed, carrying with it a number of engineer troops who had been making repairs in an attempt to put it back in operation.

In the morning, Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, was directed to assemble in the general area OHLENBERG (F6721)-OCKENFELS (F6720)-LINZ (F6718) (exclusive)-DATTENBERG (F6817), and to revert to the control of the 9th Armored Division effective 172400 March. The 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, plus the tank platoons which had been attached to the 78th Infantry Division, returned to the control of the 9th Armored Division during the day. The 52d Armored Infantry Battalion was ordered to revert to the 9th Armored Division as soon as operational conditions permitted. The 9th Armored Division was instructed to prepare plans for the employment of Combat Command B in any sector of III Corps zone east of the RHINE.

III Corps Artillery supported corps operations by a heavy counterbattery program, long-range interdiction and harassing fires, and heavy close support fires upon call of the divisions. On this day, Major General James A. Van Fleet assumed command of III Corps.

From 18 March to 22 March, all divisions within the bridgehead attacked to the east and regrouped their forces for the anticipated break-through to come. By this time the autobahn was cut, thus denying the enemy its use. The bridgehead had been expanded to a point where it no longer was considered a bridgehead operation, and a large-scale breakthrough was in the making.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

Of the many highly significant and critical operations which the European Theater produced after the Allied landings on the Normandy Beaches, the seizure by the 9th Armored Division (commanded by Major General John W. Leonard) of the LUDENDORF BRIDGE ranks second to none. Climaxing a swift advance across the COLOGNE PLAIN, the capture of the bridge had a profound influence on the conduct of the war east of the RHINE, and may be said to be one of the greatest single contributing factors to the subsequent early successes of the Allied Forces. By its surprise crossing of the RHINE, that great water barrier, the First US Army secured a foothold on the eastern bank of the RHINE which not only drew enemy troops from the front of Ninth US Army, but served as a springboard for the attack on the heartland of Germany. It undoubtedly made the crossing by the Third Army easier, and contributed to the success of Montgomery's drive to the north. Consequently, this one incident not only overshadowed other First Army activities, but dictated the course of its operations subsequent to 7 March. Prior to that date, units of the First US Army had advanced rapidly across the COLOGNE PLAIN, initially expecting to drive east to the RHINE, and then later to turn south and effect a junction with the Third US Army. This latter plan was upset by the capture of the bridge, and the second phase of the operations-the slow struggle to secure and expand a bridgehead-was begun.

The main problem at this time, therefore, was the establishment and expansion of a bridgehead. It would have been desirable to commit a complete infantry division in the bridgehead, but no such division was available, and the situation permitted no delay in moving troops across the river. Consequently, units were ordered across as rapidly as they could be disengaged; and by 9 March, a total of 17 battalions of infantry, with supporting weapons, had been moved to the far side. First US Army and III Corps Artillery was emplaced to support the battalions in this mission, while artillery from V and VII Corps also fired in support of the bridgehead operations.

There are no figures available on the amount of traffic which poured over the railroad bridge initially; but during the 12-day period, 16-28 March, a total of 58,262 vehicles crossed over all three pontoon bridges, or an average of 4,855 per day.¹ The tremendous amounts of traffic funneling over one road into the bridge area, especially during the initial stage of the operation when enemy artillery was interdicting the bridge, approaches, and roads, were bound to cause a certain amount of congestion despite the most rigid traffic control. Initially the 9th Armored Division controlled traffic, and later the 14th Cavalry Group was used. A corps traffic headquarters was established at REMAGEN, which regulated the flow of vehicles over the bridges as the direction of traffic, weight of vehicles, or condition of the bridges warranted; and because road

discipline was initially poor, a traffic control post was established at GELSDORF, nine miles west of REMAGEN. Here traffic was halted and proper distance between vehicles established. Five other control posts insured the maintenance of that distance, and not only congestion but also casualties resulting from interdicting fire were greatly reduced.

Two other problems, closely related, demanded immediate and continuous attention: (1) the security of the bridge and (2) the need for supplementary bridges and means of transport across the river. It was known that the enemy would employ every means available to attempt to destroy the bridge, and the steps taken to frustrate his efforts have been called the most thorough and complete of their kind ever established. Within a few days time, a total of nine antiaircraft automatic weapons battalions and four antiaircraft gun battalions were emplaced for protection of the bridge site—one of the greatest, if not the greatest, concentration of antiaircraft artillery ever assembled in so small an area. Barrage balloons were brought in, and continuous air cover was flown over the bridge. Contact, log, and net booms were constructed across the river to intercept water-borne objects; depth charges were dropped at an average of 12 per hour each night to discourage underwater swimmers and submarines; radar was employed to detect underwater craft; river patrols were maintained; shore patrols were on the alert 24 hours per day; at night, powerful lights illuminated the surface of the river while high velocity guns were trained on all objects floating downstream; coordination was effected between adjacent corps, who were assisted by river and shore patrols. That these precautions proved their worth is evidenced by the failure of the many enemy air attacks to destroy the bridges and by the failure of enemy saboteur swimmers to accomplish their missions. When the railroad bridge finally collapsed, it had already served its primary purpose, and had survived the most desperate attempts to destroy it.

The construction of the treadway bridge—the first tactical bridge to be thrown across the RHINE since Napoleon's day—was begun two days after the seizure of the railroad bridge, while the bridge site was under heavy and continuous artillery fire and air attack. DUKWs, LCVPs, and ferries were used to augment the bridges; and before the LUDENDORF BRIDGE collapsed, both the heavy pontoon and treadway bridges were in operation, so that the loss did not affect troop or supply movements.

For the first 18 days, the expansion of the bridgehead was relatively slow, with advances made on foot and measured in terms of yards and feet. It has been said that no poorer place could have been selected for a crossing; the mountainous country not only restricted the use of armor, but it was extremely difficult for the infantry to assault. The rugged, forested hills gave the enemy good observation, and formed a natural fortress which he used skillfully. Although his forces were weak initially, the arrival of several divisions, beginning with the 11th Panzer Division on 9 March, enabled him to conduct an aggressive defense in which numerous and determined counterattacks played a large part. (It is interesting to note that it was the intention of the 11th Panzer Division to cross the RHINE at BONN and attack south on the west of the river.) It was not until many days of hard fighting had driven the enemy across the autobahn that the 3d, 7th, and 9th Armored Divisions were able to break through to make the spectacular advances of the last days of the month.

NOTE: Caesar made his first RHINE crossing in 55 B.C. in the vicinity of ANDERNACH. Two

thousand years later, in 1945, the American crossing was made 12 miles north of the Roman bridge site.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I. DETAILED UNIT DISPOSITIONS

"7 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION
(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

(See Seizure of the Bridge, section I.) Companies A and C cleared ERPEL (F647207) while Company B dug in on the high ground north of the bridge at (F654205).[1]

"8 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The 27th Armored Infantry Battalion assisted the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion in clearing UNKEL (K634224) of the enemy, and then went into reserve in UNKEL.[2]

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The 52d Armored Infantry Battalion crossed the RHINE at 0330, cleared UNKEL (F63422-1) of scattered unorganized small German units, and occupied positions on the high ground north and east of town.[3]

14th Tank Battalion[3]

Company A crossed the RHINE at 0015 and set up road blocks. The rest of the battalion crossed at 0715. Attachments were made as follows:

Platoon of Company A with a platoon of Company B to 2d Battalion, 310th Infantry, attacking L1NZ (F6718).

Company C to 3d Battalion, 311th Infantry. Platoon of Company D to the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion.

Troop C, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Battalion[4]

Crossed the RHINE at 0700 and moved to ERPEL. The troop was attached to the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion and placed in reserve.

Company C, 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion (1st Platoon)[5]

Crossed the RHINE at 0600 and set up road blocks.

1st Platoon crossed at 1300 and set up a road block.

Company B, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion[6]

Guarded tunnel. Repaired the LUDENDORF BRIDGE and its approaches.

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Louis A. Craig)

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion crossed the RHINE shortly after 0930 and proceeded directly to ORSBERG (F653217), where one company relieved the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion. The remainder of the battalion then continued on and occupied positions north of BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226).[7]

The 2d Battalion crossed the RHINE at 0515, cleaned ORSBERG (F653217), and captured BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226) late in the afternoon. The battalion repulsed two strong counterattacks before dark.[8]

[1]Interview with Lt Col Engeman, CO, 14th Tank Battalion.

[2]After Action Report, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[3]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 3.

[4]After Action Report, 89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Battalion.

[5]After Action Report, 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

[6]After Action Report, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion.

[7]Interview with Lt Col James D. Allgood. CO. 1st Battalion, 47th Infantry, 2 May 1945.

[8]Interview with Capt Daniel Duncan, Acting CO, 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry, 10-18 March 1945, on 3 May 1945.

The 3d Battalion crossed in the afternoon and went into an assembly area in ERPEL (FO47207). At 1930, the battalion moved out to attack OHLENBERG (F677212). By marching all night over trails and cross-country, the unit arrived at its objective just at daylight on 9 March.[1]

60th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion became attached to the 9th Armored Division at 1130, and crossed the REMAGEN BRIDGE at 1410.

The 2d and 3d Battalions of the regiment became attached to the 7th Armored Division at the same time, remaining west of the RHINE during the day.[2]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker) 310th Infantry Regiment

1st Battalion

The 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry (attached to Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, crossed the RHINE on the night of 7-8 March and went into attack on the morning of 8 March. KASBACH (F664204), OCKENFELS (F673200), and part of LINZ (F678187) were captured during the day against negligible resistance.[3]

311th Infantry Regiment

The 311th Infantry Regiment crossed the RHINE after the 47th Infantry and went into an assembly area in the vicinity of RHEIN-BREITBACH (F642244), preparatory to attacking north and east the following day.[3]

"9 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion continued in bridgehead reserve in UNKEL (F634224).[4]

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion marched to KASBACH (F664204) to fill the gap between the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 47th Infantry in the vicinity of that town.[5]

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Louis A. Craig)

The Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division, assumed command of the bridgehead at 0235 after establishing his command post in ERPEL (F647207).[6]

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked (at 0400) to the northeast to seize RJ 659235 just north of ST MARIENBERG (F657231). The attacking company reached the edge of the woods at 0600. At 0610, it ran into a two-battalion counterattack which cut off the company until dark. The rest of the battalion held its positions north and west of BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226).[7]

The 2d Battalion attacked to the northeast on the morning of 9 March, but, hitting the same counterattack that struck the 1st Battalion, it withdrew to BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226), where hand-to-hand fighting was necessary to repulse the enemy.[8] The 3d Battalion attacked OHLENBERG (F677212) at dawn against light resistance, clearing the town by 0730.[9] At 1230 the battalion continued its attack to take the road net in the vicinity of OBERERL (F687216) and the few houses in the town. The battalion reached the approaches to the town, where it was pinned down by 20-mm, machine-gun, and tank fire.

[1]Interview with Maj R. L. Inzer, Executive Officer, 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry, on 4 May 1945.

[2]Interview with Maj N. J. Hennen, S-3, 60th Infantry, 9th Division, on 12 April 1945.

[3]After Action Report. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, March 1945, page 10.

[4]After Action Report, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[5]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 4.

[6]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 8.

[7]Interview with Lt Col James D. Allgood, CO, 1st Battalion, 47th Infantry, on 2 May 1945.

[8]Interview with Capt Daniel Duncan, Acting CO, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry, 10-18 March

1945, on 3 May 1945.

[9]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, for 9 March 1945 states that the resistance in OHLENBERG (F677212) was determined and heavy. When this information was mentioned to Maj Inzer, he questioned Capt Frazier, the company commander of Company L, and 1st Lt Ernest Smith, the executive officer of company I, who both corroborated Maj Inzer's statement, which is given above.

Upon orders from regiment, the unit held its positions on the open slopes southwest of town during the night, suffering numerous casualties in the process.[1]

60th Infantry Regiment

The 60th Infantry (-1st Battalion) crossed the RHINE at 0600 and went into an assembly area east of the RHINE at LINZ (F678187).¹ The 1st Battalion attacked through light ground resistance and heavy to medium artillery fire at (F692199), where the battalion was stopped by a well-defended enemy strong point.[1]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

309th Infantry Regiment

The 309th Infantry closed in its assembly area east of the RHINE at 1525.[2]

The 1st Battalion relieved the 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Division, in BRUCH-HAUSEN (F65S226) during the night of 9-10 March.[3]

The 2d Battalion attacked east on the right (south) of the 1st Battalion and reached the high ground in the vicinity of (F667225) beyond BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226). Heavy mortar and artillery fire caused the battalion to pull back into the town.[2]

The 3d Battalion assembled in the vicinity of (F646224) after crossing the RHINE.[2]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion cleared LINZ (F678187) of isolated pockets of resistance and then went into defensive positions in the vicinity of (F682195).² 311th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked HONNEF (F640275) and encountered extremely heavy resistance from a determined enemy who defended his positions with automatic weapons, small arms, and mortar fire employed in well-disposed strong points. At sunset the battalion consolidated the positions after capturing the south half of the city. The defense of HONNEF on this day was the most determined and skillful that had been encountered up to that time.[4]

The 2d Battalion attacked to clean out the area south of RHEINBREITBACH (F643244) and east of SCHEUREN (F637232). This mission was accomplished against weak resistance, and the

battalion was relieved by elements of the 309th Infantry, at which time the 2d Battalion, 311th Infantry, became the regimental reserve.

The 3d Battalion attacked to seize RHEINBREITBACH (F643244) and SCHEUREN (F637232). The resistance in these two towns was very light, and by 1430 both towns had been secured.[4]

"10 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry battalion

The 27th Armored Infantry Battalion moved from UNKEL (F634224) to DATTENBERG (F686174) and relieved the 1st Battalion, 310th Infantry.[5]

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

At 0925, the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion was attached to the 2d Battalion, 310th Infantry, 78th Division. The battalion attacked at 1230 to take HILL 448 (F690234). Again the battalion encountered heavy artillery concentrations but little ground resistance. The objective was reached during the middle of the night, but due to disorganization, confusion, and lack of communications, the battalion withdrew to the line of departure.[6]

[1] Interview with Maj N. J. Hennen, S-3, 60th Infantry, 9th Division, on 12 April 1945.

[2] After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, pages 11, 12.

[3] Interview with Capt Daniel Duncan, Acting CO, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry, 10-18 March 1945, on 3 May 1945.

[4] After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 12.

[5] After Action Report, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[6] After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 4.

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION (Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The 39th Infantry crossed the RHINE and closed into assembly areas east of the river at 1825.[1]

The 1st Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226).[1]

The 2d Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of SCHEUREN (F637232).[1]

The 3d Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of SCHEUREN (F637232).[1]

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion repulsed a strong counterattack in the morning which, however, disorganized the battalion sufficiently to delay its attack. At 1910, the battalion jumped off and advanced to (F678223) by 2335, where it was ordered to halt for the night.[2]

The 2d Battalion remained in position at (F672203) as regimental and sector reserve.

The 3d Battalion received a strong counterattack and was driven back to (F678213), where it finally stopped the enemy thrust.[2]

60th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion captured the strong point of (F698204) and reorganized preparatory to continuing the attack.[2]

The 2d Battalion successfully attacked an enemy strong point at (F698204) and continued its advance to (F700206).

The 3d Battalion jumped off at 0800 from east of LINZ (F678187) to capture the high ground in the vicinity of (F706197). Although unexpected resistance was encountered in the vicinity of RONIG (F7018), the battalion advanced slowly to its objective, which was taken by nightfall.[2]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

309th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion advanced against strong opposition consisting of small-arms, self-propelled gun, mortar, and artillery fire to its two objectives at (F663233) and (F664244).[2]

The 2d Battalion pushed to the high ground northeast of BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226), suffering heavy casualties from mortar and artillery fire in taking the objective. A strong counterattack supported by well-directed self-propelled gun fire caused the crippled battalion to withdraw to the vicinity of (F673227).[3]

The 3d Battalion occupied positions (as regimental reserve) in the vicinity of (F646224), which closed the gap in the lines.[3]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked DATTENBERG (F686174) and overcame severe resistance from heavy machine-gun and 20-mm AA gun fire to capture the town by early afternoon. At 1435, the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion relieved the 1st Battalion, which moved to the vicinity of (F685176).[4][5]

The 2d Battalion crossed the RHINE, closing in an assembly area in the vicinity of OHLENBERG (F677212) at 0600. A strong enemy counterattack caused the battalion to displace to a defensive position to the southwest which could be tied in with the 47th Infantry.[4]

The 3d Battalion crossed the RHINE during the morning, assembling in LINZ (F678187). At 1335, the battalion attacked east and, overcoming medium resistance, secured the high ground northeast of OHLENBERG (F677212).[4]

[1]Interview with 1st Lt Wm. J. Mooney, Assistant S-3, 39th Infantry Regiment, on 24 March 1945.

[2]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 8.

[3]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 12.

[4]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 13.

[5]After Action Report, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

311th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued its attack on strong points in the vicinity of HONNEF (F640275), encountering artillery and mortar fire. At 1855, a tank-infantry counterattack was repulsed, and by the end of the day remaining enemy resistance was confined to the north end of town.[1]

The 2d Battalion moved to RHEINBREIT-BACH (F643244) and then to HONNEF (F640275) as regimental reserve.

