

**John P. Parkison**  
**U.S. Army Serial No. 39418752**  
**WWII European Theater Operations**  
**119th Armored Engineer Battalion**  
**Co. B 1st Platoon 1st Squad**  
**12th Armored Division**



**WWII – Combat  
Memoirs**  
By  
John P. Parkison

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## DEDICATION

The following short stories are respectfully dedicated to my comrades who didn't come back. Their courage and loyalty gave us the freedom we are now enjoying.

Each of us who returned left a part of our lives in the scarred fields of France, Germany and Austria. We shall cherish forever our common bond with the white crosses.

These citizen soldiers asked no quarter and gave none. They fought their best. They died as heroes. As God's finger touched them, they slept.

John P. Parkison

## FOREWORD

I have written the following stories for several reasons:

Above all to my great God and savior, Lord Jesus Christ. He kept me safe and always was there to see that I would return home to my loved ones. I shall write a story soon, giving Him all the praise for my trials and tribulations. He is truly my best friend.

For the horror of war. I want others to shudder with me. The story of war is always the story of hate, greed, and power.

Hopefully for members of my immediate family, extended family and close friends who will enjoy these little "Remember When" stories. Almost all of these stories have been included in the monthly "Hellcat News", which is published by the 12th Armored Division Association. Over approximately the past twenty-one years several were included in one of our Division History Books.

For the many thanks to my sister, Gracie, for being so persistent for several years for me to write these stories. So many thanks to Audrey Stering-Smyth, my grand-niece, for all her work in typing and the job of decoding my poor handwriting.

I owe many thanks to my dear wife, Mary. She allowed me time to work on these stories. They all had to be re-written so they could make more sense to readers whom were not there in Europe. She read each completed story and asked me helpful questions.

John P. Parkison  
February 3rd, 2002

## JOHN P. PARKISON

- Born near Conrad, Montana on June 16th, 1922.
- Moved to California in 1939.
- Entered the service on September 13, 1943 at Presidio of Monterey, CA.
- Basic training was at Camp Abbott, Oregon.
- Attended Wheeled Vehicle Mechanics School near Ft. Lewis, Washington.
- Joined Company "B", 119th Armored Engineer Battalion, 12th Armored Division at Camp Barkeley, Texas.
- Served as a Combat Engineer through the Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe Campaigns.
- Transferred to 2nd A.D. Hq Co. Bad Orb, Germany in the fall of 1945.
- Was discharged on February 8th, 1946 at Camp Beale, CA.
- Enlisted in the California National Guard, 49th Infantry Division, 1948 thru 1961.
- Retired from Pacific Gas and Electric Co. in 1979 as the Sacramento District Manager of Customer Services, with 33 years of service.

Mary Jackson of Kelso, Washington and John were married February 13, 1946. We have a son, Tommy, a daughter, Judy, two granddaughters, Jackie and Sarah, and two great granddaughters, Danica and Erin. We live on a little horse ranch near enough, to Beale AFB, Marysville, CA., to hear the chatter of machine gun practice. This serves to remind me of the hectic combat days in the ETO with my great buddies.

May God Richly Bless Them.

Johnny P. Parkison  
Born 16 June 1922  
U.S. Army Serial No. 39418752  
WW2 European Theater Operations  
119<sup>th</sup> Armored Engineer Battalion  
Co. B 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon 1<sup>st</sup> Squad  
12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division

I served two years, four months and 26 days of active duty in the U.S. Army, this included one year, four months and ten days of foreign service.

I was drafted on 13 September 1943. I was appointed acting corporal at the Yuba City, CA draft board, with instructions to get a bus load of young men to the Presidio of Monterey, CA.

From there, after a few days of processing, a large group of us were on our way to Camp Abbot, OR, just south of Bend, OR. This was a basic training center for combat engineers. This included 17 weeks of infantry and engineer training, ending with two weeks maneuvers in freezing snow. I qualified as a sharpshooter with the M1 rifle. This old basic training camp is the home of the Sun River Resort, the only camp building remaining is the log Officers' Club, now being used as a conference center, etc.

Our training battalion was shipped out to various army units and /or schools in the U.S., or overseas.

I was blessed with an assignment to approximately three months schooling at the Mt. Rainier Ordnance Depot, next door to Fort Lewis, WA. Also some of my buddies got the same assignment. We were all eventually members of the 119<sup>th</sup> A.E.B. to the end of the war. Four of us are still in close contact. Others did not make it back to the States.

A WW1 veteran was our first sergeant at this school. He told us the first day there, "if we did not give him any trouble, he would not give us any." He treated us like we were all his sons, knowing we would soon be in combat. he also told us our stay there would be the best army experience we would have. He was right. The big bonus for me was meeting my future wife, Mary, while on pass to Longview, WA. Bessie and Beula lived there.

On graduation, a train load of us were sent to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Replacement Battalion, Co. A at Camp Beale, near Marysville, CA.

From there I was sent along with several buddies to Camp Barkeley near Abilene, Texas, the home of the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Two of us became members of Co. B, 119<sup>th</sup> A.E.B. The other buddies went to Co. A and Co. C, so we could always see each other on free time. It felt good to be a member of a regular army division. I believe this was in late August 1944.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division was getting ready to go overseas. They transferred out a lot of members for various reasons and took in replacements, including me.

In September 1944 we were on our way to Camp Shanks, New York. On 19 September 1944 we boarded ships in New York harbor. I was fortunate to be on an American ship named "General Bliss." It was the flagship for our large ship convoy. We pulled anchor on 20 September. We had a lot of German U-Boat activity, the U.S. Destroyers always dropping depth charges.

My ship arrived 1 October at Port of Bristol, England. We went by train to Tideworth Barracks. We convoyed from there to board LST's (Landing Ship Tanks) at a port on the English Channel. We crossed the channel and sailed up the Seine River to Rouen, France on 17 November 1944.

We convoyed to Luneville, France. The first day of combat for our division was 5 December 1944. For most of us we were in combat until 8 May 1945.

My platoon was the last unit of the division to be pulled off the line. The war was over and I was alive. We were rushed back into Germany to be occupation troops for an area in and near Heidenheim, Germany. The last few days of combat were in Austria. We had heavy snow fall the last few days of combat.

In August 1945 I was transferred to the 12<sup>th</sup> A.D. Hdqs. Co. to work for the U.S. Military Government. I took care of civilian complaints, and I was assigned a young German interpreter and a jeep. I lived in a large neat German home with two or three other soldiers. I ate at the Hdqs. Co. mess hall.

By the time our division was receiving hundreds of high point (for discharge) men and our low point men transferred out to many other combat divisions.

I believe it was early October 1945, I was transferred to Hdqs. Co. of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored division, at Bad Orb, Germany. This was a beautiful small resort town, not too far from Frankfurt.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> AD had fought in seven major campaigns starting in Africa in 1942. I volunteered to be a dispatch driver so I could see a lot of new areas. Then I was drafted to be a driver for the four G's, all colonels, G-1, G-2, G-3 and G-4. They treated me great, maybe because I kept the German liberated Mercedes clean. I would take it to the river and break the ice to get water to wash it. The car had front wheel drive and was great on slippery cobblestones. One of the colonels gave me my second stripe; I had made P.F.C. during combat. I also drove the Division General's jeep at times, but never with him in it. This jeep had been used in ten countries.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> AD was slated to be in on the Japan invasion. We would return to the U.S. and get a 30-day furlough first. But the A-bomb ended that war and saved thousands of lives.

I believe it was late December 1945 when our division made a four-day trip by trucks to the Calais Staging Area, near Marseilles, France. This was a giant tent camp. We were on our way home. I had two passes for a few days to Nice, France.

On 19 January 1946, I left Marseilles on a Liberty Ship. I arrived in New York harbor on 29 January. We docked at the same pier I had left from on 20 October 1944.

I went by truck to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Within two days I was on a train heading for Camp Beale, Marysville, CA. I was slated for a 30-day furlough, and then I was to report to the 2<sup>nd</sup> A.D. at Fort Hood, Texas. I was in a line to receive my furlough papers and an officer came up and told us if we preferred to be discharged to move over to another line. We all moved quickly over. They allotted me 55 cents for travel pay to my home in Smartville. No transportation, so I hitchhiked home. A great day! 8 February 1946.

I got several letters from one of the G-colonels asking me to re-enlist. He had told me in Germany that if I stayed with them I could make Master Sgt. in his office in a short time. The 2<sup>nd</sup> A.D. is still activated.



I was awarded the following medals (listed in order of proper wearing sequence):

1. Good Conduct (with clasp)
2. American Campaign (with foreign service)
3. European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign (E.T.O.), with 3 major combat campaign bronze stars representing a. Rhineland, b. Ardennes-Alsace, c. Central Europe
4. WWII victory
5. Army of Occupation, Germany

French Medals

1. Rhine et Danube
2. La Victoire De Colmar
3. Liberation De La France

Plus the Belgium Fourragere of the Belgian Croix de Guerre 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division

J.P.P. April 1999

## "REMEMBER WHEN"

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

"V" mail, and regular mail, saved by my sister, Bessie Robinson, made it possible for me to come up with forgotten dates from while I was overseas in WWII. My dear niece, Linda Robinson Wimer, found and gave these letters to me a few years ago. Of course our mail was always censored while the war was going on, when overseas.

Mary and I had saved our letters from each other. Many years ago we decided to burn them. I should have used my letters to her to list dates of letters and messages; so as to help me to figure out where I was at the time I wrote the letters. I could never tell her where I was due to censorship.

The following dates of the "V" mail letters, etc., told me a lot.

### DATE OF LETTER:

- August 20, 1944      I am with the 12th Armored Division at Camp Barkeley, Texas. My good friend Gene Curry (A Co. 119th A.E.B.) and I hitch hiked to Breckenridge, TX for the weekend. We had \$6. °° between us. We paid .50¢ for a room at the U.S.O.
- September 2nd, 1944      on pass to Abilene, TX, which was only a few miles from our camp. I purchased and mailed a ring set (engagement and wedding) to my future wife, Mary Jackson.
- October 29, 1944      I'm at "Tidworth Barracks" in Tidworth, England. I had a 48-hour pass to London. My lodging and food were free at an U.S. sponsored facility. I took bus tours and saw the sights. I saw a lot of "Buzz Bomb" damage. I was in the "Wax Museum" with my buddy, Tommy Hughes, when a "Buzz Bomb" attack started. The streets were empty except for a few people heading for a bomb shelter. The bombs were going on over from where we were, so we went back into the museum. This was a neat place.

- February 12, 1945      2205 hours: preparing hot chocolate and toast on a wood burning heating stove. To go on guard duty at 2400 hrs. Four of us sharing one room, the other fellows are asleep. Tommy Hughes (from Portland, OR.) and I had just finished 2 days on K.P., our punishment for going rabbit hunting without permission. We had to dig a 6' x 6' hole for kitchen garbage. This hole would fill up with water before we got down more than 18 inches. Our Mess Sergeant was a great drinker. We were wet and muddy and getting nowhere. I went back to our billet and got a five-gallon water can, filled with red wine, to help us along in our misery. When the Mess Sgt. came out to see our progress we offered him wine. It wasn't long before he was out there with us much of the time. By then we had just stopped digging. He was looped and had agreed that we had dug deep enough. We had two great days. We were billeted (our company) in a little French town named Krehange. We had been in combat with the French Army and three U.S. Infantry Divisions, cleaning out the "Colmar Pocket" occupied by the German 19th Army. We were resting, training replacements, going on patrols, and getting all vehicles ready for our next assignment.
- February 18, 1945      on pass to Nancy, France for one day, including truck travel time. I had made Private First-Class this month.
- February 26, 1945      on pass to Nancy where I bought Mary a gift. Had to persuade the clerk to sell me something. I pestered them long enough and finally got what I wanted. They did not have much as they had been under the Germans since 1940.
- March 3rd, 1945      had spent two days on patrol, which included nights. The last night we spent laying on the frozen ground in a snowstorm. We had set up an ambush on a German patrol that was to come our way. They never made their appearance. We never had our overcoats after landing in France. They were in our duffel bags, stored for the duration.
- March 27, 1945      In Speyer, a large city on the Rhine River, we had spearheaded the 3rd Army commanded by General Patton, to the Rhine River from Trier, France. We received the name "Mystery Division" with no markings on men or equipment to give away our identity. Patton had requested us to head his spearhead to the Rhine. Then we were back under the 7th Army control. Any press could not cover our movements. Speyer was a great place for loot. We took several nice autos, for staff cars, after the war was ended, painted them O.D. etc.

- May 10, 1945 at Hueback, Germany, our first town to occupy in defeated Germany. This beautiful little place was a great place for our B Co. My platoon took over a great two-story house with a swimming pool and beautiful grounds. Some of my squad worked two days to clean the pool and fill it with ice cold water. We had to move to another location before we got to use it. I have pictures of the place.
- May 13, 1945 guarding a little flour-mill on a creek with clear, beautiful water. There is a big water wheel to drive the machinery. We are about 30 miles from our billet at Hueback. There are six of us for 24 hours. We have K-rations for our meals. The next day, when we were to be relieved from the flourmill, a truck appeared and told us our company had a new town for occupation called Krönigsbronn. They had brought our belongings that we had left in Hueback and so we did not ever get back there to see who was using our clean swimming pool.
- May 23, 1945 still at Krönigsbronn.
- June 21, 1945 Many 12th Armored Division men were being transferred to other combat divisions. Many divisions would be selected to sail to the Japan area for invasion. Many tours were arranged to places like England, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, etc. I did not sign up. I needed to save my money for the wedding in the U.S.A. I had gone to Paris very soon after we arrived at Krönigsbronn. In Paris we took showers at a big warehouse and received all new clothes including the new "Ike Jacket". They had G.I. tailors to alter any uniform that needed it. Then assigned to nice hotels and restaurants, where it was free to the G.I.'s. It was a reverse lend-lease arrangement with the French. I took in all the tours, etc.
- July 10, 1945 All transfers are temporarily frozen. Captain Wilson, our C.O., transferred to another division.
- July 20, 1945 still at Krönigsbronn. We have a new C.O. We have a lot of guard duty in various locations. Tommy Hughes and I are assigned to Oberkoken, a town not too far from our town. Sometimes duty for straight 24 hours. We would take our bedrolls and K-rations. One could sleep at a time. We were way out of town and so early in the morning the farmers, men and women, would show up on foot with their tools. For the most part they were friendly. We got this post quite often. I can not remember why we were needed there; I guess our new C.O wanted to keep us occupied.

Our entire Division went on a scheduled "Tally-Ho", a procedure to search all the homes and buildings in each town. Looking for weapons, contra-band, Germans on the "wanted-list", etc. These "raids" always paid off. That is another story by itself, the civilians had to stay in their homes for the entire time. When we would arrive in a town, the "town cryer" on his bike would go around and ring his bell and give the orders to all civilians. Each Tally-Ho lasted for 48 hours and was very very exhausting. After one of these excercises I had to go by ambulance to Aalen, where our U.S. hospital was located, because I had developed an extreme headache. *my 2nd stay at Aalen, Germany  
2nd Hospital*

July 25, 1945

had received a letter from Gene Curry. He was home on a 60-day furlough from a military hospital in Spokane, WA. He was sent home from France after the Herrlisheim Battle, so he never got to Germany. He was very ill and the doctors could not diagnose his illness while in the hospital overseas.

August 5th, 1945

anticipating to be transferred to the 2nd Armored Division Headquarter Company. They were slated to be in on the invasion of Japan.

August 18, 1945

A Co. of the 119th A.E.B. moved to Krönigsbronn where I was. Two long-time buddies, from basic training, were in A Co. so we could now see each other often.