The 3d Battalion attacked at 0830 to seize MENZENBERG (F653257). The town was taken by 1305, and the attack continued until the high ground at (F668262) and (F672260) had been taken.[2]

"11 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The 27th Armored Infantry Battalion was relieved by the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 393d Infantry, 99th Division, at 0930, at which time the battalion returned to UNKEL (F634224), where it remained in reserve until 18 March 1945.³ 52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion, which was still attached to the 310th Infantry, 78th Division, went into regimental reserve at (F688227). Company C was employed astride the draw at (F662215) to prevent enemy infiltration toward KASBACH (F664204). *

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The 39th Infantry, less the 3d Battalion, was attached to the 78th Infantry Division for operations at 0900.[2]

The 1st Battalion moved from BRUCH-HAUSEN (F658226) at 1330 to continue the attack to the east with objectives at HIMBERG (F694281) and REDERSCHIED (F712264). The advance was slow, and the unit did not reach either objective during the period.[2][5]

The 2d Battalion moved from SCHEUREN (F637232) to drive east and relieve some of the pressure from the 1st Battalion. Gains were made, but the battalion was stopped due to darkness.⁵

The 3d Battalion remained in SCHEUREN (F637232).

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0830 toward the vicinity of (F701217). The battalion made slow progress against determined resistance and halted at 1730 in the vicinity of (F694209).[6]

The 2d Battalion attacked through Company K at 1015, advancing to (F688222), where it was stopped by heavy small-arms, mortar, tank, and artillery fire.[6]

The 3d Battalion remained inactive except for Company K, which cleared the line of departure for the 2d Battalion and later cleared the group of houses at (F688218).[6]

60th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0300, cleared a by-passed factory at (F692199), and continued on toward HARGARTEN (F713206).[7]

The 2d Battalion reorganized and then advanced 500 yards toward HARGARTEN (F713206).[7]

[1]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 12.

[2]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 13.

[3]After Action Report, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[4]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 4.

[5]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 14.

[6]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 9.

[7]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 8.

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

The 78th Infantry Division assumed command of the northern sector of the bridgehead at 0900, at which time the 309th and 311th Infantry Regiments reverted to 78th Division control. At 1100, the 39th Infantry, less the 3d Battalion, was attached to the division for operations.[1]

309th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked northeast of BRUCHHAUSEN (F65S226) at 0730 with the mission of cutting the COLOGNE-FRANKFURT autobahn. The battalion, working with 3d Battalion, 309th Infantry, advanced 1500 yards.[1]

The 2d Battalion, in regimental reserve, remained in the vicinity of (F673227).[1]

The 3d Battalion, in conjunction with the 1st Battalion (see above), attacked to the northeast at 0730 and advanced 1500 yards.[1]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion reverted to control of the 9th Infantry Division at 1200 and moved to the vicinity of (F660213) with the mission of protecting the approaches to the bridge.[2]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0735 to take the hill at (F690234) and the rock quarry at (F693227). The battalion was stopped short of its objective by heavy small-arms and artillery fire." The 3d Battalion continued to organize its position (F691228).[3]

311th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion repulsed two counterattacks consisting of tanks and infantry during the day. Both attacks, one at 0650, the other at 0945, were aimed at retaking HONNEF (F640275).[1]

The 2d Battalion coordinated the defense of HONNEF.[1]

The 3d Battalion actively patrolled to (F676266).[1]

99TH INFANTRY DIVISION (Major General Walter E. Lauer)

The 99th Infantry Division completed crossing the RHINE and assumed command of the southern sector of the bridgehead at 1400.4 393d Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion relieved the 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry, in the vicinity of (F708187). The battalion repulsed two counterattacks and advanced 300 yards northeast toward the high ground east of HARGARTEN (F713206).[4]

The 2d Battalion, echeloned to the left rear of the 1st Battalion, coordinated its attack with the 1st Battalion.[4]

The 3d Battalion remained in reserve in its assembly area.[4]

394th Infantry Regiment

The 394th Infantry Regiment closed in its assembly area east of the RHINE at 0730 and was attached to the 9th Infantry Division from 0730 to 1400, 11 March 1945.[4]

The 1st Battalion, with the 2d Battalion, attacked south along the east bank of the RHINE at 0830. The two battalions advanced 3000 yards, securing the towns of LEUBS-DORF (F685166) and ARIENDORF (F688148).[4]

2d Battalion (see 1st Battalion account above).[4]

The 3d Battalion was in reserve, following the 1st and 2d Battalions.[4]

395th Infantry Regiment

The 395th Infantry Regiment closed in assembly areas east of the RHINE at 1800 at which time the regiment was attached to the 9th Infantry Division as bridgehead reserve.[4]

[1]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 13.

[2]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 9.

[3]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 14.

[4]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 8.

The 1st Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of OHLENBERG (FC77212).[1]

The 2d Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of RHEINBREITBACH (F643244).[1]

The 3d Battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226).[1]

"12 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion continued in reserve in UNKEL (F634224).

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion continued in reserve in the vicinity of (F688227).[2]

60th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion crossed the RHINE, closing at UNKEL (F634224)3 at 2315, when it was attached to the 311th Infantry.

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked east at 0630 with the 2d Battalion to take the high ground west of KALENBORN (F706247). The rugged terrain and determined defense made the going very slow and prevented the battalions from reaching their objectives.[4]

2d Battalion (see 1st Battalion account above).[4]

The 3d Battalion remained in reserve in SCHEUREN (F637232).

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0630 toward its objective at (F705236) against medium to heavy resistance and advanced to (F703219), where it was stopped by an enemy strong point.[1]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0530 toward an objective in the vicinity of (F708217). Rough terrain and heavy mortar and artillery fire caused the battalion to halt short of its objective.[1]

The 3d Battalion remained in defensive positions in the vicinity of (F678213).

60th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked through the 3d Battalion at 1940 and advanced slowly to (F702202).[1]

The 2d Battalion continued to advance slowly and reached the high ground north and west of HARGARTEN (F713206) at the end of the day.[1]

The 3d Battalion passed through Company B and advanced to within 75 yards of HARGARTEN (F713206). At this point, the battalion encountered heavy fire from infantry and tanks and was forced to fall back to the line of departure, where it reorganized and renewed the attack, taking the road junction at (F721205) before being passed through by the 1st Battalion.[1]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION (Major General Edwin P. Parker)

309th Infantry Regiment

The regiment supported the attack of the 39th Infantry and protected the division right flank.⁴
The 1st Battalion cleared up pockets of resistance within the regimental sector.^[4]

The 2d Battalion remained in regimental reserve in the vicinity of (F673227).^[4]

The 3d Battalion continued its attack, advancing 500 yards to protect the division right (south) flank.^[4]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion was detached from the 9th Infantry Division and reverted to division control at 1200.

[1]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 9.

[2]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 4.

[3]After Action Report, 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[4]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 14.

It was then attached to the 3Uth Infantry. The battalion then moved to the vicinity of HONNEF (F640275).^[1]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0645 to take the high ground in the vicinity of (F690240). The battalion pushed through heavy resistance to its objective but received a tank-infantry counterattack which pushed it back to (F6S0235).^[2]

The 3d Battalion remained in its defensive positions in the vicinity of (F691228).^[3]

311th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued mopping up HONNEF (F640275).^[1]

The 2d Battalion continued clearing HONNEF (F&40275).^[1]

The 3d Battalion reorganized and patrolled to the northeast.^[1]

99TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Walter E. Lauer)

393d Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued to spearhead the regimental attack, advancing 3000 yards to secure GINSTERHAHN (F723196) and ROTHEKREUZ (F723184). At 1735, an enemy counterattack toward ROTHEKREUZ was initially successful. However, the battalion, assisted by the 2d Battalion, repulsed the attack and retook the town.^[4]

The 2d Battalion, echeloned to the left rear, continued to coordinate its attack with that of the 1st Battalion. The battalion advanced about 3000 yards against light resistance and assisted the 1st Battalion in regaining ROTHEKREUZ (F7231S4) after the German counterattack.[4]

The 3d Battalion remained in reserve, displacing to (F692194).

394th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion reverted to regimental reserve, remaining in LEUBSDORF (F685166).[4]

The 2d Battalion, maintaining contact with the 393d Infantry on the north, advanced 3000 yards to the southeast to (F716157) and (F721172).[4]

The 3d Battalion attacked at 0630, advancing approximately 3000 yards and securing its objectives north of HONNINGEN (F700127). The battalion reached (F694137) and (F702145) by the end of the day.[4]

395th Infantry Regiment

The 395th Infantry remained in bridgehead reserve in its previous locations, passing to III Corps control at 1800.[4]

"13 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION (Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion continued in reserve in UNKEL (F634224).

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion, which was still attached to the 310th Infantry, 78th Division, attacked at 0545 with the mission of capturing KRETHAUS (F700244). While the objective was not attained, the battalion did take the high ground southwest of KRETHAUS during the day.[5]

60th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion moved to RHEINBREIT-BACH (F643244) and then to HONNEF (F640275) with the mission of assisting in securing the town.[3][6]

[1]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 14.

[2]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 10.

[3]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 15.

[4]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 9.

[5]After Action Report. 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 5.

[6]After Action Report. 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION (Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The regiment received orders from the 78th Division to continue the attack, seize KALENBORN (F706247), and swing north to secure REDERSCHIED (F712264).[1]

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0615 with the 2d Battalion on the right. Together the two units gained the high ground just north and west of KALENBORN (F706247).[2]

The 2d Battalion (see 1st Battalion account above).[2]

The 3d Battalion attacked at 1200 around the right flank of the 1st Battalion in an effort to outflank the defenses of KALENBORN (F706247). The attack was stopped just outside the town.[2]

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0800 toward NOTSCHEID (F717225) against strong small-arms and mortar fire. The battalion advanced slowly and cut the road at (F714229).[3]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0800 toward (F702235) against heavy rifle fire and machine-gun fire and advanced to (F708232), where the battalion dug in for the night.[3]

The 3d Battalion attacked east in the gap between the 47th and 60th Infantry Regiments and swept the rear area as far as (F687217).[3]

60th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion captured HARGARTEN (F713206) at 0400, after which the 2d Battalion passed through it and the 1st Battalion went into reserve.[3]

The 2d Battalion passed through the 1st Battalion and attacked toward ST KATHAR-INEN (F7221). The advance was stopped by tank fire and several small infantry counterattacks but was resumed after dark and ST KATHARINEN was cleared by 2130.[3]

The 3d Battalion retook the road junction at (F722203), which had been lost in the counterattacks during the day.[3]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

309th Infantry Regiment

The regiment was ordered to coordinate its attack with that of the 39th Infantry and to assist in securing a line which ran from south of KONIGSWINTER (F617307) through AGIDIENBERG (F694295) to ROTTBITZE (F700275).[1]

The 1st Battalion attacked to the northeast at 1510 against severe small-arms and automatic weapons fire, advancing 500 yards before digging in for the night.[1]

The 2d Battalion reorganized and assumed responsibility for the rear as the regiment advanced.[1]

The 3d Battalion attacked with the 1st Battalion, advancing 500 yards before stopping for the night.[1]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked to the northeast on the right of the 311th Infantry, and gained approximately 1000 yards.

The 2d Battalion continued to occupy and organize defensive positions at (F680235).[2]

The 3d Battalion continued to organize its positions at (F693227) on HILL 442.2 311th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued to clean out HONNEF (F640275).[1]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0630 (with the 3d Battalion) to the northeast in rough country against well-defended positions manned by a capable, alert enemy. The advance was slow; a counterattack was repulsed at 1120.[1]

The 3d Battalion (see 2d Battalion account above).[1]

[1]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 15.

[2]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 16.

[3]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 10.

99TH INFANTRY DIVISION (Major General Walter E. Lauer)

393d Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion advanced to a line from (F7241S8) to (F724172), which was organized for defense.[1]

The 2d Battalion went into reserve at (F700185).

The 3d Battalion was in reserve at (F692194) 394th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion was in reserve in the vicinity of LEUBSDORF (F6S4165).

The 2d Battalion organized its defensive positions at (F716157) and (F721172).[1]

The 3d Battalion organized its objectives of the preceding day at (F694137) and (F702145).[1]

395th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion remained in corps reserve until 1800, when it reverted to 99th Division control in place.[1]

The 2d Battalion was released from III Corps control at 1300, at which time the battalion occupied positions east of LINZ (F6718) in the vicinity of (F695192).[2]

The 3d Battalion was released from III Corps control at 1800 and reverted in place to the 99th Division.[2]

"14 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion remained in reserve in UN-KEL (F634224).

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion continued its attack against a determined defense employing tank, infantry, and artillery weapons, and took KRETHAUS (F700244) west of the railroad tracks in conjunction with the 3d Battalion, 310th Infantry. At 1600, a strong tank-infantry counterattack was repulsed at (F699242).[3]

60th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion attacked north and east from a position east of HONNEF (F640275) at 0700, taking several hills and stopping 200 yards south of PERLENHARDT (F664307). Three counterattacks were repulsed during the day.[4]

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The regiment attacked with all three battalions at 0630 and was immediately brought under intense small-arms and self-propelled gun fire which stopped the attack at the line of departure. The attack was resumed at 1845 but again encountered the same bitter resistance, which held the regiment to negligible gains.⁵ 47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued to attack toward NOTSCHEID (F717225) at 0800 against heavy resistance, and at 2400 was still short of its objective.[6]

The 2d Battalion attacked toward its objective (F704237) at 1000. The battalion fought against heavy resistance to (F715234).[6]

The 3d Battalion remained in reserve at (F687217).

60th Infantry Regiment

The regiment encountered determined resistance along the whole front during the day.

The 1st Battalion attacked at 1200 toward NOTSCHEID (F717225) and at 2400 was still 400 yards short of its objective. [6]

[1]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 10.

[2]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 11.

[3]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 5.

[4]After Action Report, 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 6.

[5]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 16.

[6]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 11.

[7]After Action Report. 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 10.

The 2d Battalion attacked at 2100 to take LORSCHEID (F728218). By midnight the battalion had gained the edge of the town.[1]

One company (L) of the 3d Battalion attacked to, and occupied, an objective in the vicinity of (F733209).[2]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

309th Infantry Regiment

The regiment fought against stiff resistance during the entire day. At times hand-to-hand fighting was necessary to drive the determined enemy from his positions.[3]

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0800 and at 1430 seized the road junction just outside of HIMBERG (F694281).[3]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 1430 through the 1st Battalion and seized the high ground south of AG1DIENBERG (F694295).[3]

The 3d Battalion attacked at 0800 and gained the road junction in the vicinity of ROTTBITZE (F700276) at dark.[3]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued to attack north under the command of the 311th Infantry, making very little headway against a determined enemy using tanks, machine guns, and mortars with good effect.[1]

The 2d Battalion followed the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion to (F699242), where the battalion organized a defensive position. At 1600, a strong infantry-tank counterattack was repulsed from this position.[1]

The 3d Battalion continued to occupy its defensive position at (F693227) and to patrol to the north.[3]

311th Infantry Regiment

The regiment attacked at 0700 against a progressively stiffening resistance. Rugged, densely wooded terrain also made the advance slow and arduous. Four enemy counterattacks were launched from northeast of HONNEF (F640275), but all were repulsed.[3]

99TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Walter E. Lauer)

393d Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued to occupy defensive positions from (F724188) to (F724172).[4]

The 2d Battalion occupied defensive positions in the vicinity of GINSTERHAHN (F7219) until 1715, when the battalion came under III Corps control. The 2d Battalion then moved to (F712181) and relieved the 2d Battalion, 395th Infantry, at 2315.[4]

The 3d Battalion moved on to an assembly area in the vicinity of (F700185).[4]

394th Infantry Regiment

The regiment continued to occupy the defensive positions of the day before.[4]

395th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked from (F722193) toward the east, with the 3d Battalion on its right, at 0900. The battalion advanced over rugged terrain against light resistance.[4]

The 2d Battalion was released to division control at 1620 and immediately began the relief of the 2d Battalion, 393d Infantry.[4]

The 3d Battalion attacked with the 1st Battalion at 0900, gaining 1200 yards to the east. At 1355, the 3d Battalion repulsed a strong enemy tank-infantry counterattack.[4]

"15 March 1945"

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion remained in reserve in UN-KEL (F634224).

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

[1]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 11.

[2]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 10.

[3]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 16.

[4]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 11.

In conjunction with the 3d Battalion, 310th Infantry, the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion continued its attack on KRETHAUS, clearing the town by 1700 and continuing on to take the high ground southwest of KALENBORN (F706247) and the small woods at (F702243).[1]

60th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion attacked to the northeast on the right of the 3d Battalion, 311th Infantry. The battalion advanced against light resistance and captured MARGARENTHENHOF (F658310).[2]

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The regiment continued its attack to the east at 0630 with three battalions abreast, the 2d Battalion on the north, the 3d Battalion on the south, and the 1st Battalion in the center. Gains of up to 1000 yards were made, with the 2d Battalion capturing SCHWEIFELD (F705260).[3]

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued its attack on NOTSCHEID (F717225), clearing the town at 1800 jointly with the 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry, which entered the town from the south.[4]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0630 and advanced against light resistance to its objectives at (F710238) and (F708243), which were occupied by 1200.[4]

The 3d Battalion attacked at 1000 and advanced slowly to the edge of its objective at (F718238), where the assault company was pinned down. At the end of the period Company L was maneuvering to outflank the resistance.

60th Infantry Regiment

The 1st battalion continued its attack on NOTSCHEID (F717225) at daybreak and with the 1st Battalion, 47th Infantry, cleared the town by 1800 and occupied the high ground to the east.