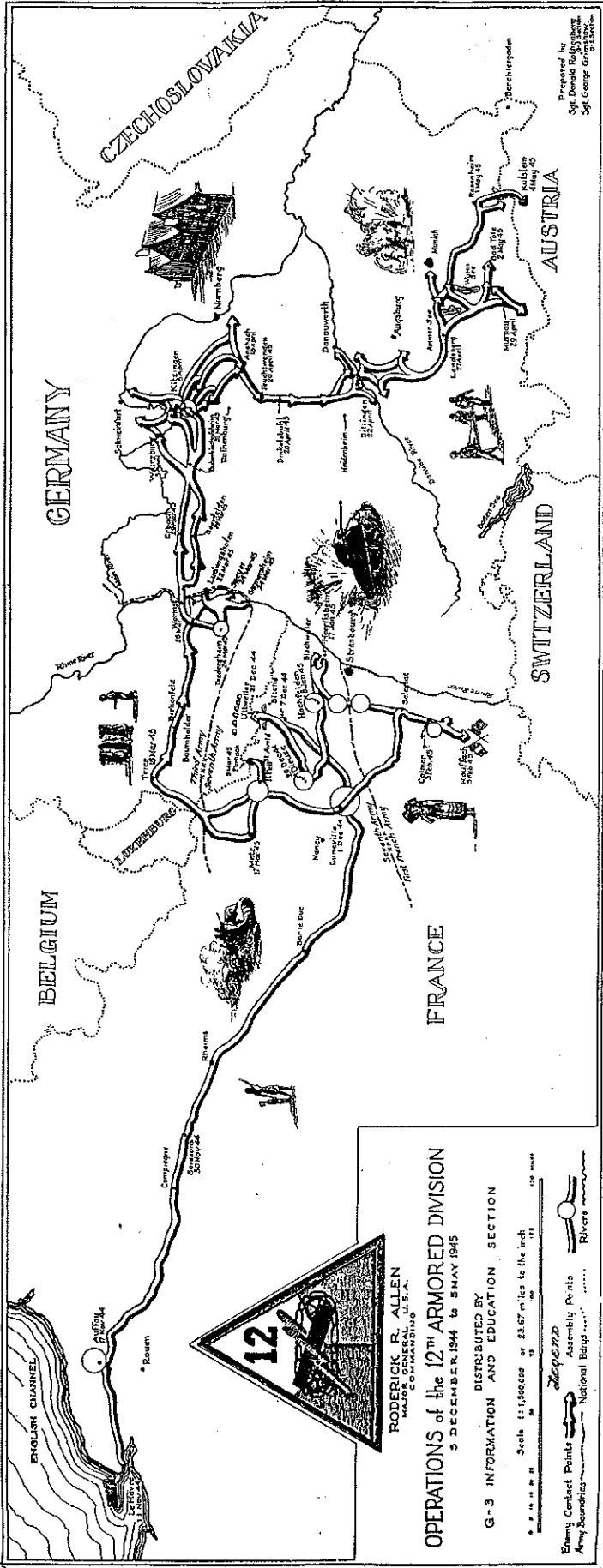
September 16, 1945

I'm living in Heidenheim and assigned to 12th A.D. Hq. Co., working for the U.S. Military Government on temporary assignment. I had a jeep to use and a teenage German boy for an interpreter. My job was to handle civilian complaints regarding damage to their homes, which the G.I.s were living in. All the occupation forces took over whatever homes and other buildings we had need for. Oh yes, we had some bad boys in the army! I lived in a two-story home with three other G.I.s. It was a beautiful home and we were careful with it. The owners would come in each day, after we had left, to clean. We all ate with the Div. Hdqs. Co. by special arrangement. My mail still went to my parent company, B-119 in Krönigsbronn. It was a great time for me; Heidenheim is a beautiful city by a small river, with an old castle up on the bluff above town.

- October 21, 1945 I had been transferred to the 2nd A.D.Hdqs.Co. On this day I was in Kassel, Germany. This town has suffered from our bombers. This was a big city and still beautiful in the undamaged portion. I had volunteered to be a dispatch driver, for whatever need they had for me. This was great, as I got to see more of Germany including even two weeks in the "British Occupied Zone". This day I was a driver for an officer. We were convoying D.P.s, displaced Russian and Polish slave laborers, to train depots to send them home. This was an eleven-day assignment. We ate with other U.S. outfits, when we could bum a meal from them. They all put out the welcome mat. The only bad part of this job was missing "mail call" at my Hdqs. Co. billet. Arrived back to Bad Orb, my new hometown, on October 23rd, 1945.
- November 19, 1945 still in Bad Orb, a beautiful little resort town. I have a great big room, up over the Headquarters Staff Offices. I'm now assigned as a driver for G-1, G-2, G-3, and G-4; all four are colonels. They treat me well. I have a German liberated Mercedes-Benz, mid-size, as a staff car plus the Generals Jeep whose back seat area is filled with radio equipment. This Jeep had survived combat duty in Africa and I believe in eight countries before the end of the war. The General did not use it anymore. I was made a two striper. They called me corporal, but I was a T/5 specialist with the same pay, 60 plus dollars, per month. What didn't go into my parent's allotment, went into a soldier's saving fund. I lived on \$10.<sup>00</sup> per month. Yes, I was a big spender! I would trade free cigarettes for a German haircut, or soap to pay the laundry lady, etc.
- December 13, 1945 still in Bad Orb. Lots of rain and snow. Many rumours of going home soon. I will get a 45-day furlough and then report to the 2nd A.D. Hdqs. Co. in Fort Hood, TX.
- January 9th, 1946 I'm at the "Calis Staging Area" not very far from Marseille, France. This is a giant tent camp, to hold G.I.s, until ships are available to sail to the U.S.A. More and more rumours; they are great to agree or disagree with. Had Christmas here. This is my 2nd Christmas in France. This one is on the happy side, no dead G.I.s to sit by to eat. We lived in squad tents with no heat and very cold for sleeping. We sleep on the canvas army bunks and have a stove, but no fuel. I had two passes to the French Riviera at Nice, France. A great place. The hotel and meals at U.S. Reverse Lend-lease were free. Black market is thriving. There's a P.X. with everything. I mailed my sweetheart, Mary, a bottle of Channel #5.

February 8th, 1946 at Camp Beale, Marysville, CA. I had a choice of furlough or discharge. I opted for discharge. I had only been there three nights.

From these letters, I gleaned out many dates and memories.  
Thank you Bessie and Linda.



The Danube, April 1945



Mail at Ration Dump near Dillingen, April 1945



## Abbreviations Pertaining to Military words

**A.D.:** Armored Division  
**APO:** Army Post Office  
**Armd.:** Armored  
**Bn.:** Battalion  
**Capt.:** Captain  
**CCA:** Combat Command "A"  
**CCB:** Combat Command "B"  
**CCR:** Combat Command "R"  
**Co.:** Company  
**Corp.:** Corporal  
**CP:** Command Post  
**CPT:** Captain  
**DOA:** Dead On Arrival  
**Eng.:** Engineer  
**Engr.:** Engineer  
**ETO:** European Theater of Operation  
**GI:** Government issue; USA Soldier  
**IG:** Inspector General  
**Inf.:** Infantry  
**KIA:** Killed in Action  
**Lt.:** Lieutenant  
**Lt. Col.:** Lieutenant Colonel  
**Maj.:** Major  
**MG:** Machine Gun  
**MP:** Military Police  
**MSgt.:** Master Sergeant  
**PFC:** Private First Class  
(or pfc)  
**POE:** Port of Embarkation  
**PX:** Post Exchange  
**Regt.:** Regiment  
**SFC:** Sergeant First Class  
**Sgt.:** Sergeant  
**T/5:** Technical Corporal  
**TSgt.:** Technical Sergeant  
**WIA:** Wounded in Action

## HOW THE ARMORED SHOULDER PATCH ORIGINATED

Will G. Robinson -  
Colonel USA Ret.

I went to France in 1917 with the 147th Field Artillery. One day, General George Patton, then a Captain, came down to Montrichard looking for an adjutant. At St. Aignan nearby, was the replacement center and we had a battalion there, one at La Courtine and one at Saumur. He made the Tank Corps look good to me and I got 200 volunteers from the 147th and other troops down there -- truck drivers, mechanics, machine gunners -- and we went up to Bourg, a little village near Langres (Haute Marne) where the Light tanks had their headquarters.

Not long after our arrival, some divisions or their advance elements came in. They had shoulder patches. These were the first we had ever seen.

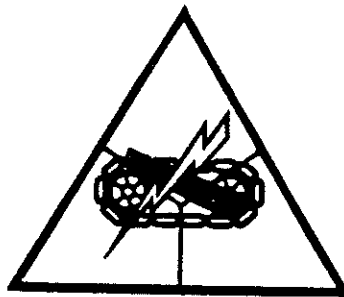
At mess that night, Patton said, "I want you officers to devote one evening to something constructive. I want a shoulder insignia. We claim to have the firepower of artillery, the mobility of cavalry, and the ability to hold ground of the infantry. So whatever you come up with, it must have red, yellow, and blue in it."

I was billeted in a chateau with a medic, a Lt. Howard. We spent all that evening in front of a fireplace with some crayons I have liberated, trying to figure out use of the colors and a design. Finally



*John Parkin displaying shoulder patch.*

we decided the design should represent a pyramid of power. We had a devil of a time dividing a pyramid into three colors. Finally by erecting a vertical from each side of the triangle, we got our design. We did not decide which color to use at the top until early morning. Then we put the yellow on top as Patton was cavalry.



*Armored Patch.*

At breakfast the next morning everyone showed up with their attempts. I guess we were the only one that managed to get color on ours. In any event, Patton adopted our design and pulled a 1000 franc bill from his pocket. This was the first that I had ever seen or at best held in my hand. He told me to take one of the Ford machine gun vehicles, (I cannot recall what we called them, but they were a motorized trap.) and go into Langres and have as many of our shoulder patches made up as I could and get them back by retreat. I managed to get the three colors in felt at the Belle Jardinier, a big store on the Place Dideret, and took them into a hat and cap shop next door. I persuaded the old lady in charge to start her crew making shoulder patches. They did a good job of them and I had one sewn on my overseas cap, as a possible idea of a new use for them. I managed to get two or three hundred of them to Bourg before retreat.

Patton was tickled about it. If there was anything he wanted, it was to make the Tank Corps tougher than the Marines and more spectacular than the Matterhorn. The triangle was the first step. A few days later he conceived the idea that our overcoats were too long and ordered them cut to knee length and the surplus made into belts.

We were different all right. At that time there were just three companies in the Light Tanks and not to exceed 350 men, all volunteers and from all conceivable outfits.

As a fellow grows older, detail and particularly names slip one's memory, but as I recall, that is the story of how Armored got its shoulder insignia.

*The German prison camp Hurlach Lager No. 4 near Landsberg*



## 119th Armored Engineer Battalion

Coat of arms approved 3 December 1942

Crest: None

Motto: "Work and Fight"

Shield: Per pale argent and gules a panther passant proper.

Description: Scarlet and white are the colors of the Corps of Engineers. The panther symbolizes strength, energy, cunning, agility and nocturnal skill of the organization.



*The reason you couldn't find us to build your bridge you silly ass  
... is because we have been protecting your flank all night ... sir!*



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 12, 1985

I am greatly honored to have this opportunity to extend warm greetings to the officers and enlisted men of the 12th Armored Division as you gather for your 40th reunion in Orlando.

The "Hellcats" made a significant contribution to the ultimate victory of the Allied Forces in Europe in World War II. You pursued the forces of tyranny and oppression with vigilance and legendary bravery, driving the enemy deep into areas of their very homeland and forcing them to surrender en masse. The cause of liberty was won and our freedom was made secure because of your courage and heroism in the performance of duty under fire.

I salute the men of the 12th Armored Division most proudly. America will never forget what it owes to you and your fallen comrades-in-arms. Nancy joins me in sending best wishes for this occasion and for the future. God bless you.

*Ronald Reagan*

## Illness Strikes Before Battle

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

When the 12th A.D. arrived in England, on 1 October 1944, many units were taken by train to an airfield tent camp. This airfield was used for towing loaded gliders into France. Rumors started flying around that we would be transported by gliders behind enemy lines into France. However, these were mere latrine rumors. We were there a few days only, until "Tidworth Barracks", near Salisbury, was ready for our occupation. Tidworth was known as the spawning ground of American armored divisions.

Our battalion was fortunate to have been assigned to stone and concrete barracks. Many units were quartered in tents on a muddy plain, nicknamed the "Windmill Hill". We, in the 1st Platoon, were assigned one room, with a fireplace, with no fuel to use. Our bunks were triple-tiered and the room was very crowded.

One morning I had to respond to the "sick call" announcement. Our top medic, Sgt. Gouldy, examined me and told me I had a bad case of tonsillitis and a high fever. He said I was to go by ambulance to a hospital. I did not want to be separated from my unit, in case they shipped out for France before I was released from the hospital. I begged him to give me medicine and send me back for duty. He broke some rules and sent me back to my bunk. I have forgotten some of the details, however, between Sgt. Gouldy and my squad Sgt. they covered for me; a medic checked up on me often. I believe that on the 3rd day or so, my fever left me and the abscess started draining. Both of the above sergeants have passed away. It is said that one thousand WWII veterans die each day. Many leave us, without sharing their combat days with their loved ones.

I have mentioned Sgt. Gouldy in previous stories I have hand-written. He was looking out for me, even on my day of discharge from the Army. I was standing in line to be discharged, when a doctor showed up and asked for me. I walked over to him and he said he had just read my medical files and that Sgt. Gouldy had recommended a tonsillectomy for me. The doctor suggested I have one done before I was discharged, at Government expense. I thanked him and declined the offer. He too was doing his job and looking out for me. He saw to it, that I got my spot back in the long line.

*Written June 9, 2004  
Colter Bay Campground  
Loop "J" space 191  
Grand Teton Nat'l Park*

# My First Reconnaissance

John P. Parkison  
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1st Squad, 1st Platoon

In early December 1944, our task force reached the French "Maganot Line". We were a very green combat force at that time. Our company took over a French farm early forenoon. This farm had several buildings with a courtyard in the center and only one entry. As soon as we entered into the courtyard, the owner rushed out from his two-story house and asked for the help of a doctor or medic. His wife was in labor. Our medics rushed into the house and we soon heard the cry of a newborn baby. That family was so grateful that we had showed up.

My squad took over a small, empty corner on the ground floor of a large stonewalled barn. Other squads occupied the space in the hayloft of this barn. The farmer had his cows and horses tied in the barn for some protection.

We were soon ordered to "fall out" for a mission. A reconnaissance patrol was being formed and they needed two combat engineers to be in this patrol. Our platoon leader briefed us on what was to take place. Then he asked for two volunteers to go on this patrol. After a brief silence, with no one volunteering, my buddy Tommy Hughes and I looked into each other's eyes. The silent communication was that we would volunteer. This patrol was made up of two men each, from infantry, cavalry recon., engineers, plus two others, with one carrying a radio backpack. When Hughes and myself volunteered, our Platoon Leader, 1st Lt. McConnell (KIA) dismissed the other soldiers and briefed us on what the patrol mission was. We had to empty our pockets in order to see if we had any item the enemy could utilize in the event we were captured or killed. My wife to be had mailed me an identification bracelet, which included the word "Hellcat", the nickname of the 12th Armd. Div. The Lt. said I would have to leave that bracelet with him. I might add that my dear wife to be, had a message engraved on the backside of the bracelet, which said "Hands off he is mine" signed Mary.

Our patrol took off on foot through an area without trees or any other cover. This was open farmland. To our right we could see a group of our medium tanks lined up facing the bunkers that we were heading for. They were on higher ground and could fire over top of us, if necessary. We did get near enough to the Maganot Line bunkers to observe that the Krauts were dug in, outside of the pillboxes. I'm sure their heavy weapons were inside, pointing at us. No shots were fired. I can only assume that our tanks on the ridge kept them from firing at this patrol; we saw them and they could see us.

Soon thereafter a radio message came through, ordering the patrol to return to our lines. We peons never knew why, but the two combat engineers were grateful. Perhaps once we spotted the enemy dug in, we had all that the higher-ups wanted to know.

We all had our turn, to state what we had seen. When the briefing was over my Lt. handed back my valued bracelet.

That night our squad had a different kind of enemy to confront; big, ugly barn rats. We had bedded down in our small area, hoping for a warm and restful sleep. We had just got settled into our mummy, wool, sleeping bag liners. We were, of course, fully dressed, boots and all, with our M1 rifles beside us. Someone hollered "there is a horse loose in the barn, walking around near us!" Someone suggested we better secure that horse before it trampled us. We were all silent, waiting for someone to volunteer to retie the horse. Some began giving excuses, saying they feared horses, etc. Finally I told them they were fortunate to have a Montana Cowboy in their squad and that I would catch the horse. I had to be real careful as it was pitch dark, and we were not to use a flashlight or match. I located the horse between two cows, and found the right end of him. He was dragging his halter rope, and very carefully I found a place between two other horses and secured him. I was very concerned about being kicked.

When I got back to my bedroll, the other guys gave me big thanks. I commented, "I've got to stop volunteering." Tommy and I were bedded down against the wall of the far side of our real estate. I wiggled my way into my bag. I always slept with my arms out, and never put the headpiece over my head. That way I could hear better and be ready to operate the M1 quickly. Naturally I slept colder this way, and more alert. I still sleep that way after these many years, minus the M1 rifle, with only my six-shooter.

Soon the squad was sound asleep, snoring and talking in their sleep, except for Tommy and me. The rats were using us for a pathway. I knew I could not sleep with my shoulders, head, and face covered. Soon a big rat stopped right on my face. With a quick scoop, with one hand, I flung him off of me. Someone let out a scream as the rat flew through the air and landed on his face! Tommy and I silently took our bedrolls and left the barn. We crawled into the bed of a 2 ½-ton truck. We tried sleeping on the wooden benches, but soon were too cold to sleep. We talked and laughed about the "flying rat". This was preferred to dirty rats.