The 2d Battalion met heavy resistance on the edge of LORSCHIED (F728218), where a counterattack was initially successful in splitting the battalion. However, the battalion continued the attack and cleared the town early in the afternoon.[4]

The 3d Battalion sent Company L with tanks and tank destroyers to occupy a position at (F743214). This mission was accomplished by noon.[4]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

309th Infantry Regiment

The regiment occupied the positions gained on 14 March, patrolled to the northeast, and covered the autobahn with observation and fire.[3]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion assembled in the vicinity of HIMBERG (F694281) with the 2d Battalion as division reserve.[3]

The 2d Battalion, reverting to the 78th Division, was attached to the 311th Infantry and assembled in the vicinity of HIMBERG (F694281) with the 1st Battalion as division reserve.[4]

The 3d Battalion continued its attack with the 52d Armored Infantry Battalion under control of the 9th Infantry Division. During the day, the battalion seized the high ground southwest of KALENBORN (F706247) and secured the woods at (F702243).3-4 311th Infantry Regiment

The regiment continued its attack at 0630 with all three battalions in line: the 1st Battalion on the west, the 2d Battalion in the center, and the 3d Battalion on the east flank. The hilly, wooded terrain was the main obstacle to progress as the units advanced up to 2000 yards. Later in the afternoon, patrols entering KUCHUCKSTEIN (F642304) found the town undefended and immediately seized and secured the place.[1]

99TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Walter E. Lauer)

393d Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 1315 and secured the high ground in the vicinity of (F739163) and the town of REIDENBRUCH (F734168) against light resistance.[2]

The 2d Battalion reverted to division control at 1200 and moved to ROTHEKREUZ (F725180), closing in the assembly area at 1710.[3]

The 3d Battalion, which had the stiffest fighting of the day, attacked at 0500. Overcoming determined but spotty resistance, the battalion captured HESSLN (F733177) at 0920, HILL 330 (F735172) at 1320, and KRUM-SCHEID (F744180) at 1810, and was attacking GIRGENRATH (F742168) at 2400. A counterattack of 100 infantry was repulsed at 1000 with heavy losses to the enemy.[2]

394th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 1330 and captured the high ground in the vicinity of (F712140) at 1900 against light resistance.[3]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 1330 and advanced to the vicinity of (F732142) against light resistance.[3]

The 3d Battalion remained in reserve at (F696142).[3]

395th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued to attack against stubborn resistance. At 2400, the battalion was in the outskirts of STEINHARDT (F747203).[3]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0630 against heavy rocket and artillery fire and light ground resistance. The battalion captured an objective in the vicinity of (F7419) and the town of HAHNEN (F739189) by 1040, and occupied an enemy strong point at (F732192) at 1615.[3]

The 3d Battalion was released from division control and became III Corps reserve at 1200, at which time the battalion occupied an assembly area at (F733182).[3]

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Clift Andrus)

26th Infantry Regiment

The regiment, with normal combat team attachments, closed in the bridgehead and moved north into the zone of the 78th Division.[4]

"16 March 1945"

On 16 March, the defense against the RE-MAGEN BRIDGEHEAD cracked wide open. Large gains were made along the entire front up to and beyond the bridgehead limits. By the end of the day, the sector was a front rather than a bridgehead—an army sector which one week later erupted, sending armored columns north, east, and south to confuse and confound the last vestiges of the defenders of Fortress Europe. Thus, the initiative and audacity of a two-battalion task force in seizing a bridge unlocked the door to the heartland of Germany.

9TH ARMORED DIVISION

(Major General John W. Leonard)

27th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion remained in reserve in UN-KEL (F623224).

52d Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion reverted to III Corps reserve in KRETHAUS (F700224).[5]

[1]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 17.

[2]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 11.

[3]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 12.

[4]After Action Report, III Corps, March 1945, page 39.

[5]After Action Report, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 5.

60th Armored Infantry Battalion

The battalion attacked to the northeast under the 311th Infantry, advancing to the outskirts of ITTENBACH (F668313). The rough, wooded terrain slowed the battalion's advance more than the defense of the area.[1][2]

9TH INFANTRY DIVISION (Major General Louis A. Craig)

39th Infantry Regiment

The regiment reverted to the 9th Infantry Division at 0930.[3]

The 1st Battalion continued its attack to (F698255).[3][4]

The 2d Battalion continued its attack to (F710265).[3]

The 3d Battalion cleared KALENBORN (F706247) and at 2400 was fighting toward the crossroads at WILLSCHIED (F715250).[4]

47th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion continued attacking to the east, reaching (F728228) by the end of the day.[4]

The 2d Battalion attacked in the afternoon to seize a line of departure for the attack on VETTLESCHOSS (F725245) on the following day.[4]

The 3d Battalion occupied (F716238) at 1030."

80th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0300 against heavy resistance and captured STRODT (F735222) at 2400.[4]

The 2d Battalion occupied LORSCHIED (F728218).

The 3d Battalion continued to occupy defensive positions at (F740214) and (F734217) until relieved by the 9th Reconnaissance Troop at the end of the period.[4]

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Edwin P. Parker)

The division was released from III Corps and attached to VII Corps at 1200. Operational control of the 39th Infantry was terminated at 1200, and the regiment reverted to the 9th Infantry Division.

309th Infantry Regiment

During the day, the regiment secured 1500 yards of the autobahn and advanced up to 3500 yards. The 1st Battalion attacked at 0845 to cut the autobahn. By 1415, the overpasses at (F697302) and (F692305) had been seized intact and by 2000, the town of BRUNGSBERG (F695309) had been secured.[3]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0730 against strong points in the towns and overwatching self-propelled guns and captured HOVEL (F693302) at 1015 and AGIDIENBERG (F694295) at 1715.[5]

The 3d Battalion continued to occupy defensive positions east of ROTTBITZE (F700275).[3]

310th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion remained in division reserve in HIMBERG (F694281).

The 3d Battalion went into reserve at (F690234) and was attached to the 311th Infantry.[4]

311th Infantry Regiment

The regiment attacked at 0700 with all three battalions in the assault, advancing up to 2000 yards against light resistance and capturing most of KONIGSWINTER (F617307). Two counterattacks on KONIGSWINTER were repulsed during the day, one at 1800 and the other at 1920.[4]

[1]After Action Report, 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945. page 7.

[2]After Action Report, 60th Armored Infantry Battalion, March 1945, page 8.

[3]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 18.

[4]After Action Report, 9th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 12.

[5]After Action Report, 78th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 17.

99TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Walter E. Lauer)

393d Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0600, capturing WEISSFELD (F746155) at 1230. Resistance was very light during the day.[1]

The 2d Battalion remained in reserve at ROTHEKREUZ (F725188).

The 3d Battalion attacked against light resistance at 0010, capturing GIRGENRATH (F742168) at 0845, BREMSCHIED (F751171) at 0845, OVER (F7617) at 1605, STOPPERICH (F757167) at 1605, and FRORATH (F756185) at 1630. A counterattack at KRUMSCHEID (F744180) was repulsed at 0420.[1]

394th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0900 and captured part of HONNINGEN (F700127) after advancing 2000 yards.[1]

The 2d Battalion attacked against light resistance and seized the high ground in the vicinity of STANBRICK (F737128).[1]

The 3d Battalion remained in reserve at (F696142).

395th Infantry Regiment

The 1st Battalion attacked at 0540 against light small-arms fire, capturing STEIN-HARDT (F747204) at 0845 and advancing to (F750206) during the day.[2]

The 2d Battalion attacked at 0330 against light resistance, capturing HEEG (F749186) and REIFERT (F753187) at 0815 and continuing to advance to (F754187).[2]

The 3d Battalion remained in III Corps reserve at (F733182).

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

(Major General Clift Andrus)

The 1st Infantry Division continued to move into the bridgehead area, closing into an area east of HONNEF about 1300. Later in the day the 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments moved to more advanced locations, preparatory to launching an attack to the northeast through the 78th Infantry Division.[3]

[1]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 12.

[2]After Action Report, 99th Infantry Division, March 1945, page 13.

[3]Sitrep No. 564 (After Action Report, III Corps, March 1945).

APPENDIX II. ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLE

The period 6-9 March saw the complete elimination of enemy forces west of the RHINE in the III Corps zone. German withdrawal was in full swing on 6 March, and rapid advances were made that day against scattered delaying forces, not very eager to fight. On 7 March, enemy resistance on the south collapsed as American troops reached the AHR RIVER on the south flank, capturing bridges intact, and most important, capturing intact the railroad bridge over the RHINE RIVER at REMAGEN (F645200).

Enemy support for his infantry during this early phase in March was not impressive. Initially, artillery and mortar fire were fairly heavy, while tanks and self-propelled guns in small numbers contributed to the delaying action. Few reinforcements in men or materiel were received by the enemy; this policy was probably due to lack of reserves as well as to the desire to save replacement units for rebuilding the beaten divisions behind the RHINE barrier.

The crossing of the ROER RIVER on the entire III Corps front on 1 March brought identifications of all enemy units known to have been fighting between the ROER and the RHINE. While the 3d Parachute Division in the center had recently been reorganized, and its strength and morale were sufficient to cause it to offer stubborn resistance, the 272d Volksgrenadier Division on the south was caught in the process of a sketchy reorganization behind the ROER dams. The 353d Volksgrenadier Division, on the north flank of the 3d Parachute Division, had the 941st and 943d Grenadier Regiments in fairly good shape, but the 942d Grenadier Regiment had not been re-formed. The 62d Volksgrenadier Division remained in line against the V US Corps, on the south, until 6 March, when it too shifted north, and was contacted on III Corps front.

The 89th Grenadier Regiment of the 12th Volksgrenadier Division was identified on the III Corps north boundary the last two days of February. During the first few days of March, this division was pushed out of VII US Corps area into increasing contact on III Corps front.

The principal surprise in enemy identifications west of the RHINE was the contact with the 39th and 78th Grenadier Regiments of the 26th Infantry Division on 5 March.

As the advance shifted slightly southeast in approaching the RHINE, elements of the 277th Volksgrenadier Division and the 89th Infantry Division, fighting on V Corps front, were identified.

The surprise crossing of the RHINE created a new situation from an order of battle standpoint. No enemy divisional units were in position on the east bank; hence the first 36 hours of the bridgehead saw commitment of miscellaneous engineer, antiaircraft, and replacement units only. The 11th Panzer Division arrived on 9 March and was committed against the bridgehead. This division had been fighting west of the river far to the north of III Corps, being withdrawn east of the river on about 5 March. It proceeded south with orders to recross the river at BONN and attack south; but arriving after the seizure of the LUDENDORF BRIDGE, it was, instead, committed against the bridgehead. The 106th Panzer Brigade accompanied the 11th Panzer Division, being on its south flank, in the middle of the bridgehead.

The next divisions to be committed against the bridgehead were identified on 13 March. On the south, the 272d Volksgrenadier Division, which had suffered severely in the retreat across the RHINE, was reinforced by some salvaged elements of the 326th Volksgrenadier Division and by the 80th Replacement Battalion from COBLENZ (L9095), and was committed in defense of HONNINGEN (F700127). On its right flank, the 277th Volks-grenadier Division came in the same day, also in very bad condition from its retreat across the RHINE on the V Corps front. On the north, the 62d Volksgrenadier Division and 9th Panzer Division took over the defense of the HONNEF area (F640275) on the same day.

These reinforcements enabled the 11th Panzer Division to narrow its zone, and with the 106th Brigade and elements of the 130th Panzer Lehr Division attached, it remained the strongest division opposing the III Corps; especially as the division received 300 men from the Heidelberg NCO School 11 March, and 450 reinforcements from the 139th Mountain Replacement Battalion on 17 March.

On 14 March, the 340th Volksgrenadier Division was identified on the southeast of the bridgehead. This division arrived in poor condition from the Third US Army front on the south, but it was to receive the largest group of replacements to arrive in this area—Denmark Battalions I, II, and III, a regimental size unit from the 160th Training Division in Denmark. The Denmark units soon melted away, however, as did later arrivals from several replacement battalions from WESTPHALIA.

Also on 14 March, the 3d Parachute Division came back on the III Corps north front, this time without General Schimph, who had been captured earlier in the month by the 9th US Infantry Division.

On 17 March, the 26th Volksgrenadier Division, an old enemy from the ARDENNES and the

ROER RIVER battles, arrived on the southern front, under General Kokott, an experienced straggler collector. This officer had partially filled out his command with remnants of the 277th Replacement Regiment of BONN and 253d Replacement Battalion of AACHEN, and elements of the 18th Volksgrenadier Division and the 89th Infantry Division.

A number of prisoners taken during the period were of special interest. General Schimph, commanding the 3d Parachute Division, took the order literally to hold the west bank of the RHINE to the last; so did Lieutenant Colonel Martin of the 941st Grenadier Regiment, and Colonel Fromberger of the 78th Grenadier Regiment, 26th Infantry Division. An officer who was the publisher of "The Skorpion," of German propaganda leaflets for the Wehrmacht, and of English-language propaganda leaflets for British and American consumption, was apprehended before he could get back across the RHINE, while two groups of trained saboteurs fell into our hands when five of a squad of seven highly-trained swimmers were driven out of the RHINE before they could blow the REMAGEN BRIDGES.

APPENDIX III. COMMENTS OF GENERAL BAYERLEIN, commanding general, German LIII corps

The following story, told to American interrogators by General Lieutenant Fritzy Bayerlein, depicts, to some extent, the state of mind of the German high command in the field during March 1945. The subject, General Bayerlein became an officer in 1922. He served with the panzers in the Polish Campaign (1939) and the French Campaign (1940), and was Rommel's Chief of Staff in the Afrika Corps in 1943. After commanding the 3d Panzer Division in Russia for a brief period. General Bayerlein was ordered to France to organize, train, and command the Panzer Lehr Division—the unit especially equipped and trained to repulse the Allied invasion of France. After the seizure of the LUDEN-DORF BRIDGE over the RHINE by the 9th US Armored Division, General Bayerlein was designated the commander of the LHI Corps, a battle group charged with the mission of throwing the American forces back across the RHINE.

The interrogation is especially interesting for three reasons: It is a partial chronicle of historical events, it indicates the German preoccupation with our air corps, and it details by example the state of mind of the German officer corps when faced with certain defeat. The careful student will note the lack of prevision demonstrated by General Bayerlein in his location of his units. This interrogation took place one month after the events recounted. At that time, the subject's recollection of the events which transpired was most vague in contrast to his vivid remembrance of Personal danger or embarrassments.

While all but the most prejudiced will agree that Allied air power was a most important factor in the final outcome of the war it is interesting to note the importance given to minor losses by German ground officers when the losses were caused by air power. For instance, the loss of 100 men in ground action was accepted as a normal thing, while 100 casualties sustained (from air bombardment) was headlined as a crippling blow to the unit—a decisive factor in a subsequent defeat.

General Bayerlein gives an excellent example of the German professional officer's state of mind in the closing days of the war. While, from the German point of view, the war was irrevocably lost, Bayerlein continued to perform his duty to the best of his ability while blaming his superior for poor decisions and making certain that no act of omission occurred which could justify his court-martial.

Comments of General Bayerlein to US interrogators:

On 1 March 1945, General Bayerlein, Commanding General, German LIII Corps, was in his headquarters at RHEINFELD (F3879). At this time, he received an order which Hitler sent to all units west of the RHINE stating that ". . . no staff officers, under any circumstances, will cross the RHINE"; the hope evidently being that the continued presence of high-ranking members of the German General Staff west of the RHINE would stimulate the waning resistance. Bayerlein stated that he was only too happy to comply, as it was clear to him that the defense of Germany was finished. On 3 March, it became even clearer when US tanks fired directly into his command post at RHEINFELD, driving him and his staff practically to the river bank across from BENHAT. Such a situation seemed "the end of the world" to Bayerlein, he said; but on the night of 3-4 March, he received direct orders from Army Headquarters to cross over, which he did in a small boat early on the morning of 5 March. "It seemed that Army Headquarters did not feel, as the Fuehrer did, that Germany had so many capable division and corps commanders she could sacrifice them for a gesture."

On 9 March, Bayerlein was ordered to OBERPLEIS (F676350) for a new assignment, and the situation at REMAGEN made it very clear to him just what it would be. Although there were no cohesive German units of any size defending against the bridgehead, elements of the 11th and 9th Panzer Divisions were marching toward the threatened area. (The size of these units was limited by the gasoline supply rather than by the number of troops and vehicles available.) The commander of the "Defense of the RHINE" was an old man, one Kortzfleisch, of indeterminate rank and commanding an assortment of Hitler Jugend and Volksturm. Kortzfleisch was in jittering terror of being disgraced and shot should the RHINE be crossed in his sector. (General Bayerlein did not state the limits of Kortzfleisch's sector.)

Model arrived in person on 9 March and gave General Bayerlein his assignment, which was to take a battle group of the Panzer Lehr, and the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions, and wipe out the bridgehead. He was given a day to study the situation and prepare a plan. (It should be noted that Model and Bayerlein were not particularly fond of each other. Shortly before the ARDENNES battle Bayerlein had requested that his unit, the Panzer Lehr Division, be withdrawn from the front in order to permit it to reorganize, re-equip, and retrain. Model censured his division commander and told him to "reorganize in the line. That is what we did in Russia." Bayerlein replied that if that is what had been done in Russia it apparently had not been too successful. From that time on relations between the two officers were rather strained.)

General Bayerlein's plan for the reduction of the REMAGEN bridgehead, which he presented to Model, was to attack along the line OBERERL (F685217)-ERPEL (F647207) at dusk on 10 March with whatever troops were available at that time. During the night of 9-10 March, however, a few American tanks crossed and moved south to HONNINGEN (F700127), and the

next morning Model refused to permit the attack through OBERERL. insisting that the threat to the south be met by an attack on LINZ (F678187).

(NOTE: This decision was most illogical as: (1) The tanks referred to were one platoon of the 14th Tank Battalion, which had been east of the river for a day and a half; (2) the main effort of the bridgehead was and had been north and east; and (3) the strategic objectives in the vicinity were the RUHR area in the north and the autobahn to the east. There was neither a logical objective nor good maneuver ground to the south. Furthermore, Model was a high-caliber officer and knew that his only chance of success was to hit the bridgehead hard and early before the Americans had time to build up their forces east of the river. The only possible reasons for General Bayerlein's statement are that he was trying to put the blame for his failure on Model or else that Model was insane, as many people claimed.)

On 12 March, Model appeared at OBERPLEIS (F67&350) with Marshal Kesselring, who stated that he was the new commander in the West over Model, who continued his same duties but under the direction of Kesselring. During the visit, Bayerlein explained his initial plan for destroying the bridgehead to Marshal Kesselring, who became furious that the plan had not been executed. Model, perhaps to justify his decision, complained that he was being furnished nothing in the way of troops and supplies. Inasmuch as the Americans had captured OBERERL by this time, the plan became unworkable and was dropped. Marshal Kesselring did order, however, that LEYBERG (HILL 359) (F668262) be retaken.

On the night of 12-13 March, Bayerlein moved his headquarters to ASBACH (F780297) in order to be more centrally located with respect to his sector. This move, like all moves of Bayerlein, was made at night to escape the American tactical aircraft. Bayerlein claimed that, between NORMANDY and the end of the war, he had lost the fighting strength of his division two and a half times from enemy air action alone. Furthermore, the omnipresent threat of air strikes on any column so greatly restricted his freedom of movement that an active mobile defense was usually impossible. The BEMAGEN operation was no exception to the general rule, although the rugged, heavily wooded terrain minimized the effectiveness of fighter-bombers on the battlefield proper. During the critical period of the bridgehead, however, there was a continual drumming of the rear areas. On 10 March, the 130th Infantry Regiment, arriving from Denmark, was due to detrain at ALTEN-KIRCHEN (F935320). On the preceding day ALTENKIRCHEN had been destroyed to the point where the railroad station was unusable and the streets impassable. It was necessary for the regiment to detour north and south by way of BACHENBURG (F938342) (north) and NIDER WAMBACH (F901257) (south). Such situations were the usual thing and made time and space computations nearly impossible, with the resultant piecemeal employment of units. On 13-14 March, FLAMMERSFELD (F854277) and the forest west of ALTEN-KIRCHEN (F935320) were heavily bombed. While the heavy 17-cm guns which were shelling the bridge at REMAGEN were located in these woods, no great damage resulted, which convinced Bayerlein that the Americans knew the general location of the guns but did not have them pin-pointed. On 16 March, however, a trainload of gasoline, nearly the entire fuel reserve of the corps, was destroyed-a tragedy to the fuel-short unit. (In spite of the losses and inconveniences enumerated by General Bayerlein, the REMAGEN operation appears to have been almost exclusively a ground force show in the plodding infantry style. As the general had no Luftwaffe under his command, it was an easy thing to place an undue amount of weight on

factors affecting the operation which were beyond his control.)

In compliance with the orders of Marshal Kesselring, General Bayerlein attacked LEY-BERG (F668262) on 13 March and retook the objective. An attack on HONNEF (F640275) the same day, however, failed.

(NOTE: At 132400 March, the 1st Battalion, 309th Infantry, was reported 1500 yards east of LEYBERG with the 3d Battalion, 311th Infantry, on its north and the 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry, on its south. It is extremely doubtful that three battalions from three different regiments of two divisions would falsify their locations by 1500 yards. It is much more probable that General Bayerlein reported an untrue "mission accomplished" to the new commander of the West, trusting to the confusion rampant at the time to cover his false official report.)

A second plan to smash the bridgehead was now (13 March) planned, consisting of an attack by the newly arrived 130th Infantry Regiment through BRUCHHAUSEN (F658226) and ORSBERG (F652216). Once more Model stepped in and, accusing Bayerlein of "atomizations" of his forces, demanded that the available offensive forces be consolidated with the 340th Volksgrenadier Division under the command of General Tollsdorf (. . . "who had established some sort of a reputation for destroying tanks with panzerfausts."). Bayerlein said that this division consisted of 200 men practically without arms and certainly without any heavy weapons or proper training under Tollsdorf, a grossly incompetent leader. Nevertheless, Bayerlein turned over to Tollsdorf the 1500 good troops in the available battalions and assigned them a sector in front of the autobahn. Bayerlein stated that upon the employment of his last striking force he became convinced, and reported, that no chance remained to eliminate the bridgehead.

(NOTE: Indicative of the mental status of the command in the West at this time is the example of an army commander correcting a corps commander in his employment of 1500 men. Here we see high commanders with a few troops at hand that the countermanding of orders becomes the rule. Although General Bayerlein stated that in his opinion, and in the opinion of other German General Staff officers, Model was insane at this time, there is certainly no proof of this accusation in this case. Bayerlein planned an attack through the American assault forces, along the line BRUCHHAUSEN-ORSBERG to the river, with a three-battalion force totaling 1500 effectives. On 13 March, there were five American battalions in reserve within 2000 yards of BRUCHHAUSEN and ORSBERG. It appears that Bayerlein was merely trying to build up his own prestige by insinuating that his foredoomed plan would have been a success had it not been precluded by his superior. The chronic cry from German corps commanders that Model was mad could be due to his intense and misdirected sense of duty or to the human failing of subordinates covering a defeat by blaming a superior. Certainly, it is doubtful whether a disciplined officer of the mental ability of Model would become unbalanced because of a military defeat which he must have foreseen and which his training would indicate as being inevitable.)

On 16 March, Bayerlein received official notification through channels that Hitler had ordered the whole bridgehead area wiped out with V-2 bombs, regardless of the resultant harm to the local population. While this drastic defense was never employed, the knowledge of its possibility did not increase the German soldiers' will to resist on that particular piece of ground. (NOTE: In its after action report for March 1945, III Corps reported six V-2 bombs landing in the bridgehead area. It is believed that General Bayerlein meant that while V-2 bombs were used in the operation, no cold-blooded effort was made to wipe out all living things within the

bridgehead. The order required a prohibitive number of bombs in the first place and probably could not have been obeyed even if the military commanders had desired to do so.) The effectiveness of the defense was also impaired by the execution of five officers for dereliction of duty in failing to destroy the LUDENDORF BRIDGE-an event that made the whole officer corps extremely conscious of the personal responsibility for failure. As a consequence the justification of acts and decisions became the paramount thought in most minds. Bayerlein stated that when the American forces cut the autobahn on 16 March, he had concentrated an especially strong defense at the northern edge of his sector so that this disaster at least could be debted to someone else. In addition, a bridge complex swept the command which caused officers of all grades to spend a disproportionate amount of time, energy, and explosives in blowing all sorts of bridges, even senselessly. In many instances, bridges were blown in rear areas by high-ranking officers, thereby crippling the war effort but clearing the individual of responsibility for an unblown bridge.

The high command apparently concurred in Bayerlein's belief that the reduction of the bridgehead was impossible, as he was ordered on 18 March to pull out of the line and move north to the defense of the area east of COLOGNE (F4560) and BONN (F550370). The Americans, however, unleashed a drive to the east instead of to the north, so BAYERLEIN was ordered south again with his battle group to defend ALTENKIRCHEN (F935320). The result of all this jockeying around was that he was unable to put up a strong defense anywhere, being too preoccupied with moving his troops to be able to fight them. As a consequence he retired to the north, and, facing south, extended his line to STEINBACH (FM065352), from which position he continued to retreat north until captured in the last days of the RUHR pocket.

APPENDIX IV. NAMES OF UNIT COMMANDERS, 7 March 1945

First United States Army - Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges
III Corps - Major General John Milliken
III Corps Artillery - Brigadier General Paul V. Kane
VII Corps - Major General J. Lawton Collins
9th Armored Division - Major General John W. Leonard
Combat Command A - Colonel Thomas L. Harrold
Combat Command B - Brigadier General William M. Hoge
Combat Command R - Colonel Walter Burnside
Division Artillery - Colonel Joseph W. West
2d Tank Battalion - Major Oliver W. Schantz
14th Tank Battalion - Lieutenant Colonel Leonard E. Engeman
19th Tank Battalion - Lieutenant Colonel Burton W. Karsteter
27th Armored Infantry Battalion - Major Murray Deevers
52d Armored Infantry Battalion - Lieutenant Colonel William R. Prince
60th Armored Infantry Battalion - Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth W. Collins
89th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron - Lieutenant Colonel Caesar F. Fiore
9th Armored Engineer Battalion - Lieutenant Colonel Sears Y. Coker
656th Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)(attached) - Lieutenant Colonel John C. Meador
482d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion (SP) (attached) - Lieutenant Colonel

Vincent F. Lupinacci

7th Armored Division - Major General Robert W. Hasbrouck

1st Infantry Division - Major General Clift Andrus

2d Infantry Division - Major General Walter M. Robertson

9th Infantry Division - Major General Louis A. Craig

78th Infantry Division - Major General Edwin P. Parker

99th Infantry Division - Major General Walter E. Lauer

SOURCE: Gen. John W. Leonard and The U S Army Armored School

LINK: <http://www.allworldwars.com/The%20Remagen%20Bridgehead%20March%201945.html>

The Last Offensive by Charles B. MacDonald

Chapter XI A Rhine Bridge at Remagen

Fortuitous events have a way sometimes of altering the most meticulous of plans. That was what happened as the Allied armies neared the Rhine.

In seeking at the end of January to allay British concern about the future course of Allied strategy, the Supreme Commander had assured the British Chiefs of Staff that a Rhine crossing in the north would not have to be delayed until the entire region west of the river was free of Germans.¹ Field Marshal Montgomery's 21 Army Group, General Eisenhower reiterated in a letter to senior commanders on 20 February, was to launch a massive thrust across the Rhine north of the Ruhr even as the 6th and 12th Army Groups completed their operations to clear the west bank. Those two army groups were to make secondary thrusts across the Rhine later.²

While designating the area north of the Ruhr and the Frankfurt-Kassel corridor as the two main avenues of advance deep into Germany, Eisenhower left open the choice of specific Rhine crossing sites to his army group commanders. With an eye toward the Frankfurt-Kassel corridor, the 12th Army Group's planning staff in turn noted, in what eventually was to be the First Army's zone, two acceptable crossing sites. Both were at points where the Rhine valley is relatively broad; one in the north, between Cologne and Bonn, the other between Andernach and Koblenz. From either site access would be fairly rapid to the Ruhr-Frankfurt autobahn and thence to the Lahn River valley leading into the Frankfurt-Kassel corridor.

Both had drawbacks, for both led into the wooded hills and sharply compartmented terrain of a region known as the Westerwald; but both avoided the worst of that region. The most objectionable crossing sites of all were in the vicinity of Remagen; there the Westerwald is at its most rugged, the roadnet is severely limited, and the Rhine flows less through a valley than a gorge.³

As the First Army neared the Rhine, General Bradley, the army group commander, like Patton of the Third Army, was looking less toward an immediate Rhine crossing than toward the Third Army's drive south to clear the Saar-Palatinate. The role of Hodges' First Army in the coming operation was to defend the line of the Rhine and mop up pockets of resistance. Hodges also was to be prepared to extend his units to the southernmost of the two acceptable

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crossing sites, that between Andernach and Koblenz.⁴

The Germans at Remagen

With Allied troops approaching the Rhine, the order and efficiency normally associated with things German had become submerged in a maelstrom of confused and contradictory command channels. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the railroad bridge on the southern fringe of Remagen. There a small miscellany of troops was operating under a variety of commands. An army officer, Capt. Willi Bratge, was the so-called combat commander of the entire Remagen area, ostensibly with the power of over-all command but only in event of emergency. Capt. Karl Friesenhahn, an engineer officer, was the technical or bridge commander. An anti-aircraft officer, responsible to neither, commanded anti-aircraft troops in the vicinity. Men of the *Volkssturm* were under Nazi party officials. Furthermore--though no one at Remagen yet knew it--another officer, a major, was destined soon to come to the town to supersede Bratge's command.⁵

This confusion and contradiction was repeated at almost every level of command all along the Rhine front. Much of it was attributable to the fact that prior to March, responsibility for protecting the Rhine bridges had rested entirely with the *Wehrkreise* (military districts). Troops of the *Wehrkreise* were responsible not to any army command but to the military arm of the Nazi party, the *Waffen-SS*, and jealous rivalry between the two services was more the rule than the exception. As the fighting front in early March fell back from Roer to Rhine, responsibility was supposed to pass from *Wehrkreis* to army group and army, but in practice *Wehrkreis* commanders jealously held on to their command prerogatives. Furthermore, anti-aircraft troops answered neither to army headquarters nor *Waffen-SS* but instead to the *Luftwaffe*; and within the Army itself the Field Army (*Feldheer*) vied for authority with the Replacement Army (*Ersatzheer*).

To complicate matters further, a number of recent command changes had had an inevitable effect. On 1 February, *Wehrkreis VI* had relinquished authority for Remagen to *Wehrkreis XII*. Then, on 1 March, came the shift that took place at the height of Operation GRENADE, exchange of zones between the *Fifth Panzer* and *Fifteenth Armies*. A few days later, as German troops fell back from the Roer, General Puechler's *LXXIV Corps*, gravitating on Bonn, might have been expected to command any bridgehead retained in the vicinity of Bonn and Remagen; but instead, Field Marshal Model at *Army Group B* set up a separate command, the one under General Botsch, commander of a badly depleted *volks grenadier* division. Botsch was to be responsible directly to Zangen's *Fifteenth Army*.

As General Botsch tried to appraise the

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situation, he ran head on into the differing views of his two superiors, Zangen and Model, as to the course the Americans presumably would follow--Model with his belief that the main thrust would be made on Bonn, Zangen with the idea that the Americans would exploit the "spout of the funnel" leading to Remagen. To be prepared for either eventuality, Botsch wanted to place his headquarters midway between the two towns, but Model insisted that he locate at or near Bonn. There Botsch ran afoul of Bonn's local defense commander, Generalmajor Richard von Bothmer, who raised questions as to just who was in command at Bonn. Trying to resolve the

conflicts, Botsch spent much of the first few days of March driving back and forth between command posts of the *Fifteenth Army* and *Army Group B* and between Bonn and Remagen.

Although tiring and frustrating, these peregrinations probably established General Botsch as the one man who understood how the diverse command complex worked. Driving up the Ahr River valley toward the *Fifteenth Army's* headquarters early on 6 March, Botsch also got a firsthand view of pandemonium in the making as individuals and depleted units retreated pell-mell toward the Rhine. This personal knowledge of how serious matters really were well might have stood the Germans in good stead at Remagen, but General Botsch had no chance to use it.

For it was General Botsch to whom Field Marshal Model turned in the afternoon of 6 March to replace the captured General von Rothkirch in command of the *LIII Corps*.⁶ At 1700 Botsch left on the futile assignment of trying to resurrect the *LIII Corps* without even being accorded time to brief his successor, his erstwhile disputant at Bonn, General von Bothmer. Thus was lost to the Bonn-Remagen defense the one commander who, because of his knowledge of the complicated command setup and the true nature of German reverses west of the Rhine, might have forestalled what was about to happen at Remagen.

When the *Fifteenth Army* commander, General von Zangen, learned of Botsch's shift, he told General Hitzfeld, commander of the *LXVII Corps*, to send someone to Remagen to check personally on the situation there. A short while later, at 0100 on 7 March, at the same time Zangen ordered the *LXVII Corps* to counterattack the spout of the funnel leading to Remagen, he also told Hitzfeld the Remagen bridgehead was then the responsibility of the *LXVII Corps*.

With the bulk of his troops still thirty-five miles from the Rhine, sorely beset on all sides and under orders to launch a counterattack that on the face of it was impossible, and with American troops no more than ten miles from Remagen, Hitzfeld could do little. Summoning his adjutant, Major Hans Scheller, he told him to take eight men and a radio and proceed to Remagen, there to assume command, assemble as much strength as possible, and establish a small bridgehead. He specifically warned Scheller to check immediately upon arrival as to the technical features of the Remagen railroad bridge and to make sure the bridge was prepared for demolition.

At approximately 0200 (7 March), Major Scheller and his eight men started for Remagen in two vehicles over winding, troop-choked, blacked-out Eifel

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roads. In the darkness, Scheller's vehicle quickly became separated from the other, the one that carried the radio. Running low on fuel, Scheller ordered his driver to take a long detour to the south to seek out a supply installation where he might get gasoline. Shortly after 1100 on 7 March Major Scheller, still without a radio, finally reached the Remagen bridge. Sounds of battle already were discernible in the distance.

The Hope for a Bridge

As the crucible neared for the Germans at Bonn and Remagen, probably none of the American troops or their commanders, who on 6 March began to make great strides toward the Rhine, entertained any genuine expectation of seizing a bridge across the river intact. (See [Map VIII](#).) Some units were under formal orders to seize and hold any bridge that still stood, but more as a routine precaution than anything else. Nobody had made any positive plans about what to do should such a windfall occur.

Back in February, as the First Army drive began, some staff officers had toyed with the idea that a Rhine bridge might be taken. So remote appeared the chances nevertheless that they went ahead with a request to Allied air forces to continue to bomb the bridges. Inclement weather rather than plan had provided the bridges respite from air attack during the early days of March.

In the Ninth Army, of course, a flurry of hope for a Rhine bridge had developed on the first day of March, inviting the attention of the Supreme Commander himself.⁷ Yet that hope had proved short-lived; and despite the fact that two attempts came heartbreakingly close to success, the failures appeared to confirm the general opinion that the methodical Germans would see to it that nobody got across the Rhine the easy way.

The possibility still continued to intrigue commanders at every level. When General Hodges visited headquarters of the III Corps on 4 March, for example, he and the corps commander, General Millikin, spoke of the possibility of taking the bridge at Remagen; but with troops of the III Corps still a long way from the Rhine, the discussion was brief. The next day, with the 1st Division advancing on Bonn, the division commander asked General Millikin what to do in case the highway bridge at Bonn could be seized. On 6 March Millikin put the question to the First Army G-3, Brig. Gen. Truman C. Thorson. The bridges, Thorson ruled, should be captured wherever possible.