When we could hear the field kitchen crew up and banging around, and when we knew they had fired up the immersed oil-fueled heaters, in garbage cans full of water, we knew that the water would be hot. We stole out into the dark with our steel helmets to "borrow" some water. We washed and shaved in the dark. We even washed our feet and put on a pair of new wool socks. When we saw the rest of our squad, we told them we had no rat problem in the night. We had rested so well that we had gotten up early to shave, and were looking forward to an eventful new day.

*Written June 10, 2004  
Grand Teton Nat'l Park*

# Christmas 1944



Mr. John Parkison  
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*Ed. Stayer 456*



## CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE-1944

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B Co., 119th Armd. Engr. Bn.  
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1st Squad., 1st Platoon

My first Christmas overseas found "B" Co. 119th Armored Engr. Battalion in a small French town not far from Utweiler, Germany. Combat Command "B" of the 12th armored division had captured Utweiler December 21st. My company was always in this group in combat. Our 12th A.D. had three combat commands: "A", "B", and "R". My squad (12 men) billeted in the sales room of a small bakery. The French family lived in the back rooms. We were so crowded I had to sleep on a display shelf. I was the smallest member of the squad. None complained, we were just grateful to sleep inside.

We had just recently been issued tanker wool-lined over-alls to wear over our long johns and wool O.D. pants. They were a Godsend. They did not have any pockets so I cut a corner off of my one O.D. blanket and asked the French family lady to sew a pocket inside of the over-alls to carry my little .25 caliber semi-automatic that I had recently liberated from a German soldier. The village people spoke German and I tried to tell her what I wanted in a few German words I thought I knew. It turned out I was asking her to sew a table instead of a pocket in the over-alls. No wonder I didn't make sense! My closest combat buddy, Tommy Hughes from Portland, Or. had witnessed this conversation and was really being entertained. Tommy was German and of Irish descent. He spoke German quite well and finally he came to my rescue. We all had a great laugh. The lady of the house did not want money for her work but was delighted when I gave her a bar of soap.

This village may have been in Germany. Most of the time we did not know where we were or what was taking place, except in our immediate real estate. The next night, December 24, Tommy and I moved our bedrolls to a barn where our field kitchen was set up. We were to man an outpost above town for approximately four hours before daylight. We were thankful we got the last shift as it gave us more sleep time. We were told to be alert for German patrols, etc., also a large group of the U.S. 100th Infantry Division; who would no doubt be coming down a dirt road into this village. The 100th Division was to relieve our Division on the front, as we were needed elsewhere. I was to challenge this group if they showed up. They did. Tommy and I were very quiet. We took turns on the snow covered ground behind our .30 Caliber machine gun. It was well below freezing. Time went very slowly, and being alert for whatever. We both hoped that under stress we would not forget the password or counter sign. They changed at least once per day and sometimes more often. You always hoped the friendly troops also had the latest passwords and remembered them. Finally I heard the movement of a large group coming our way. They were very quiet, no talking, etc., just footsteps and some weapon or gear sounds. It was very dark. I stepped onto the road and soon saw the lead man, faintly. I quietly called "halt", and they all froze in their tracks. The lead man gave the password and received the counter sign (or word) from or me. I then ordered the lead man to advance and to be recognized. All went well. Tommy was happy to get up off of the cold snow.

These infantry soldiers were professional; they only carried their combat gear, ammunition, weapons, and each had one wool rolled blanket carried over their right shoulder with ends tied together under their left armpit. They were equipped with snow-packs that we all wished we had. The officer in charge said they all had empty canteens and needed water. I told them the village well was down in the Town Square, but that the water may not be safe to drink. I told them that there was treated water in a lister bag, near our field kitchen. When daylight came we took our machine gun and went back to the village. Many of the 100th Infantry were using water from the well.

It was Christmas day and we were served turkey and all the trimmings. Many in our combat command were less fortunate. When we first arrived in this little town we found two U.S. infantrymen, dead in the middle of the street, in front of the little bakery. Tommy and I moved them over against a building, no sidewalks in most of these places. We did not want these combat men, who paid the ultimate price, to be run over by vehicles. There were some steps nearby leading into a building. Tommy and I took our filled mess kits and sat by these comrades and wondered whom they had left back home. As we ate several little kids came up to watch us and we gave them all of our hard candy which had been given to us when we got our meal. They were tickled and happy.

Written on November 18th, 1986

## Winter Survival in Combat

John P. Parkison  
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1st Squad, 1st Platoon

The winter in Europe, in 1944-45, has been reported to be the coldest winter in the prior 29 years. Frostbite and frozen toes, or feet, took a high toll on the U.S.A. combat soldiers on front lines. They often outnumbered combat wounds. Surviving the extreme elements we were in, on the front, line, was a "battle" of its own kind.

General Eisenhower's intelligence sources stated that the war in Europe would be over before Christmas 1944. This belief prompted General Eisenhower to order his command to limit the supply trucks' use strictly to hauling ammunition, food rations, and mail only. Consequently these orders prevented any warm winter clothing from reaching the front lines. It was reported, however, that rear echelon soldiers were wearing warm winter clothing.

Then came the deep snow and extreme cold weather. I can only speak for the 12 men in my squad. We went for a long time before we were issued rubber overshoes. The combat boots we wore had the rough side of the leather on the outside. They were ideal to act as a blotter, to soak up all moisture. We each had been issued a small can of dubbin to treat the outside of our boots with. This dubbin consisted of oil and tallow. If used often it did slow down the process of moisture getting to your feet. Then came the blessed day when it was our turn to be issued overshoes! We were still in France, and many of the French villages had been abandoned or were mostly rubble, due to heavy combat. One day a little heating stove was spotted by one of our squad members in an abandoned house. This little wood/coal burning stove appeared to be very lonesome and in need of use by us, so it found a ride in a small utility trailer. Whenever conditions allowed us to use the "little stove" we all wore smiles of anticipation for a hopeful good night. When we were blessed with a room or shed to spend the night in, we would set it up. If no chimney outlet was available we simply knocked out a windowpane for the stovepipe exit. Two great soldiers in our squad always took on the task of setting up the stove. Glen McIlvain, (WIA) and Lenzie Buchanon (KIA) were very efficient, and would have a roaring fire going in just a few minutes. Sometimes orders came to "mount up, we are moving out". By using our asbestos gloves (carried for facilitating changing red-hot machine gun barrels) the stove would be carried outside and emptied in the snow, then quickly loaded on the trailer. It was completed in less time than the set-up time.

On a few occasions we were able to really warm up, wash our feet, put on dry socks, and clean our weapons in comfort; I considered this as "living high on the hog" or "pure luxury"! These combat luxuries I've remembered often, over the past 60 years. The one I enjoyed the most was when I would come in from my turn of guard duty and wake up my replacement. We were able to keep the fire burning all night, as each "guard" coming off their duty would fire up the stove. Before I would fire up the stove, I would make me a canteen cup of hot cocoa from a powder packet that came in one of our

combat rations. I always found nice red-hot coals in the stove. If we had had a meal at our field kitchen the day before, I would save a piece of bread so I could toast it over the hot coals to go with the hot chocolate. Then I would build up the fire.

My only regret, regarding these cold weather luxuries, is that I failed to give thanks to the One who had provided all of this. He has forgiven me for my past sins, present sins and future sins. He died on the cross for me and bore all of my sins and all that read this. It is a free gift and all we have to do is open our heart's door and invite the Lord Jesus in.

I am sure that I have made reference to this "little stove" in a previous war story. We had to leave the "little stove" behind, before we crossed the Rhine River. A German family may still be enjoying its warmth.

John Parkison  
February 24, 2004

## "BOUNCING BETTYS"

John P. Parkison  
Co. B, 119th Armd. Engr. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

We were having heavy rainfall during December, 1944 in France. One day orders came for our squad to proceed to a real small valley, surrounded by heavy brush and trees. When we arrived we found two medium tanks stuck in very muddy, soft ground. We were ordered to cut down trees and build a corduroy road, at the rear of the tanks, so they could try to back out over the log road. T/5 Harris, (later wounded at Ochsenfurt) who was in charge of our Engr. tools, got the two-man chainsaw started and we began cutting and trimming trees. We picked out ones we could carry through the mud. We walked up a gentle slope to the trees we wanted to cut. We had been working a short time when I proceeded to a tree to cut all the low branches off. All of a sudden I felt a slight tug on my combat boot. I looked down and saw a trip wire. I yelled, "mines!" and everyone froze. We were in the center of a large anti-personal mine field. The only reason no mines were set off was that the Germans had either thought we would be coming from the other direction or they did not know what they were doing. As my boot hit the trip wire it held the release pin in all the tighter. It took us some time to carefully get out of the mine field. I can't remember if we destroyed the mine field or just marked it to alert others. By that time two tank retrievers came, with long steel cables and pulled the stuck tanks out. So our work detail was really lucky and we did very little work.