The G-3 of the III Corps, Colonel Mewshaw, and an assistant had mused over the likelihood of taking the Remagen bridge with paratroops or a picked band of Rangers; but so slight appeared the chance that the discussion never went beyond the operations section. In the directive issued to the 9th Armored Division on 6 March, the order in regard to the bridge at Remagen was to "cut by fire"; the order also restricted artillery fire against the bridge to time and proximity fuze. Early in the evening of 6 March the III Corps also asked the air officer at First Army to refrain from bombing both the Bonn and Remagen bridges.

That same evening, 6 March, General Millikin talked by telephone with the

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9th Armored Division commander, General Leonard. Among other things, General Leonard recalled later, Millikin had something like this to say about the railroad bridge at Remagen: "Do you see that little black strip of bridge at Remagen? If you happen to get that, your name will go down in glory."⁸

Yet despite all deliberation about the bridge on 6 March, this was the same day that Colonel Mewshaw confirmed for the 9th Armored Division G-3 that the division's main effort should be aimed not at the Rhine but at crossings of the Ahr. Furthermore, neither the 9th Armored Division nor that division's Combat Command B, the unit headed toward Remagen, mentioned in its field order taking the bridge at Remagen, although General Leonard did note the possibility orally as a matter of course to the CCB commander.

For all the talk about getting a bridge over the Rhine, the prospect remained little more than a fancy.

Advance to the Rhine

On 6 March, as General Millikin shifted the objectives of his divisions southeastward to conform with the First Army's emphasis on crossings of the Ahr River, the advance of the III Corps picked up momentum. Despite time lost to a determined German delaying force at the road center of Rheinbach, the 9th Armored Division's Combat Command A gained more than ten miles and stopped at midnight less than two miles from the Ahr. CCB reached Stadt Meckenheim, only eight miles from the Rhine. A regiment of the 1st Division on the corps north wing got within four miles of the Rhine northwest of Bonn.

The next morning, 7 March, as troops of the neighboring VII Corps eliminated the last resistance around Cologne, General Hodges transferred responsibility for clearing Bonn to General Collins's corps, but with the responsibility went the means, the 1st Division. At the same time, infantry of the 9th Division continued to close in on Bad Godesberg, and the 9th Armored's CCA jumped the Ahr at Bad Neuenahr, even though the Germans fought doggedly to hold open the Ahr valley highway, the main route of withdrawal for General Hitzfeld's *LXVII Corps*. Combat Command B meanwhile sent one column southeastward to cross the Ahr near its confluence with the Rhine and another column toward Remagen.

Built around the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion and the 14th Tank Battalion (minus one company), the task force heading for Remagen was under the tank battalion commander, Lt. Col. Leonard Engeman. To lead the column, Colonel Engeman designated an infantry platoon and a tank platoon, the latter equipped with the new, experimental T26 Pershing tank mounting a 90-mm. gun.

Because bulldozers had to clear rubble from the roads leading out of Stadt Meckenheim before the armored vehicles could pass, Task Force Engeman got a fairly late start on 7 March. The column began to move only at 0820, but the Germans apparently gained nothing from the delay. The first opposition--desultory artillery and small arms fire--developed more than three miles from the starting point. Another mile and a half

to the east the column turned south, and just before noon entered a big patch of woods west of Remagen. Here and there little clusters of Germans passed, hands behind their heads, anxious to give themselves up to the first Americans who would take the time to deal with them.

A few minutes before 1300, the leading infantry platoon commander, 2d Lt. Emmet J. Burrows, emerged from the woods on a high bluff overlooking Remagen. Below him, the view of the Rhine gorge, even in the haze of 7 March, was spectacular.

The railroad bridge just outside Remagen, Lieutenant Burrows took in at a glance, still stood.

The Crisis at the Bridge

Down at the bridge, confusion reigned, much as it had all morning. Since soon after daylight, frightened and disorganized groups of German troops had been fleeing across the bridge, bringing with them tales of the strength of American forces pouring down the Ahr valley. The wounded and the stragglers--tired, dispirited men with heads bowed--added stark punctuation to the accounts. Lumbering supply vehicles, horse-drawn artillery, quartermaster and other rear echelon service units created mammoth traffic jams. The jams would have been worse had not a 4-day rush job to lay planks across the railroad tracks at last been finished the night before.

Built in 1916, the railroad bridge at Remagen was named for the World War I hero, Erich Ludendorff. Wide enough for two train tracks, plus footpaths on either side, the bridge had three symmetrical arches resting on four stone piers. The over-all length was 1,069 feet. At each end stood two stone towers, black with grime, giving the bridge a fortress-like appearance. Only a few yards from the east end of the bridge, the railroad tracks entered a tunnel through the black rock of a clifflike hill, the Erpeler Ley.

A year before the start of World War II, the Germans had devised an elaborate demolition scheme for the bridge that included installing an electric fuze connected with explosives by a cable encased in thick steel pipe. Even if the electric fuze failed to work, a primer cord might be lit by hand to set off emergency charges. Later, at the end of 1944, engineers had made plans to blow a big ditch across the Remagen end of the bridge to forestall enemy tanks until the main demolitions could be set off.

Long at his post, the engineer commander at Remagen, Captain Friesenhahn, knew the demolition plan well, but only a few days before 7 March an order had arrived that complicated the task. Because a bridge at Cologne had been destroyed prematurely when an American bomb set off the explosive charges, *OKW* had ordered that demolitions be put in place only when the fighting front had come within eight kilometers of a bridge; and igniters were not to be attached until "demolition seems to be unavoidable."⁹ In addition, both the order to prepare the explosives and the demolition order itself were to be issued in writing by the officer bearing tactical responsibility for the area.

Until just before noon, 7 March, the officer bearing tactical responsibility at Remagen was Captain Bratge. In a growing lather of excitement at the hegira of

German units and stragglers, Bratge early in the morning telephoned headquarters of *Army Group B* to ask for instructions, but he was able to get through only to a duty officer. The officer assured him that *Army Group B* was not particularly worried about the situation at Remagen; Bonn appeared to be the most threatened point.

For actual defense of Remagen and the bridge, Captain Bratge had only thirty-six men in his own company, plus Friesenhahn's handful of engineers and a smattering of unreliable *Volkssturm*, the latter technically not even under Bratge's command. The antiaircraft troops that earlier had been set up on the west bank had left in midmorning, joining the retreating hordes crossing the bridge.

General Botsch, Bratge knew, had asked Field Marshal Model at *Army Group B* for an entire division to defend at Bonn and a reinforced regiment at Remagen. That kind of strength, Model had replied, simply was not available. Although Model had promised some reinforcement, none had arrived. During the evening of 6 March, Bratge had tried to reach General Botsch's headquarters to ask for help, but had been unable to get through. He had no way of knowing that Botsch's headquarters had pulled out to go to Botsch's new command, the *LIII Corps*. An officer sent from General von Bothmer's headquarters at Bonn to give Bratge this information had wandered into American positions and been captured.

At one point Captain Bratge managed to corral the remnants of a battalion from the *3d Parachute Division* and persuaded the officers to set up a defense to the southwest to block an expected American advance from the Ahr valley, but a short while later these troops melted into the fleeing columns and disappeared. When an antiaircraft unit stationed atop the Erpeler Ley withdrew, ostensibly under orders to go to Koblenz, even that strategic observation point was left unmanned.

At 1115, Bratge looked up from the unit orders he was checking at the bridge to see a red-eyed major approaching. His name, the major said, was Hans Scheller. General Hitzfeld of the *LXVII Corps*, he continued, had sent him to take command at Remagen.

Once Captain Bratge had assured himself that the major was, in fact, from the *LXVII Corps* and that his orders were legitimate, he was pleased to relinquish command. Together the two officers went to check with the engineers on progress of the demolitions. Although reports began to arrive that Americans had reached the bluffs overlooking Remagen, Scheller was reluctant to order the bridge destroyed. An artillery captain, arriving at the bridge, had insisted that his battalion and its guns were following to cross the bridge, and Major Scheller felt keenly that combat units should not be penalized by having the bridge blown in their faces, particularly when they were bringing with them precious items such as artillery pieces.

On the hill above Remagen, Lieutenant Burrows's excitement at discovering the bridge intact had brought his company commander, 1st Lt. Karl H. Timmerman, hurrying to the vantage point at

the edge of the woods. Timmerman in turn called for the task force commander, Colonel Engeman.

The task force commander's first reaction

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LIEUTENANT TIMMERMAN, *first officer to cross the Remagen Bridge.*

was much like that of Burrows and Timmerman, awe and surprise tempered by a sharp desire to get artillery time fire on the bridge immediately to hamper the German retreat. Supporting artillery nevertheless declined to fire, citing reports, actually erroneous, that friendly troops already were too close to the bridge.

As Colonel Engeman directed Lieutenant Timmerman to start his infantry company moving cross-country into Remagen with the platoon of Pershing tanks to follow down the winding little road from the bluff, CCB's operations officer, Maj. Ben Cothran, arrived on the scene. Like the others before him, he got a tingling shock of excitement as he emerged from the woods and saw the Rhine below him, the Remagen bridge still standing.

"My God!" Cothran exclaimed. "I've got to get the Old Man."¹⁰

He was referring to Brig. Gen. William M. Hoge, the CCB commander. In keeping with the theory that the other column of the combat command heading for the Ahr was making the main effort, Hoge had followed closely behind that thrust. In response to Cothran's radio report, he tore cross-country to the scene.

He might lose a battalion, General Hoge mused, if his men crossed the bridge before the Germans blew it. If they destroyed it while his men were in the act of crossing, he probably would lose a platoon. On the other hand

Turning to Colonel Engeman, Hoge said, "I want you to get to that bridge as soon as possible."

A short while later, at 1515, a message arrived from CCB's other column, which earlier had found a bridge across the Ahr River at Sinzig and had fought its way across. In Sinzig the men had discovered a civilian who insisted that the Germans at Remagen intended to blow the Ludendorff railroad bridge precisely at 1600. Although the Germans in fact had no specific time schedule, the civilian's report nevertheless spurred General Hoge to urge Task Force Engeman to greater speed in seizing the bridge at Remagen.

Having fought through the town of Remagen against an occasional die-hard German defender, Lieutenant Timmerman, his infantrymen, and the supporting platoon of tanks neared the bridge around 1600. As they approached, dodging occasional small arms and 20-mm.

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fire from the towers, a volcano of rocks, dirt, and noise erupted. Captain Friesenhahn on his own initiative, when he saw the Americans appear, had exploded the charge designed to prevent tanks from reaching the bridge. Timmerman and his men could see the Germans on the other side of the river scurrying to and fro, apparently getting ready to blow the bridge itself.

Major Scheller and Captain Bratge had already crossed the bridge to the railroad tunnel. Friesenhahn hurried to join them to get the order to destroy the bridge, but concussion from a tank shell knocked him to the floor of the bridge, unconscious. Fifteen precious minutes passed before he came to his senses. Still dazed, he resumed his trek toward the tunnel.

In the railroad tunnel, pandemonium. Terrified civilians cowering against the walls, children wailing. Reluctant *Volkssturm* awaiting only a chance to surrender. Clusters of apprehensive soldiers, some foreign workers, even some animals. White phosphorus shells from the American tanks across the river creating a heavy, eye-stinging smoke screen. Some soldiers caught outside the tunnel screaming as the phosphorus burned into their flesh.

As Captain Bratge rushed outside to survey the situation, he came upon Captain Friesenhahn and yelled at him to get the order from Major Scheller to blow the bridge. When Scheller gave his approval, Bratge insisted on waiting while a lieutenant wrote down the exact timing and wording of the order. Going outside again, he shouted to Friesenhahn to blow the bridge. True to his instructions from *OKW*, Friesenhahn insisted at first on having the order in writing, then relented in the interest of time.

Warning the civilians and soldiers to take cover, Captain Friesenhahn turned the key designed to activate the electric circuit and set off the explosives. Nothing happened. He turned it again. Still nothing happened. He turned it a third time. Again, no response.

Realizing that the circuit probably was broken, Friesenhahn sought a repair team to move onto the bridge; but as machine gun and tank fire riddled the ground, he saw that not enough time remained to do the job that way. He called for a volunteer to go onto the bridge and ignite the primer cord by hand. When a sergeant responded, Friesenhahn himself went with him as far as the edge of the bridge and there waited anxiously while the sergeant, crouching to avoid shells and bullets, dashed onto the bridge.

After what seemed an eternity, the sergeant started back toward the east bank at a run. Seemingly endless moments passed. Had the sergeant failed? Would the primer cord ignite the charge?

At last, a sudden booming roar. Timbers flew wildly into the air. The bridge lifted as if to rise from its foundations.

Cowering against the explosion, Friesenhahn breathed a sigh of relief. The job was done.

Yet when he looked up again, the bridge was still there.

Lieutenant Timmerman had barely finished the order to his men of Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, to storm across the railroad bridge when the explosion came. Some men flung themselves to the ground for protection. Others watched in awe as the

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SERGEANT DRABIK, *first American across the Rhine.*

big span lifted and a giant cloud of dust and thick black smoke rose. Moments later, like Friesenhahn and the Germans on the east bank, they saw in incredible surprise that the bridge still stood.

As the smoke and dust cleared, Timmerman could discern that even though the explosion had torn big holes in the planking over the railroad tracks, the footpaths on either side were intact. Signaling his platoon leaders, he again ordered attack.

Bobbing and weaving, dashing from the cover of one metal girder to another, the men made their way onto the bridge. Machine gun fire from the towers near the east bank spattered among them, but return fire from the riflemen themselves and from the big tanks on the Remagen side kept the German fire down. With a few well-placed rounds, the Pershings silenced German riflemen firing from a half-submerged barge in the river.

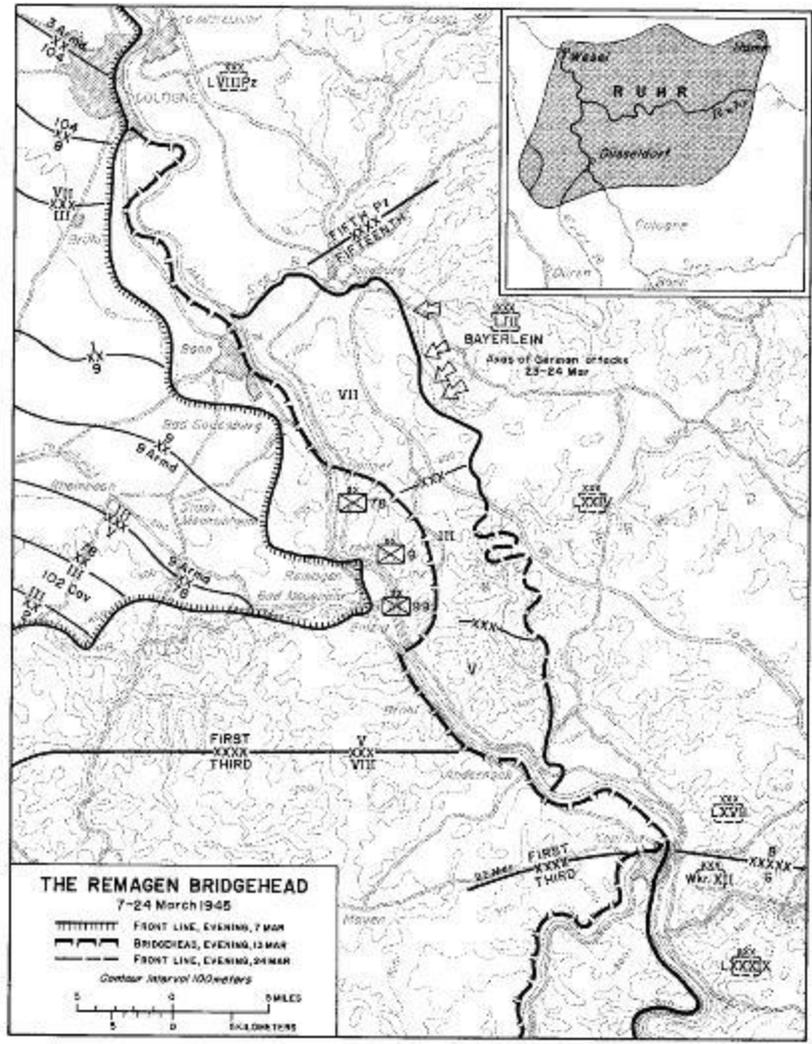
Close behind the first riflemen went two sergeants and a lieutenant from the engineer detachment operating with Task Force Engeman. Working swiftly, the engineers cut every wire they could find that might possibly lead to additional demolitions. They shot apart heavy cables with their carbines.

Nearing the far end, several men digressed to clean out the machine gunners from the towers, while others continued to the east bank. The first man to set foot beyond the Rhine was an assistant squad leader, Sgt. Alex Drabik. ([Map 3](#)) Others were only moments behind, including the first officer to cross, the Company A commander, Lieutenant Timmerman.

As Timmerman's men spread out on the east bank and one platoon began the onerous task of climbing the precipitous Erpeler Ley, Major Scheller in the railroad tunnel tried time after time to contact his higher headquarters to report that the bridge still stood. Failing that, he mounted a bicycle and rode off to report in person. As American troops appeared at both ends of the tunnel, Captain Bratge and the other Germans inside, including the engineer officer, Captain Friesenhahn, surrendered.

Reaction to the Coup

Hardly had the first of Timmerman's men crossed the Rhine when Colonel Engeman radioed the news to the CCB commander, General Hoge. Because Hoge in the meantime had received word to divert as much strength as possible from Remagen to reinforce the



MAP 3

Map 3
The Remagen Bridgehead
7-24 March 1945

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bridgehead over the Ahr River at Sinzig, he would be acting contrary to an order still in effect if, instead, he reinforced the Rhine crossing. He hesitated only momentarily. Send the rest of the armored infantry battalion across immediately, he told Engeman; then he drove to his own command post for a meeting with his division commander, General Leonard.

General Leonard's first reaction to the news was mock concern against Hoge's upset of the plans. "But let's push it," he added, "and then put it up to Corps."¹¹

At 1630 the 9th Armored Division chief of staff telephoned the command post of the III Corps.

"Hot damn!" cried a little sergeant as he transferred the call to the chief of staff and threw down the telephone. "We got a bridge over the Rhine and we're crossing over!"¹²

Although the corps commander, General Millikin, was away from the command post, his chief of staff, Col. James H. Phillips, believed he knew how his commander would react. Even before trying to contact Millikin, he told the 9th Armored Division to exploit the crossing.

When Phillips relayed the news to headquarters of the First Army, General Hodges ordered engineers and boats to Remagen even before calling General Bradley at 12th Army Group for approval.

"Hot dog, Courtney"--General Bradley later recalled his own reaction--"This will bust him wide open Shove everything you can across it."¹³

General Eisenhower's reaction was much the same. Only the planners appeared to question in any degree the advisability of exploiting the coup. The SHAEF G-3, General Bull, who happened to be at Bradley's headquarters when the news arrived, remarked that a crossing at Remagen led no place and that a diversion of strength to Remagen would interfere with General Eisenhower's plan to make the main effort north of the Ruhr.¹⁴ Yet Bradley would have none of it, and Eisenhower confirmed that view.

"Well, Brad," Eisenhower said, "we expected to have . . . [four] divisions tied up around Cologne and now those are free. Go ahead and shove over at least five divisions instantly, and anything else that is necessary to make certain of our hold."¹⁵

Confirmed approval to exploit the crossing reached the III Corps at 1845 on 7 March, and an hour and a half later General Hodges relieved the corps of the assignment of driving south across the Ahr. General Millikin in the meantime had been making plans to motorize the reserve regiments of his two infantry divisions and rush them to the bridge. Engineers, artillery, antiaircraft--units of all types stirred in the early darkness and headed for Remagen. All roads leading

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toward the little Rhine town soon were thick with traffic. Before midnight three heavy caliber artillery battalions already were in position to fire in support of the little band of infantrymen east of the Rhine.

At the bridge, the handful of engineers from Task Force Engeman worked unceasingly to repair the damage the demolition had done to the flooring of the bridge. Although considerable work remained, the engineers shortly before midnight signaled that tanks might try to cross.

Nine Sherman tanks of the 14th Tank Battalion crossed without incident, but the first tank destroyer to try it foundered in an unrepaired hole in the planking. The vehicle appeared to teeter precariously over the swirling waters far below, but for almost five hours every effort either to right the destroyer or to dump it into the river failed. At 0530 (8 March) the vehicle was at last removed.

In the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion's minuscule bridgehead, the infantrymen and their limited tank support spent a troubled night fighting off platoon-size counterattacks along their undermanned perimeter and expecting the Germans at any moment to strike in force. At dawn, when the disabled tank destroyer was removed from the bridge, the arrival of a battalion of the 78th Division's 310th Infantry relieved the pressure. As the first vestiges of daylight appeared, a battalion of the 9th Division's 47th Infantry also crossed into the bridgehead.

In the twenty-four hours following seizure of the bridge, almost 8,000 men crossed the Rhine, including two armored infantry battalions, a tank battalion, a tank destroyer company, and a platoon of armored engineers of the 9th Armored Division; a regiment and two additional battalions of the 78th Division; a regiment and one additional battalion of the 9th Division; and one and a half batteries of antiaircraft artillery.

During that twenty-four hours and into the next day, 9 March, General Eisenhower's initial jubilation over capture of the Ludendorff Bridge cooled under the impact of admonitions from his staff. Committed to a main effort north of the Ruhr with the 21 Army Group, he actually had few reserves to spare for Remagen. Late on 9 March his G-3, General Bull, informed General Bradley that while the Supreme Commander wanted the bridgehead held firmly and developed for an early advance southeastward, he did not want it enlarged to a size greater than five divisions could defend. Bradley in turn told General Hodges to limit advances to a thousand yards a day, just enough to keep the enemy off balance and prevent him from mining extensively around the periphery. Once the troops reached the autobahn, seven miles beyond the Rhine, they were to hold in place until General Eisenhower ordered expansion. Thus, almost from the start, the forces in the Remagen bridgehead were to operate under wraps that would not be removed for more than a fortnight.

On the German Side

Like the Americans, the Germans had no plan ready to cope with the situation at Remagen. Indeed, the fact that the U.S. Ninth Army had made no immediate move to jump the Rhine had lulled many German commanders into the belief

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that the Allies would pause to mop up and regroup before trying to cross; and that had engendered a measure of apathy in regard to the possibility of losing a bridge.

Nor did the Germans have any reserves close at hand to throw quickly against the little Remagen bridgehead. Most combat units near Remagen were still on the west bank, struggling to escape American pincers and get back somehow across the Rhine. Most of the service troops in the Remagen area were busy ferrying the depleted combat forces.

As the news about the Ludendorff Bridge spread slowly through a disorganized German command, officers near Remagen assembled about a hundred engineers and antiaircraft troops and fought through the night of the 7th, but to little avail. One group of Germans did reach the bridge itself with explosives in hand, but men of the 78th Division captured them before they could do any damage.

Because of the fluid tactical situation, many higher German commanders were on the move during the night of 7 March and failed for hours to learn about loss of the bridge. Field Marshal von Rundstedt's headquarters got the word earlier than most through a chance conversation between the operations officer and local commanders. Nobody could find the *Army Group B* commander, Field Marshal Model, in whose sector the debacle had occurred. Model himself was at "the front," his headquarters on the move.

When *OB WEST* finally did establish contact with *Army Group B*, Model still was away. So preoccupied was the army group staff with trying to save divisions of the *LXVI* and *LXVII Corps*, threatened with entrapment by the 4th Armored Division's sweep to the Rhine above Andernach, that the headquarters at first reacted apathetically. When Model returned during the morning of 8 March, he ordered the *11th Panzer Division*, which by that time was preparing to recross the Rhine at Bonn to make the projected counterattack southwest toward Rheinbach, to sweep the Americans into the river and blow the Ludendorff Bridge.

The *11th Panzer Division* had about 4,000 men, 25 tanks, and 18 artillery pieces, a force that well might have struck a telling blow had it been available soon after the first Americans crossed the Rhine. Yet the panzer division, assembled near Duesseldorf, had somehow to obtain gasoline for its vehicles and thread a way along roads already jammed with traffic and under attack from Allied planes. Not until two days later, 10 March, were even the first contingents of the division to get into action against the bridgehead.¹⁶ Field Marshal Model meanwhile designated a single commander to co-ordinate all counteraction at Remagen, General Bayerlein, erstwhile commander of *Corps Bayerlein*, who had fallen back before the drive of the VII Corps on Cologne. Bayerlein on 9 March took command of a heterogeneous collection of service troops opposite Remagen with the promise of the incoming *11th Panzer Division*, some 300 men and 15 tanks masquerading under the name of the once-great *Panzer Lehr Division*, another 600 men and 15 tanks under the seemingly imperishable *9th Panzer Division*, and a company-size remnant of the *106th Panzer Brigade* with 5 tanks. Once all troops

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arrived, including relatively strong artillery units, Bayerlein was to have approximately 10,000 men grouped under the headquarters staff of the *LIII Corps*.

When Model visited Bayerlein's new headquarters on 9 March, Bayerlein outlined a plan to attack at dusk on 10 March against the center of the bridgehead, then roll up the flanks. The main component was to be the *Kampfgruppe* of the *Panzer Lehr Division*; but when the bulk of that force failed to arrive on time, Model vetoed the entire plan.¹⁷ Model's first concern was to draw some kind of cordon around the bridgehead, but in the process he let pass the possibility of counterattacking before the Americans became too strong to be evicted. As American attacks continued, the incoming *11th Panzer Division* also became drawn into the defensive cordon and could launch only small, localized counterattacks.

As for the Commander in Chief West, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, the loss of the Remagen bridge was the excuse Hitler needed to relieve the old soldier of his command. Already upset by Rundstedt's failure to hold west of the Rhine, Hitler on 8 March summoned from Italy Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, longtime Commander in Chief South (*OB SUEDE*). The next day Hitler told Kesselring to take charge in the west. In the process he emphasized that the Remagen bridgehead had to be wiped out in order to gain time for refitting and reorganizing the exhausted German units behind the moat of the Rhine. Kesselring left Berlin for his unenviable



FIELD MARSHAL KESSELRING

assignment the night of 9 March, the relief to be effective the next day.¹⁸

Build-up and Command Problems

The First Army commander, General Hodges, had made various organizational shifts to enable the III Corps to exploit the Rhine crossing. During the night of 7 March, he attached a second armored division, the 7th, to Millikin's corps, along with an antiaircraft battalion, an engineer treadway bridge company, and an amphibious truck company. He also relieved the 78th Division of its offensive mission with the V Corps south of the Ahr River and ordered the division to join its reserve regiment at Remagen.

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Finding troops to send to Remagen was easier than expected because resistance west of the Rhine collapsed so rapidly. A final surge by the Third Army's late-running 11th Armored Division to reach the Rhine at Brohl on 8 March took all semblance of organization out of the defense south of the Ahr, and the next day the 2d Division of the V Corps swept to the Rhine to

link with the armor. On those two days and the next, resistance was so indifferent that the corps artillery could find no targets. It was much the same in the sector of the VII Corps, where on 9 March the 1st Division eliminated the last defenders from the university city of Bonn, there to discover the Rhine bridge destroyed. The German commander in Bonn, General von Bothmer, escaped to the east bank of the Rhine, only to be called before a court-martial that stripped him of his rank, whereupon Bothmer shot himself.¹⁹

For all the speed of the American thrusts, thousands of Germans made their way across the Rhine, mostly on ferries in small river craft. In terms of prisoners taken the pincers movement south of the Ahr was disappointing--the V Corps, for example, in its drive to the Rhine, captured just over 5,000 Germans, while the VII Corps between the Erft and the Rhine had been taking over 13,000.²⁰ Yet those Germans who escaped did so in disarray, unit integrity in most cases gone; and behind them they left small mountains of equipment, ammunition, weapons, and vehicles. While most ranking commanders got across the Rhine, two--Generalleutnant Richard Schimpf, commander of the *3d Parachute Division*, and Generalmajor Ludwig Heilmann, commander of the *5th Parachute Division*--failed to make it. Both were captured, as was General Rothkirch earlier.

At Remagen and on the roads leading to the town, congestion was a serious problem. The ancient wall-encircled town of Zuelpich and bomb-devastated Euskirchen particularly were bottlenecks, but the worst difficulty was at the Ludendorff Bridge itself. Although moderately heavy German artillery fire fell almost constantly around the bridge, it failed to halt traffic for any period longer than a quarter-hour. The slow pace imposed on vehicles by the condition of the bridge and by congestion on the east bank still served to back up traffic for several miles outside Remagen.

Almost from the start, the First Army's General Hodges was dissatisfied with the way his corps commander, General Millikin, handled the problems both at the bridge and in the bridgehead. Hodges and some members of his staff complained long and vocally that control was poor on both sides of the river and that accurate information on troop dispositions beyond the Rhine was lacking. Even after the order passed down from General Eisenhower on 9 March to limit advances within the bridgehead, Hodges continued to chafe at what he considered slow, uninspired attacks that failed to push far enough east to relieve the bridge site of observed artillery fire.

General Millikin on 9 March placed the commander of the 9th Armored Division, General Leonard, in specific control of all activity in the vicinity of the bridge and put all troops east of the



LUDENDORFF RAILROAD BRIDGE AT REMAGEN

river under the 9th Infantry Division commander, General Craig; but Hodges continued to complain. Unaccustomed to working with Millikin, whose III Corps in months past had served under the Third Army, Hodges and his staff made no attempt "to hide the fact that everybody here wishes the bridgehead command had fallen to General Collins."²¹

Millikin's problems, on the other hand, were myriad. Although he himself was frequently at the bridge, getting accurate, timely information from the east bank was a frustrating chore. In the first days of an impromptu operation of this sort, there were bound to be shortages of matériel and of specialized troops. One of these was in Signal Corps units. So frequently did vehicles and artillery cut telephone lines laid across the railroad bridge and so often did debris and a swift current break wires strung in the river that telephone communications with the east bank were out about as much as they were in. Neither liaison officers, who often were

delayed in threading their way back across the congested bridge, nor radio communications could solve the problem entirely.

Committing incoming infantry units on the far bank was a piecemeal proposition, geared both to when units arrived and to where the most pressing need existed at the time. Not even the various components of all regiments were able to stay together, and splitting the parts of divisions was the rule. This heightened problems of control that haste, improvisation, and the sharply compartmented terrain had already made bad enough.

To General Millikin, the way to overcome his problems was not to make bold thrusts here and there but to expand the entire periphery of the bridgehead systematically. On 8 March he ordered a controlled advance to three successive phase lines: the first--two and a half miles north and south of the Ludendorff Bridge and about two miles deep--designed to free the bridge site from small arms fire; the second designed to eliminate observed artillery fire; and the third--extending as far north as Bonn, as far south as Andernach, and east well beyond the autobahn--designed to free the bridge site of all shelling.²²

As night fell on 10 March, the 78th Division's 311th Infantry had advanced beyond the first phase line and taken Honnef, almost five miles north of the bridge. Progress was marked too in the south, where the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion captured a village beyond the town of Linz, not quite three miles southeast of the bridge.

In the high wooded hills east of the bridge progress was slower. There the 9th Division's 60th Infantry had been able to go less than a mile from the river. German tenacity there could be explained in part by the rugged terrain but owed much also to relatively strong artillery support. Since artillery units had retreated across the Rhine ahead of the infantry and tanks, a number of them had reached the east bank in fair shape, particularly those a little farther north where advance of the VII Corps had shoved them across the Rhine before the III Corps came up to the river at Remagen. A Volks artillery corps from the north was committed early to the fighting east of Remagen, and other artillery units were on the way. Soon the Germans would be employing against the bridgehead some fifty 105-mm. barrels, another fifty 150-mm. howitzers, and close to a dozen 210-mm. pieces. The shortage of ammunition rather than guns was the more serious problem.²³

Although the extent of progress belied it, General Millikin intended the eastward and southeastward thrusts to be his main effort, in keeping with the theory--advanced by both Bradley and Eisenhower--that the troops in the bridgehead could best serve the over-all scheme by driving toward the Lahn River valley and the Frankfurt-Kassel corridor. At the same time, Millikin reasoned, such thrusts would also more quickly eliminate German observation on the bridge. General Hodges for his part wanted the III Corps first to push northward

in order to clear crossing sites for General Collins's VII Corps. Yet he failed to make this clear to Millikin until the fourth day, 11 March, when for the first time he crossed the Rhine into the bridgehead. Even then he issued no specific order, although he did make several allusions to the north and strongly suggested that the main effort be made in that direction.²⁴

The suggestion was enough for Millikin. He promptly put emphasis behind the 78th Division's thrust by narrowing the division's sector and shifting the bulk of the 9th Division to the northeast. On the following day, 12 March, with the arrival of most of the 99th Infantry Division in the bridgehead to take over the southern and southeastern portions of the periphery, he ordered all units shifted back to their parent divisions; but by that time, the chance for a really spectacular drive northward had passed.

Indications that the going might become more difficult developed as early as 11 March, when contingents of the *11th Panzer Division* counterattacked at Honnef, temporarily regaining the town.²⁵ On the same day a second *Volks Artillery Corps* reached the front. On 13 March, as remnants of the *340th Volks Grenadier Division* arrived, the German commander, General Bayerlein, put them into the line east of Honnef. Later in the day the *130th Infantry Regiment*, a well-equipped and comparatively fresh separate unit of 2,000 men, arrived from the Netherlands. Although Bayerlein wanted to counterattack immediately with the *130th Infantry* reinforced by tanks, Field Marshal Model ordered that the regiment be used to bring the *340th Volks Grenadier Division* back to reasonable strength. Thus, the *130th* too went into the defensive line.²⁶

Unlike Bayerlein, Model believed that no decisive counterattack could be launched until sufficient infantry reinforcement arrived to release the armored units from the line. In this he was supported by General von Zangen, under whose *Fifteenth Army* Bayerlein's forces opposing the bridgehead operated. Yet in disagreement with Zangen, Model insisted that the strongest line be built in the north to thwart what he remained convinced would be the Americans' major thrust. At a meeting on 11 March with Model and the new Commander in Chief West, Field Marshal Kesselring, Zangen protested this line of thought. Field Marshal Kesselring for his part apparently sanctioned it, for Model's view prevailed.²⁷

With disapproval of the plan to use the *130th Infantry* offensively, General Bayerlein saw his last hope for an effective counterattack pass. To Bayerlein, there was no chance of assembling sufficient forces to drive the Americans into the Rhine once they had gained additional time to reinforce their bridgehead.²⁸ On the other hand, Model's decision did serve to slow operations in the sector where the American commander, General Millikin, now planned, temporarily, his main effort. Thus General Hodges' dissatisfaction with Millikin's

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handling of the bridgehead fight continued.

At the bridge site, concentrated efforts were made from the start toward supplementing the Ludendorff railroad bridge. One of the first units to arrive for the purpose was Naval Unit No. 1,

a U.S. Navy force with twenty-four LCVP's (landing craft, vehicle and personnel) that had been attached to the First Army for some months in anticipation of the Rhine crossings.²⁹ Also quick to arrive was an engineer unit of the III Corps, the 86th Engineer Heavy Ponton Battalion, with orders to operate three ferries, one well north of the Ludendorff Bridge, one close to the bridge at Remagen, and the third well south of the bridge. As assembled by the engineers, the rafts were made of five pontoons covered with wooden flooring. Used as free ferries propelled by 22-hp. outboard motors, the craft began to operate as early as the morning of 9 March. The ferries and LCVP's were augmented on 14 March by dukws (2½-ton amphibious trucks) of the 819th Amphibious Truck Company.³⁰

Survey teams of the 1111th and 1159th Engineer Combat Groups, scheduled to build tactical bridges across the Rhine, reached Remagen during the morning of 8 March. Because of road priorities granted at first to infantry units and engineers who were to operate ferries, the bridging units themselves began to move to the river only during the night of 9 March. Construction of the first bridge, a treadway from Remagen to Erpel, began early on 10 March.