The "Bouncing Bettys" were anti-personnel mines. They were quite small and the top of the mine was above ground level. They could be detonated by a trip wire, or by stepping on one when armed with three little prongs sticking out of the ground. We were lucky they were set the way we found them. I cannot remember the official German name of the mine but the G.I.'s nick-named them "Bouncing Bettys" or "De-Nuters". When they exploded they would go straight up, approximately 36". Then a second explosion, the big one, hit anyone close by. They were filled with jagged metal, nails, glass or ball bearings.

Written on July 12th, 1991

## "MIRACLE BRIDGE OF OBERBERGHEIM"

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

The following was submitted by Lt. Norb Chehak, 3rd Platoon leader B-119. I used his words as an officer and close friend to our Company Commander Captain Bob Wilson. I'm sure his knowledge of the assignment and politics was more informed than my memory.

**"In February, 1945, our Division was under the command of the French Army for the elimination of the 'Colmar Pocket'. After Colmar was captured, B-119 was assigned to support a brigade of the 28th U.S. Infantry Division, also under the command of the French. Our mission was to cross the Ill River and to move east. What an assignment! A 28th Division Colonel couldn't care less about a bunch of 'outsiders' (the 119th); really; and the French Army had very little compassion. In the classical assault crossing of a river, engineers command the boats carrying the Infantry. This Colonel announced that he would cross his infantry after the B-119 had secured and defended the shore. All we had was a few 3-men rubber boats. The river was at flood stage; but 'B' Company made it, captured several of Hitler's finest, and secured the far banks."**

As of March 10th, 1986 my rendition of this crossing is as follows:

**Our squad lead by Sgt. "Doc" Savage was the first squad to cross the Ill River in four 3-man rubber boats. We captured several of Hitler's finest, and secured the far bank. The water was swift, dirty and deep. I could not swim, I was weighted down with full battle gear, and if we had been dumped in the water, I would have sunk like a lead weight. Here were 12 guys, in four boats, paddling furiously to keep from being swept away. The Germans in foxholes with weapons trained on us. No shots fired, the Germans stood up in their foxholes and surrendered. I guess they were so busy watching the crossing and not believing what they were witnessing and/or they were tired of war. The German officer dropped his P-38 pistol and holster to the ground. I have it. I believe the bulk of this enemy group had departed before we started our crossing. We were ordered to remain on the far bank for security. Bigger boats were trucked in to cross the Ill River, along with Bailey Bridge material for a new bridge.**

We crossed without any combat rations. We found some unwrapped black bread in the foxholes and one of our squad, Stan Schilling, located a large can of meat (Spam-type). He also got some smoke going and liberated some honeycombs from near by beehives. It was long, cold and boring day. The rest of our platoon and company on the other side of the river were hard at work, ferrying the infantry across the Ill.

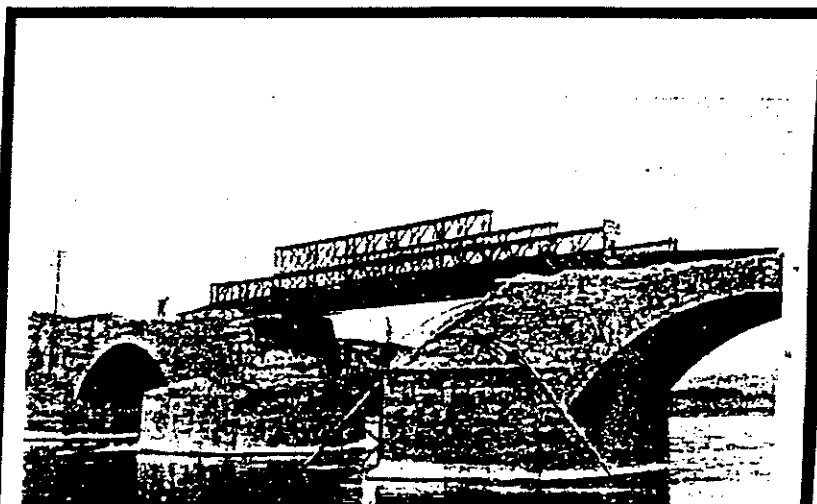
And now back to Lt Chehak's story:

"We then rigged a flying ferry and transported the paddle feet across the Ill River. This all happened on the edge of the town of Oberbergheim. It was then necessary to erect a Bailey Bridge to get tanks, artillery and supply vehicles across the river. The original fixed bridge had been destroyed. Since the assault, the infantry crossing had taken all the daylight hours; we built a 40-ton capacity Bailey Bridge during the night, after blasting the remnants of the old bridge out of the way. The bridge was completed in a matter of hours in cold, bitter, combat conditions".

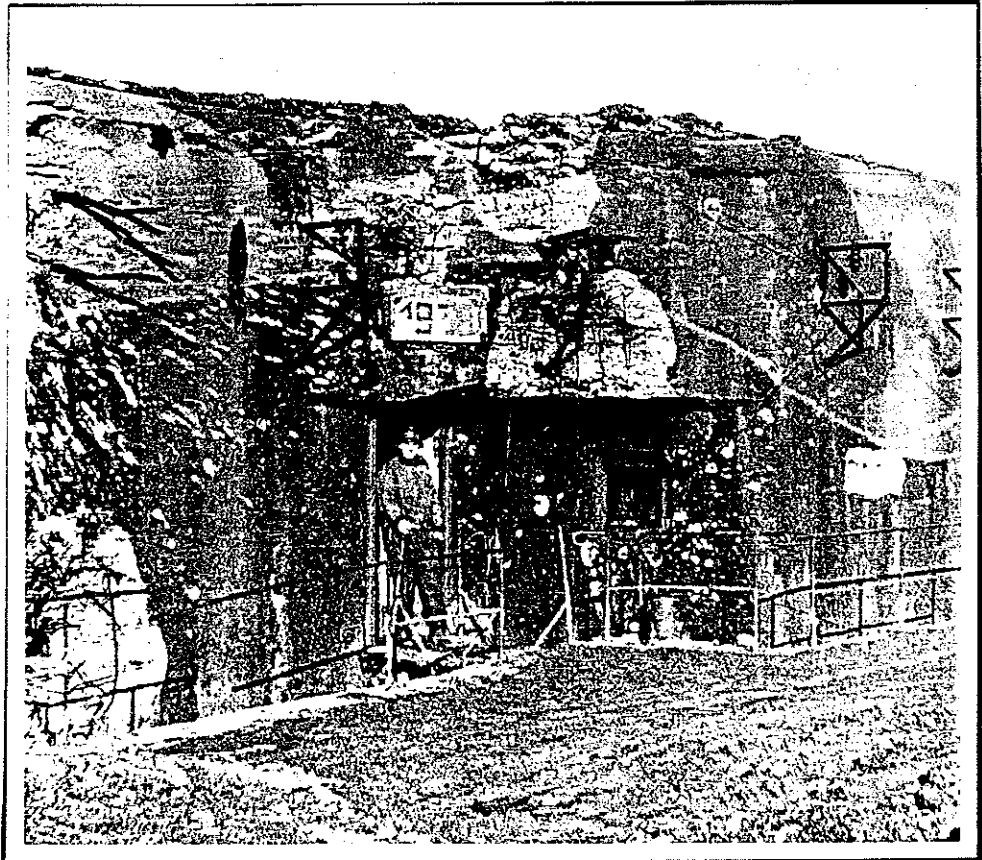
Note: In 1977 Lt. Chehak and Captain Wilson visited this bridge site in Oberbergheim. An elderly Frenchman, speaking German, came from a nearby house to inquire what they were doing there. A fixed bridge had replaced the Bailey years ago. Chehak asked when the new bridge had been built. The Frenchman went on to say that they should have been there during the war when the American Miracle Bridge was built. He said, "It got dark and there was nothing." In the morning there was a bridge and tanks were crossing." Lt. Chehak told him they were there and had helped to build the bridge. The Frenchman said, "No, that's impossible. That bridge was a miracle of God and the Americans."

Now back to my memories:

We spent a long cold night watching for any enemy activity. It was a pitch-black night. We were relieved after daylight. After the tanks and other groups had crossed onto our side we crossed over to our company area for hot chow, at our field kitchen, and a little time for sleep before we moved out.