Although jammed roads leading to Remagen continued to hamper bridge construction, the most serious delays derived from German artillery fire and air attacks. During 8 and 9 March, the Germans maintained an average rate of one shell every two minutes in the vicinity of the bridge sites, but by 10 March, their fire had fallen off to four or five rounds per hour.³¹ Artillery fire during the course of construction of the Remagen treadway bridge destroyed four cranes, two Brockway trucks, two air compressors, three dump trucks, and thirty-two floats. The treadway, nevertheless, was opened for limited traffic at 0700, 11 March, and for full use in late afternoon. A heavy ponton upstream at Linz was opened at midnight on the 11th. On the 13th engineers closed the Ludendorff Bridge in order to repair damage caused by Captain Friesenhahn's emergency demolition.

Unlike the artillery fire, German air attacks were more annoying than destructive. A strong cordon of defenses around the bridge manned by the 16th Antiaircraft Artillery Group, antiaircraft battalions borrowed from the divisions of the III Corps, and additional units transferred from the V Corps sharply interfered with German accuracy. On 12 March, at the height of air attacks against the bridge, sixteen 90-mm. gun batteries were emplaced on the west bank of the Rhine and twenty-five batteries of automatic antiaircraft weapons were almost equally divided between the two banks,

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probably the most intensive tactical grouping of antiaircraft weapons in the European theater during the course of the war.³²

The Luftwaffe first struck at the railroad bridge on the morning after Lieutenant Timmerman and his intrepid little band had crossed. Although low overcast interfered with flight, the Germans made ten sweeps with a total of ten planes, most of them Stuka dive bombers. None inflicted any damage on the bridge, and antiaircraft units claimed eight destroyed.³³

Exhortation to the Luftwaffe to strike and strike again was one of the few immediate steps Field Marshal Kesselring could take toward eliminating the Ludendorff Bridge after he assumed command in the west on 10 March. He conferred that day with senior Luftwaffe commanders, urging them to knock out the bridge and any auxiliary bridges the Americans might construct.

From 8 through 16 March, the Luftwaffe tried. The German planes struck at the railroad bridge, at the ferries, and at the tactical bridges, but with no success. Whenever the weather allowed, American planes flying cover over the bridgehead interfered; even when the German pilots got through the fighter screen, they ran into a dense curtain of antiaircraft fire. When they tried a stratagem of sending slow bombers in the lead to draw the antiaircraft fire, then following with speedy jet fighters, the Americans countered by withholding part of their fire until the jets appeared. American antiaircraft units estimated that during the nine days they destroyed 109 planes and probably eliminated 36 others out of a total of 367 that attacked.

By three other means the Germans tried to destroy the railroad bridge. Soon after losing the bridge, they brought up a tank-mounted 540-mm. piece called the Karl Howitzer. The weapon itself weighed 132 tons and fired a projectile of 4,400 pounds, but after only a few rounds that did no damage except to random houses, the weapon had to be evacuated for repairs. From 12 through 17 March a rocket unit with weapons emplaced in the Netherlands fired eleven supersonic V-2's in the direction of the bridge, the first and only tactical use of either of the so-called German V-weapons (*Vergeltungswaffen*, for vengeance) during World War II. One rocket hit a house 300 yards east of the bridge, killing three American soldiers and wounding fifteen. That was the only damage. Three landed in the river not far from the bridge, five others west of the bridge, and one near Cologne; one was never located.³⁴

The night of 16 March, the Germans tried a third method--seven underwater swimmers in special rubber suits and carrying packages of plastic explosive compound--but from the first the Americans had anticipated such a gambit. During the first few days of the bridgehead, before nets could be strung across the river, they dropped demolition charges to discourage enemy swimmers

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and stationed riflemen at intervals along the railroad bridge to fire at suspicious objects. Later, with nets in place, they stationed tanks equipped with searchlights along the river.

When the German swimmers first tried to reach the bridge, American artillery fire discouraged them from entering the water. On the next night, the 17th, they moved not against the railroad bridge but against tactical ponton bridges, only to be spotted by the American searchlights. Blinded by the lights, the seven Germans, one by one, surrendered.

While these events occurred along the Rhine, gains in the bridgehead continued to be steady but unspectacular, and General Hodges remained displeased with General Millikin's conduct of the battle. On 15 March Hodges discussed with the 12th Army Group commander, General Bradley,

the possibility of relieving Millikin. "Mind you," Hodges remarked, "I have only the greatest admiration and respect for the GIs doing the fighting out there, but I think they have had bad leadership in this bridgehead battle."³⁵ Bradley left Hodges' headquarters agreeing to look for a replacement for the III Corps commander.

Two days later General Van Fleet, former commander of the 90th Division, arrived at Hodges' headquarters to take Millikin's place. Shortly before 1500, Hodges telephoned Millikin.

"I have some bad news for you," Hodges said, then went on to inform him of his relief.

The III Corps commander waited until Hodges had finished.

"Sir," he said finally, "I have some bad



GENERAL VAN FLEET. (Photograph taken in 1951.)

news for you too. The railroad bridge has just collapsed."³⁶

The End of the Bridge

It happened during a period of relative quiet. No German planes were around, and German artillery was silent. About 200 American engineers with their equipment were working on the bridge.

The first indication that anything was wrong was a sharp report like the crack of a rifle. Then another. The deck of the bridge began to tremble. The entire deck vibrated and swayed. Dust rose from the planking. It was every man for himself.

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With a grinding roar of tearing steel, the Ludendorff railroad bridge slipped, sagged, and with a convulsive twist plunged into the Rhine. Of those working on the bridge at the time, 93 were injured, 28 killed.

The collapse of the bridge could be attributed to no one specific factor but rather to a combination of things, some even antedating the emergency demolition. As far back as 1940 Allied planes had launched sporadic attacks against the bridge, and in late 1944 had damaged it to such an extent that it was unserviceable for fifteen days. Then came the heavy planking to convert the bridge for vehicles; the assault by the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion's Company A and the fire of the big Pershing tanks that accompanied it; Friesenhahn's emergency demolition; the drumbeat of hundreds of infantry feet; the heavy tread of tanks and other vehicles; the pounding of German artillery; the vibrations from German bombs, from American anti-aircraft pieces and big 8-inch howitzers emplaced nearby, from the near misses of the V-2's; and then the weight of heavy engineer equipment as the Americans tried to repair the bridge. All had to be borne by the downstream truss alone after Friesenhahn's demolition so damaged the upstream truss that it was useless. In the end, it was too much for one weakened truss.³⁷

More speculative is the explanation of why the German demolitions failed, in the first place, to destroy the Ludendorff Bridge. Sabotage, for example, either by a German soldier or a foreign laborer, hardly could be ruled out.³⁸ Since the electric circuit designed to set off the main demolitions had been tested shortly before it was to be used and was in order, something happened to the circuit shortly before Friesenhahn turned the key. Most Germans familiar with the events believed that a lucky hit from an American shell--probably fired by a tank--severed the main cable leading to the demolitions. The Americans themselves conducted no immediate post-mortem, and once the bridge had fallen into the Rhine, the evidence was gone.

Whether the reason could be ascertained or not, Hitler at the time was determined to find scapegoats to pay for the debacle. He convened a special 3-man military tribunal that acted with little regard for legal niceties.³⁹ The tribunal condemned to death two majors who had commanded engineer troops in the vicinity of the bridge, Herbert Strobel and August Kraft; a lieutenant of *Flakartillerie*, Karl Heinz Peters; the major sent by General Hitzfeld of the *LXVII Corps* to assume tactical command at the bridge, Hans Scheller; and the previous tactical commander, Captain Bratge. The engineer in charge of demolitions, Captain Friesenhahn, who had been captured by the Americans, was acquitted in absentia. Because Bratge too was an American prisoner, he survived. The other four died before firing squads.

Expansion of the Bridgehead

The loss of the Ludendorff Bridge had no effect on operations in the Remagen bridgehead. The bridge had been closed



THE RHINE AT THE REMAGEN BRIDGE SITE. *(Photograph taken in 1948.)*

for repairs since 13 March, and the forces in the bridgehead already were accustomed to working without it. General Hodges nevertheless quickly authorized construction of a floating Bailey bridge about a mile downstream from Remagen. In a remarkable engineering feat, the Bailey bridge was completed in just under forty-eight hours and opened for traffic on 20 March.⁴⁰

One reason for a new bridge was the presence of a new force in the Remagen bridgehead. Beginning early on 15 March, the 1st Division of General Collins's VII Corps had crossed the Rhine over the III Corps bridges and on ferries, and at noon the next day, Collins assumed responsibility for the northern portion of the bridgehead. In the process, Collins's corps absorbed the 78th Division.

The specific role the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, intended the Remagen bridgehead to play in future operations meanwhile had been made clear on 13 March. The bridgehead,

Eisenhower directed, was to be used to draw enemy units from the Ruhr area opposite the 21 Army Group and from the 6th Army Group's Rhine crossing sites in the south. Although an exploitation eventually might be made in the direction of Frankfurt, a minimum of ten First Army divisions had to be reserved for the time being as a possible "follow-up force" for the 21 Army Group, still designated to make the Allied main effort.⁴¹

From this restriction, it was obvious that Eisenhower had no wish to see the bridgehead expanded appreciably. General Bradley in turn told the First Army to advance no farther than a line approximately twenty-five miles wide at the base along the Rhine and ten miles deep, in effect, a slight expansion of the third phase line that the III Corps commander, General Millikin, earlier had imposed.⁴²

The First Army's General Hodges disagreed, though to no avail. Like almost everybody at First Army headquarters, Hodges was piqued about the elaborate preparations Field Marshal Montgomery was making for his 21 Army Group's crossing of the Rhine and the emphasis General Eisenhower continued to place on that crossing when, in Hodges' view, a breakout from the Remagen bridgehead could have been staged at will. With evident amusement he listened to the story--probably apocryphal--of how the 21 Army Group on 7 March had asked Supreme Headquarters to stage a diversion before Montgomery jumped the Rhine and how, five minutes later, SHAEF passed the word that the First Army had already staged a diversion; the First Army had crossed the Rhine.⁴³

While advances in the Remagen bridgehead continued to average only about a thousand yards a day, Hodges was convinced this was less a reflection of German strength than of timidity in American attacks. By 17 March the German order of battle opposite the bridgehead sounded impressive on paper--in addition to those units early committed, the Germans had brought in contingents of the *26th*, *62d*, *272d*, *277th*, and *326th Volks Grenadier Divisions*; the *3d* and *5th Parachute Divisions*; and the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division*--but in no case were these real divisions. All were battalion-size *Kampfgruppen* or else had been fleshed out to something more than regimental strength with inexperienced replacements culled from various *Wehrkreise* up and down the Rhine.⁴⁴ In most cases the Americans characterized the resistance as "moderate to light." Although the German defense appeared to be "orderly," the more serious problem was difficult terrain.⁴⁵

By 16 March, when troops of the 78th Division made the first cut of the Ruhr-Frankfurt autobahn northeast of Honnef, expansion of the bridgehead had proceeded to the point where artillery no longer was able to support the attacks properly from the west bank of the Rhine. As artillery units began to cross the river, engineers supporting the VII Corps began construction of three more tactical bridges to care for the increased logistical burden. Keyed to the northward advance of the infantry east of the

Rhine, the first of the bridges was completed late on 17 March, another on 19 March, and a third, located at the southern fringe of Bonn, on 21 March. Screened by smoke from chemical generators, the engineers incurred only one casualty during the course of construction.⁴⁶

Of all the American attacks, those to the north and northeast by the 1st and 78th Divisions continued to bother the German army group commander most. More than ever convinced that the Americans intended to make their main effort northward toward the Ruhr, Field Marshal Model recognized that a strong counterattack had to be staged soon or the Americans would breach the natural defensive line in the north, the Sieg River, which enters the Rhine just downstream from Bonn, and then be ready for exploitation.

On 19 March Model began to strip all armored units from the eastern and southern portions of the line to assemble them in the north for counterattack. In the process, he introduced the *LXXIV Corps* to command the northern sector, then ordered the commander, General Puechler, to exchange places with the tank expert, General Bayerlein of the *LIII Corps*, thereby reversing the two corps headquarters. As finally constituted, the ring around the Remagen bridgehead involved the *LIII Corps* under Bayerlein in the north, the *LXXIV Corps* under Peuchler in the center, and the *LXVII Corps* under General Hitzfeld in the south.⁴⁷

Unfortunately for Model's plan, the Americans afforded no pause in their attacks. Once relieved from the line, the depleted German armored units had to be committed piecemeal again to try to block the continuing thrusts. Although this produced occasional intense combat, particularly at towns or villages blocking main highways, nowhere was it sufficient to stall or throw back the infantry of the two American divisions. Operating with only normal tank and tank destroyer attachments, the 78th Division on 21 March gained the Sieg River, the northern limit of the bridgehead as authorized by General Bradley. At that point the corps commander, General Collins, attached to the 78th Division a combat command of the 3d Armored Division to attack east along the south bank of the Sieg. By 22 March the divisions of the VII Corps had reached the final bridgehead line, both at the Sieg River and along the west bank of the little Hanf Creek that empties into the Sieg just over nine miles east of the Rhine.

The 9th and 99th Divisions of the III Corps, commanded now by General Van Fleet, profited from the shift of German armor to the north. On 18 March the 9th Division at last cut the autobahn, while patrols from the 99th Division reached the meandering Wied River almost due east of Remagen. Other contingents of the 99th Division drove swiftly southward close along the Rhine almost to a point opposite Andernach. By 20 March the III Corps had reached the prescribed bridgehead line.

As both corps neared the planned line, General Hodges at the First Army's headquarters fretted at the restrictions still binding his troops. Watching with admiration far-reaching drives west of

the Rhine by the Third Army, Hodges was convinced the end for Germany was near. "The war is over, I tell you," he kept repeating to his colleagues; "the war is over."⁴⁸

The next day, 19 March, as pleasant but unfounded rumors swept the First Army of an impending armistice, Hodges flew, at the 12th Army Group commander's behest, to meet General Bradley in Luxembourg City. During the morning, Hodges learned, Bradley had conferred with General Eisenhower. In anticipation of an early attack by Montgomery's 21 Army Group to cross the Rhine, Hodges was authorized to send a maximum of nine divisions into the Remagen bridgehead. From 23 March on, he was to be prepared to break out to the southeast, the main objective to be Limburg and the Lahn River valley and linkup with Third Army troops once Patton's forces crossed the Rhine.⁴⁹

The wraps thus were about to be removed from the First Army, though the final unveiling was predicated on Montgomery's crossing the Rhine. The date for the First Army's big push later would be set for 25 March.

In preparation for the attack, Hodges on the 21st sent General Huebner's V Corps into the bridgehead to take over the southern periphery from the 99th Division. When the attack date came, nine divisions, including three armored divisions, would be ready for the exploitation.

It remained for the Germans to write a final, futile postscript to the Remagen bridgehead fighting. On 24 March, still imbued with the idea that the Americans were aiming directly for the Ruhr, Field Marshal Model managed to assemble the bulk of the German armor for his long-delayed counterattack under the direction of General Bayerlein. Yet when the Germans struck the divisions of the VII Corps, their efforts were poorly co-ordinated and far too weak for the job. It was, in effect, not one counterattack but several small ones that brought intense fighting at various points but, in the end, gained nothing. The Germans merely frittered away irreplaceable troops that would be needed desperately the next day elsewhere along the periphery of the Remagen bridgehead and already were needed at other points on the elongated Rhine front, where on 23 March portentous events had begun to occur.

The capture of the Ludendorff railroad bridge and its subsequent exploitation was one of those *coups de théâtre* that sometimes happen in warfare and never fail to capture the imagination. Just how much it speeded the end of the war is another question. The bridgehead dealt a serious blow to German morale that may well have been partly responsible for lackluster resistance at other points, and it served as a magnet to draw a measure of fighting strength from other sites. On the other hand, the German Army clearly would have been beaten without it, perhaps just as quickly.⁵⁰ From 7 through 24 March, the Remagen bridgehead fighting cost the III Corps approximately 5,500 casualties, including almost 700 killed and 600 missing. The VII Corps, from 16 through 24 March, incurred not quite 1,900 casualties, including 163 killed and 240

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missing. In the same time span, the Germans lost more than 11,700 men as prisoners alone.

When the First Army attacked again on 25 March, a new war of movement even more spectacular than that displayed in the drive to the Rhine was to open. A precursor of what it would be like was to be seen in a drive already underway by the Third Army into the Saar-Palatinate.

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Footnotes

- [1.](#) See above, [ch. I](#); Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, pp. [413-14](#).
- [2.](#) Ltr, Eisenhower to AGp CG's, 20 Feb 45; SCAF 180, 201500 Jan 45. Both in SHAEF SGS Post-OVERLORD Planning file, 381, III.
- [3.](#) 12th AGp Opns Plan, 23 Feb 45; Rhineland Opns Plan (draft), 27 Feb 45.
- [4.](#) 12th AGp Outline Opn UNDERTONE, 7 Mar 45.
- [5.](#) The German story is primarily from a study by Ken Hechler, *Seizure of the Remagen Bridge*, based on postwar German manuscripts and contemporary German records and prepared in OCMH to complement this volume. A U.S. Army historian in Europe during World War II, Mr. Hechler subsequently wrote a comprehensive and authoritative account of the Remagen action, *The Bridge at Remagen* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1957). The published work includes considerable material developed by Mr. Hechler through postwar interviews in the United States and Germany, and has also been used extensively in the preparation of the first half of this chapter.
- [6.](#) See above, [ch. X](#).
- [7.](#) *Ibid.*
- [8.](#) Combat interview with General Leonard, see also interview with General Millikin and his comments on the draft MS of this volume.
- [9.](#) A translation of this order appears as Annex to 99th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt, 7 Mar 45.
- [10.](#) Direct quotations in this section are from Hechler, *The Bridge at Remagen*.
- [11.](#) Hechler, *The Bridge at Remagen*, p. 155.

- [12.](#) *Ibid.*, p. viii.
- [13.](#) Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, p. 510.
- [14.](#) *Ibid.* For General Bull's view of this event, see John Toland, *The Last 100 Days* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 214-15.
- [15.](#) Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1948), p. 380; Capt, Harry C. Butcher, USNR, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 768. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, page 514, says four divisions.
- [16.](#) MS # B-590, *11th Panzer Division*, 6-21 March (Generalleutnant Wend von Wietersheim).
- [17.](#) MSS # A-970, Remagen Bridgehead--*LIII Corps* (Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein) and # B-590 (Wietersheim).
- [18.](#) Kesselring's personal account of his stewardship may be found in his memoirs, *A Soldier's Record* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1954), pp. 283ff.
- [19.](#) MS # C-020 (Schramm).
- [20.](#) V Corps Operations in the ETO, p. 401; VII Corps AAR, Mar 45.
- [21.](#) Sylvan Diary, entry of 9 Mar 45; see also telephone messages in III Corps G-3 Jnl file, 8-9 Mar 45.
- [22.](#) III Corps Opnl Dir 10, 8 Mar 45; General Millikin's comments on the draft MS of this volume.
- [23.](#) MS # B-547 (Generalleutnant Eduard Metz).
- [24.](#) Combat interview with Col. Phillips, CofS III Corps; Sylvan Diary, entry of 11 Mar 45; Gen Millikin's comments on the draft MS of this volume.
- [25.](#) MSS # A-970 (Bayerlein) and # B-590 (Wietersheim).
- [26.](#) See criticisms in MS # B-829 (General der Infanterie Gustav von Zangen).
- [27.](#) MSS # B-829 (Zangen) and # B-101 (General der Infanterie Otto Hitzfeld).
- [28.](#) MS # A-970 (Bayerlein).
- [29.](#) LCVP's could carry thirty-six soldiers with full combat equipment, vehicles up to the size of $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton ambulances or trucks, or four tons of cargo. See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Invasion of France and Germany* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957), pp. 317-23.

- [30.](#) For the engineer story, see AAR's of the engineer units, III Corps Engineer War Diary, and combat interviews with engineer officers.
- [31.](#) Sylvan Diary, entries of 8-10 Mar 45; III Corps AAR, Mar 45.
- [32.](#) A convenient summary of the antiaircraft defense may be found in 16th AAA Gp AAR, Antiaircraft Artillery Defense of Rhine Bridges, 17 Mar 45.
- [33.](#) III Corps AAR, Mar 45.
- [34.](#) SHAEF Air Defense Division, Summary of Casualties and Damage from V-Weapon Attack, Report for the Week Ending 19 March 1945; British War Office, The German Long-Range Rocket Programme, 1930-1945, MIA4/14, 30 Oct 45, copy in OCMH; Royce I. Thompson, Military Impact of the German V-Weapons, MS in OCMH.
- [35.](#) Sylvan Diary, entry of 15 Mar 45.
- [36.](#) *Ibid.*, entry of 17 Mar 45.
- [37.](#) Combat interview with Lt. Col. Clayton A. Rust, CO 276th Engineer Combat Bn.
- [38.](#) Hechler, in *The Bridge at Remagen*, pages 212-20, analyzes the various speculations in detail.
- [39.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 192-212.
- [40.](#) III Corps Engineer War Diary, 120600 Mar 45.
- [41.](#) SCAF 232, SHAEF to Bradley, 13 Mar 45, in 12th AGp Military Objectives, 371.3, vol. VI. Quote is from Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, p. 517.
- [42.](#) 12th AGp Ltr of Instrs No. 17, 13 Mar 45.
- [43.](#) Sylvan Diary, entry of 15 Mar 45, and *passim*.
- [44.](#) III Corps and VII Corps AAR's Mar 45, and pertinent German MSS.
- [45.](#) III Corps AAR, Mar 45.
- [46.](#) VII Corps Engineer Office, Rhine Crossings of VII Corps; VII Corps AAR, Mar 45.
- [47.](#) MSS # A-970 (Bayerlein); # B-829 (Zangen); # B-101 (Hitzfeld).
- [48.](#) Sylvan Diary, entry of 18 Mar 45.
- [49.](#) *Ibid.*, entries of 19-20 Mar 45.

50. For a German view, see Wagener, MS # A-965.

SOURCE: U S Army Center for Military History, The Last Offensive by Charles B. MacDonald

LINK: <http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/007/7-9-1/index.html>

Harold B. McCarn Enlistment Record

U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946

Name:	Harold B McCarn
Birth Year:	1923
Race:	White, Citizen (<i>White</i>)
Nativity State or Country:	North Carolina
State of Residence:	Maryland
County or City:	Baltimore City
Enlistment Date:	24 Jun 1944
Enlistment State:	North Carolina
Enlistment City:	Fort Bragg
Branch:	No branch assignment
Branch Code:	No branch assignment
Grade:	Private
Grade Code:	Private
Term of Enlistment:	Enlistment for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law
Component:	Selectees (Enlisted Men)
Source:	Civil Life
Education:	2 years of college
Civil Occupation:	Machine shop and related occupations, n.e.c.
Marital Status:	Single, without dependents
Height:	00
Weight:	190

PFC Harold B. McCarn – WW II Memorial Database Information

National Archives & Records Administration
War Department Files

PFC Harold B. McCarn

ID: 34997223

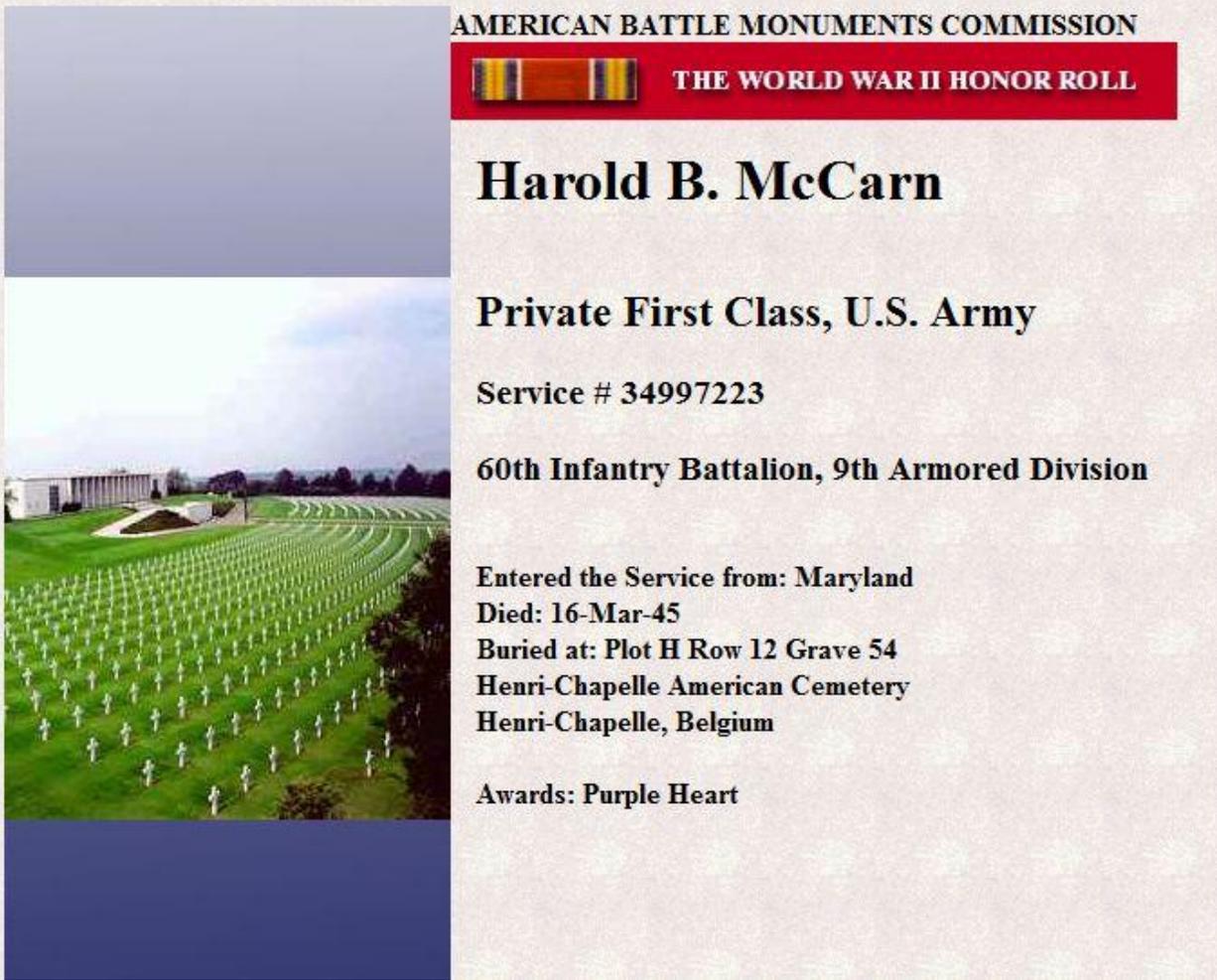
Branch of Service: U.S. Army

Hometown: Balitmore City Cty, MD

Status: KIA



PFC Harold B. McCarn – Grave Location: Henri-Chapelle Belgium



AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

 THE WORLD WAR II HONOR ROLL

Harold B. McCarn

Private First Class, U.S. Army

Service # 34997223

60th Infantry Battalion, 9th Armored Division

Entered the Service from: Maryland
Died: 16-Mar-45
Buried at: Plot H Row 12 Grave 54
Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery
Henri-Chapelle, Belgium

Awards: Purple Heart

PFC Harold B. McCarn – No IDPF response letter



National Personnel Records Center

Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, Missouri 63132-5100

May 30, 2011

JAMES WEATHERLY

SEBRING, FL 33872

RE: Veteran's Name: MCCARN, Harold B
SSN/SN:
Request Number: 1-9442388756

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you for contacting the National Personnel Records Center. The record needed to answer your inquiry is not in our files. If the record was here on July 12, 1973, it would have been in the area that suffered the most damage in the fire on that date and destroyed. The fire destroyed the major portion of records of Army military personnel for the period 1912 through 1959, and records of Air Force personnel with surnames Hubbard through Z for the period 1947 through 1963. Fortunately, there are alternate records sources that often contain information which can be used to reconstruct service record data lost in the fire; however, records cannot be reconstructed.

If you have questions or comments regarding this response, you may contact us at 314-801-0800 or by mail at the address shown in the letterhead above. If you contact us, please reference the Request Number listed above. If you are a veteran, or a deceased veteran's next of kin, please consider submitting your future requests online by visiting us at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>.

Sincerely,


MARNITA R. FAIR
Archives Technician (2A)



**We Value Our
Veterans' Privacy**

*Let us know if we have
failed to protect it.*

PFC Harold B. McCarn – Memorial Service notice 1945

Harold M^c. Carn
Killed in service

Harold B M^c. Carn

In Memory of our Son
PFC Harold B M^c. Carn
Born Feb 14th 1923

Killed in action in World
War 2 March 16th 1945 in
Aidemburg Germany
Buried in Henri
Chappel Military Cemetery
Germany

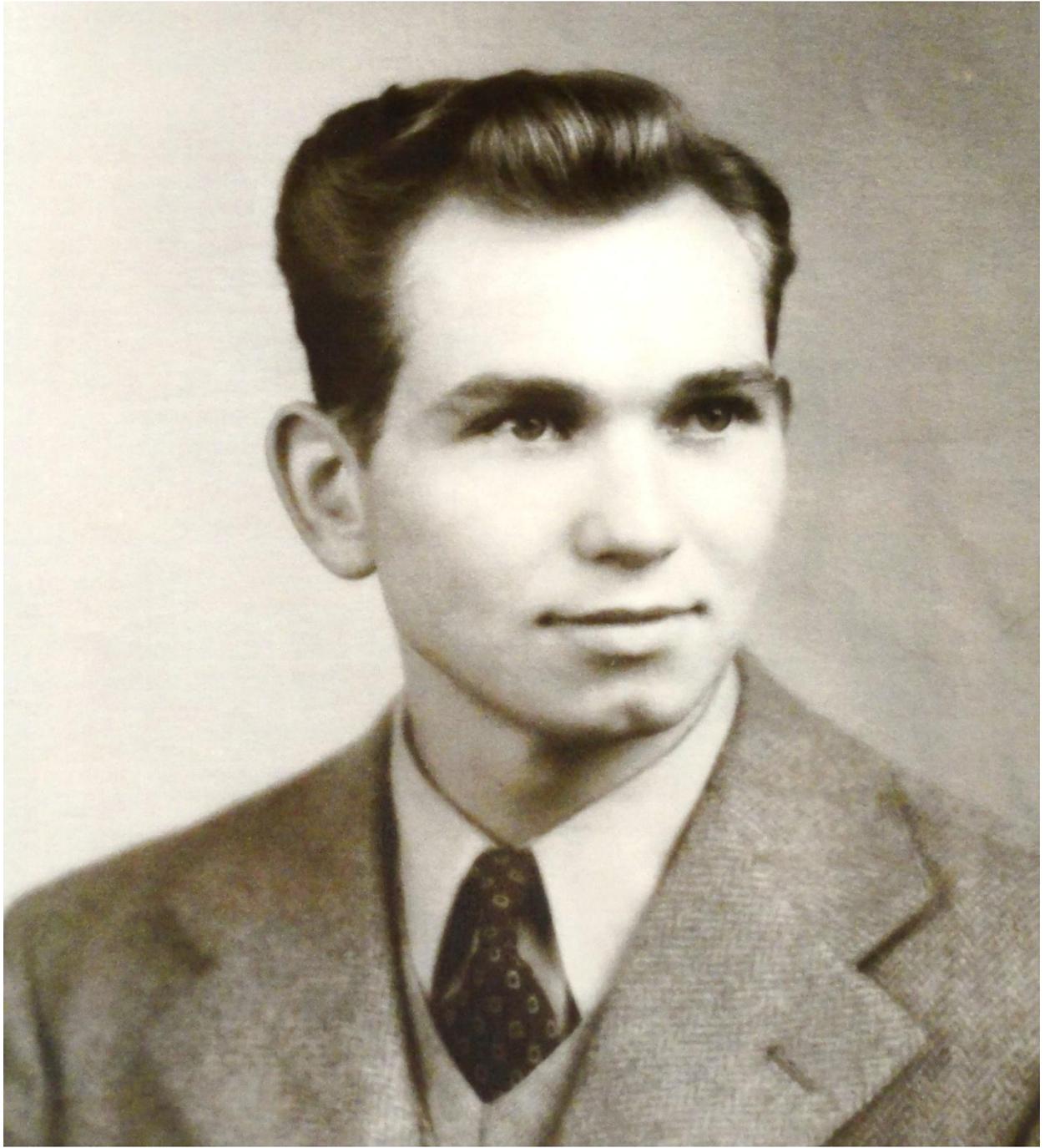
22 year old

Harold Service M^c. Carn

Son of

Service M^c. Carn & Vera Stout
M^c. Carn

PFC Harold B. McCarn – Photo



13 March 1945 WWII Action Summary

13 March

WESTERN EUROPE—12th Army Group: In U.S. First Army's III Corps area, 78th Div continues to meet strong resistance as it expands bridgehead to NE: 311th Inf, further strengthened by attachment of 60th Armd Inf Bn of 9th Armd Div and 78th Rcn Tr, occupies Rhine island just W of Honnef, mops up within Honnef, and presses slowly NE over difficult terrain; 309th co-ordinates its attack to NE with that of 39th, which secures high ground immediately W of Kalenborn. 9th Div completes capture of Hargarten and makes limited gains in Kalenborn-Notscheid-Hargarten region. On S flank, 99th Div consolidates and withstands local counterattacks. In V Corps area, 102d Cav Gp (—) and 38th Sq are directed to start to Saverne area on 14th; 102d Sq is detached from 2d Div but remains in position.

In U.S. Third Army's VIII Corps area, 6th Cav

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Queen Mary November 1944 sailing log

44-11-03	New York, NY	<i>Mount Vernon</i>	42nd Infantry Division	??? (but was in convoy)	Marseilles, France	44-11-13	Corporal Ivan Louis Tominack (7th Army, 42nd Infantry Division, 445th Ordnance (HAM) Company), via N. Tominack
44-11-03	New York, NY	<i>Queen Mary</i>	(total of 11,968 troops & 1,065 crew)	sailed alone	Gourock, Scotland	44-11-09	S. Harding - <i>Gray Ghost</i>
44-11-04	Bombay, India	<i>General A. E. Anderson</i>	various Army; Marine; Chinese cadets; New Zealand nurses (about 2000 troops total)	???	San Pedro, CA	44-12-04	Dr. H. M. Johnson, Medical Corps
44-11-07	Brooklyn, NY	???	8th Armored Division	???	Southampton, England	44-11-19	<i>In Tomado's Wake: A History of the 8th Armored Division</i> , thanks to R. Butler, citing
44-11-07	Lae, New Guinea	<i>John Sykes</i>	1st Australian Signal Training Battalion ?	???	Bougainville, New Guinea	44-11-09	Brian H. Longfield, via S. Daniels
44-11-07	New York, NY	<i>General M. C. Meigs (AP-116)</i>	Unknown	???	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	44-11-19	Ship's voyage log of Joseph Gutsick (in Mike