*Another 119th patch job so that the 12th Armd. could live up to its motto of "Speed is the pass word". Picture sent in by Ed Gross, B/119th. The Miracle Bridge*



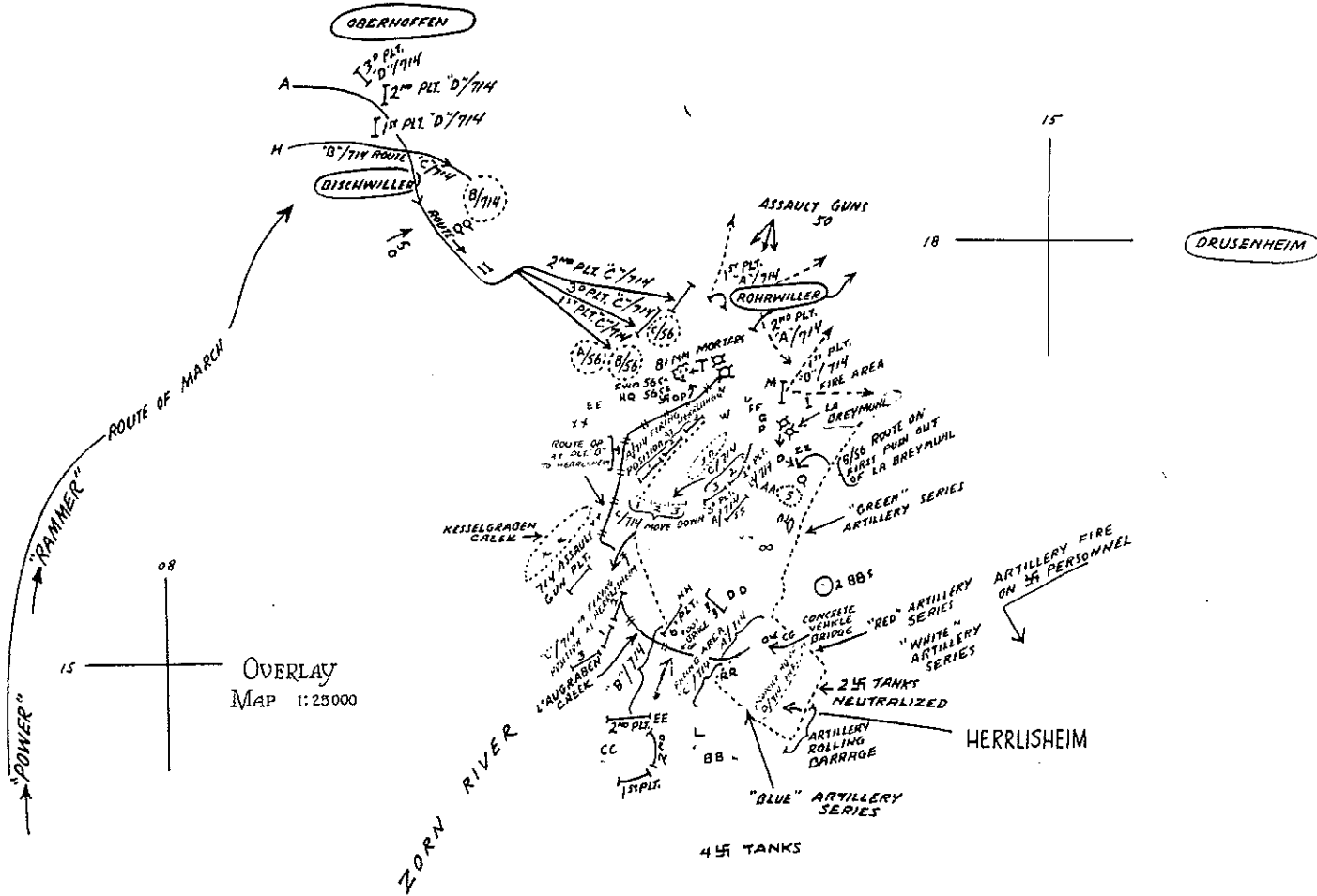
*Maginot forts were several stories deep and connected to each other by tunnels. Yet they failed to hold the ground, in spite of being placed on high hills, since this area changed hands several times during the winter. A few miles to the north, the Siegfried Line, almost as elaborate, featured rising gun turrets which sank back into the fort after firing*



*Infantry moves up in Bischweiler*



# M



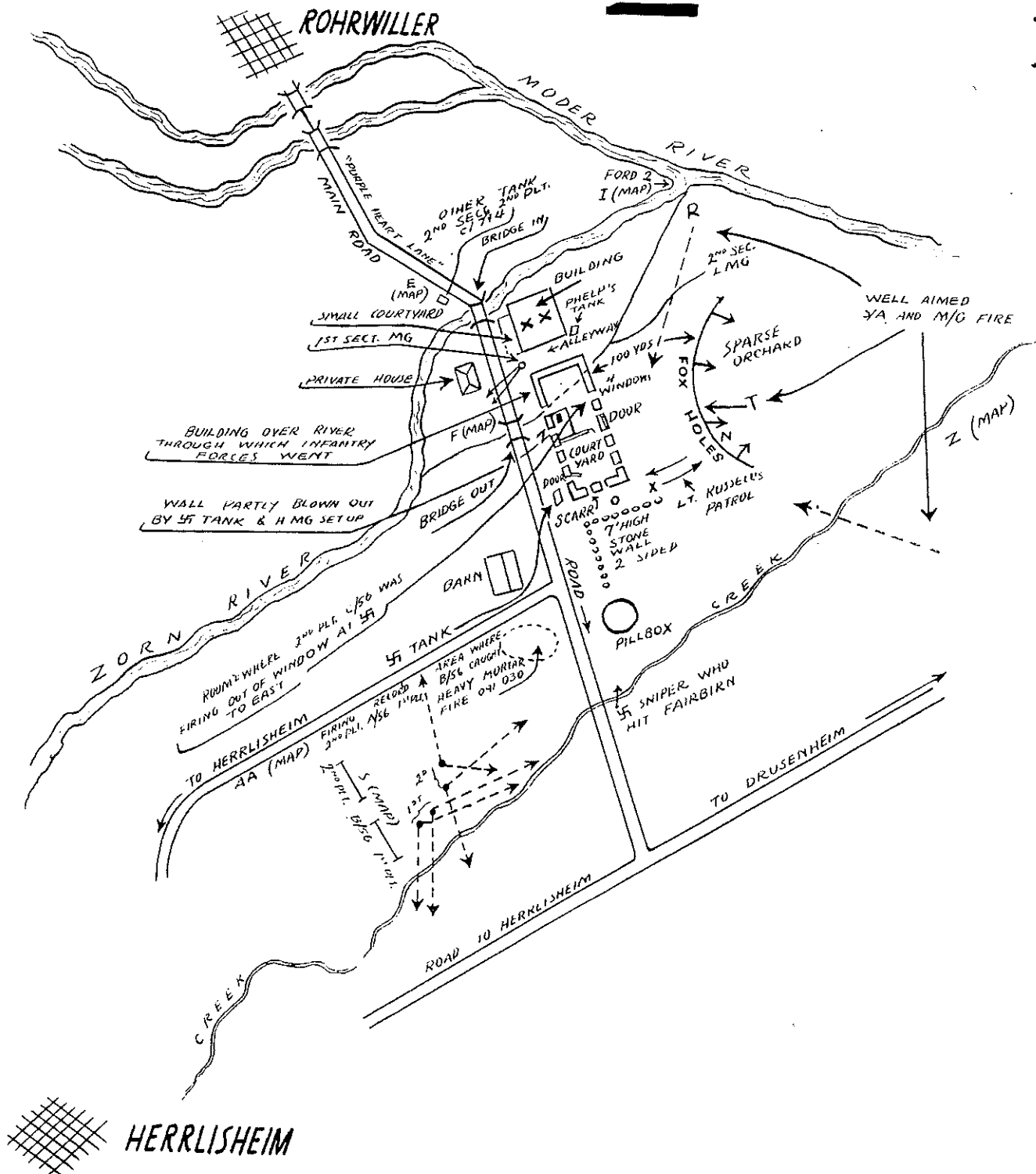
Left: The 12th Armored Division see the damage done by Allied bombers to the Nazi Congress city of Nurnberg.

# LA BREYMUHL - WATER WORKS

DIAGRAM

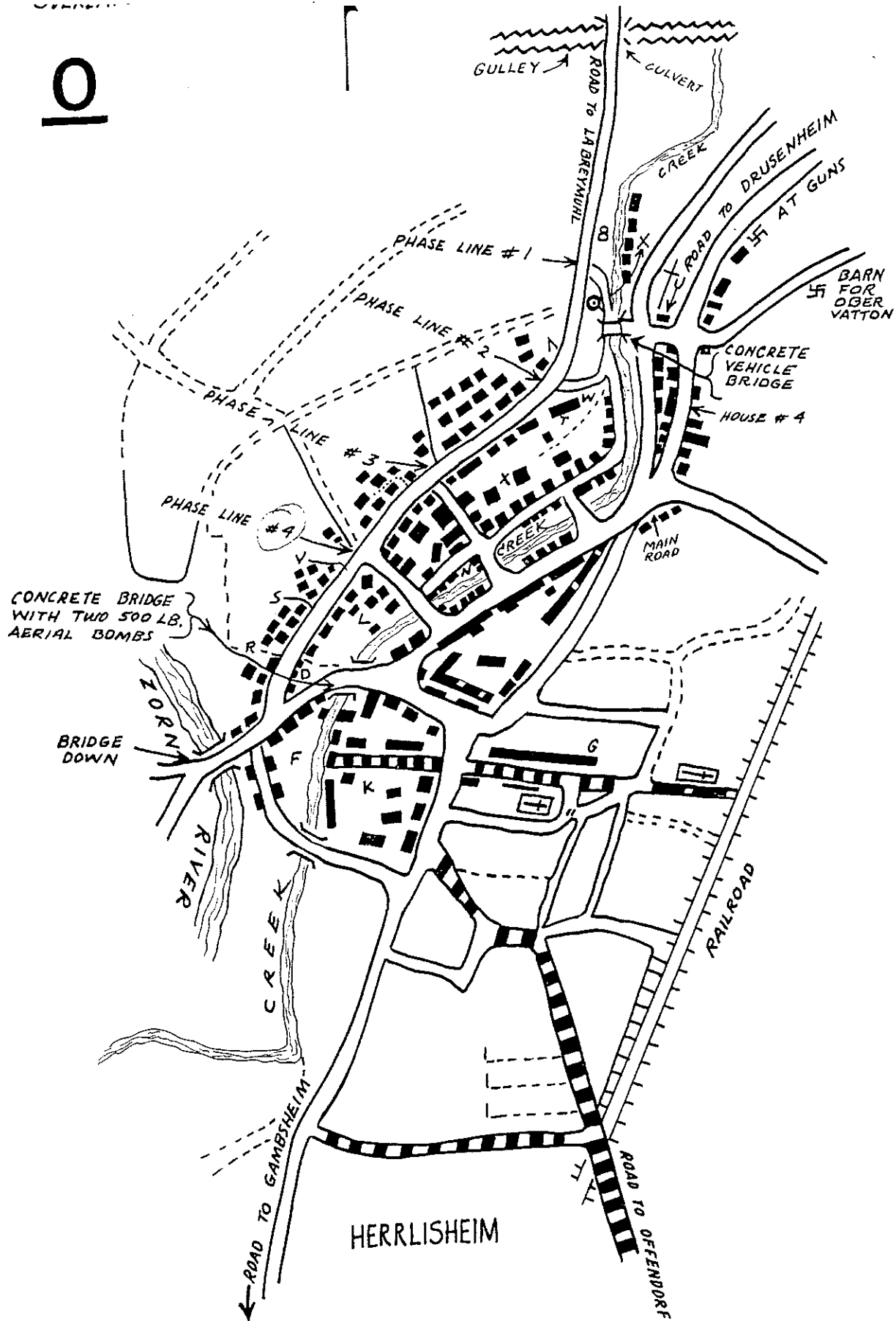
BOIS DE DRUSENHEIM

# D



 HERRLISHEIM

10



## ADVANCE AND WITHDRAW

### PART I

John P. Parkison  
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12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

We were billeted in Bischweiler, France on January 6th, 1945. This was a good-sized town. The entire 12th Armored Division had moved into this general area. My squad was assigned to a house occupied by a French family. We were allowed to use the living room. We slept on the floor; what little time we were there. Our access was through the rear kitchen door and attached to the cow barn. This family always had a duck, or goose, in a small wooden cage, to fatten it up to eat. The duck could not move or stand up. They fed it by inserting a tube into the duck's mouth and then force-fed it by turning a crank on a small feeder similar to a coffee grinder. Whenever we returned from the front line, or roadblocks, we returned to this same billet. It could be anytime during the day or night. This was "home" for us until the 36th Infantry Division on January 20th, 1945 relieved our Division.

On the 6th or 7th of January my squad was sent to the little town of Rohrweiler. I do not remember for what mission, a lot of our Infantry and Tankers were there. As soon as we got there we all came under heavy German artillery fire. My squad took cover in a small barn, filled with milk cows. The entire floor was covered with fresh straw and the cows were all tied to their mangers. The four rock walls gave us horizontal cover and none of the squad was hit, although I lost my first raincoat as it had too many shrapnel holes in it to be of any use (two more had to be replaced due to bullet holes at later dates).

On January 8th, when we were sleeping in our billet, we got orders to move out in the late evening to Rohrweiler again. This time the move involved all three squads of the 1st Platoon. When we got there we were given white muslin to cover us as much as possible as we had snow on the ground. The muslin was "make-do" camouflage. A lot of the German soldiers had white clothes to wear in the snow. There were approximately 42 of us in this group. The supply trucks had brought up sections of a footbridge, which we were to carry up, to bridge the Zorn River so that our Infantry could continue their attack on the objective, the town of Herrlisheim. Our Infantry was pinned down in La Breymuhl, a small group of mostly brick buildings, containing machinery for regulating the flow of the Zorn River into the Moder River. We all soon called this group of buildings "the waterworks". It was pitch dark that night. Looking towards "the waterworks", our destination, the area looked like one big ball of fire. The Germans were hitting these buildings with heavy concentrations of artillery, mortar, and tank fire, continuously. As I saw this I could not imagine any of our guys living through this German attack.

I believe each four-man team carried one section of footbridge (It could have been a six-man team). We each had our battle gear with extra ammunition, rifles, and combat packs. We started down the road to "the waterworks", already nicknamed "Purple Heart Lane". We soon moved off of the road into the ditch. The German machine gunners were firing across the road using tracers over our heads and ball ammunition, much lower, for a kill. We knew about this trick and stayed in the ditch. We all arrived in one piece. How could that be? As we got closer, the buildings were lit up like 4th of July fireworks and the sound was unbelievable. When we were ordered to stop we were near one of the brick buildings and were told to leave the bridge and to seek cover in the building. The only light was when a shell exploded. The floor was covered with soldiers, our Infantry and men from the 79th Infantry Division. By that time we were no doubt all sort of numb. The ground actually shook. I lost all awareness of time. Finally the shelling subsided and our platoon was ordered outside to proceed to the Zorn River. I remember seeing a "M8 Command Car" parked between two buildings as a shell exploded near it and lit up the area. While we were in the building our medic was sitting between two men against the wall. Shrapnel killed both of them and left him untouched.

As we moved forward with our footbridge we had to cross over an undamaged canal bridge. There was a lot of machine gun chatter going on. As we crossed over the Canal Bridge I heard a voice say, "Fellows please try not to step on me". He was wounded and unable to move. I often wondered if he got help and survived. There was a stone, 7' courtyard wall, around "the waterworks" preventing the German tanks from firing low enough to do a lot of damage to our soldiers. As we got near the wall we were ordered to stop and get into a prone position. I do not remember how long we laid there. I do believe I fell asleep for a few minutes as the ordeal had exhausted me. When we got orders to get up my outer pants were frozen to the ice and snow. Our instructions were to leave the footbridge, to head out towards Rohrweiler and to dig in to protect the left flank at a certain area east of "Purple Heart Lane".

We were ordered to dig two-man foxholes. The ground was frozen under the snow to a depth of 16" to 18". We had to lay on our sides and try to get a hole through the frozen ground with our little entrenching tools; each squad of 12 men carried 10 folding shovels, one hatchet, and one pick. My entrenching tool was a shovel. The Germans kept firing flares over our area and we would freeze in motion until the flare faded out. This really slowed us down. I finally got a hole started and hit a hard object, which after hitting it a few times, I thought was a rock. I reached down to get the object and was surprised that it was one of my hand grenades, which had fallen from my cartridge belt harness. At times I felt it was not worth it to keep trying to get through frozen ground. I'm sure by now all of us were wet with sweat. I was, but I kept on and as soon as I got through the frozen ground the digging was easy. I could break off chunks of the hard stuff. Tommy Hughes, my "foxhole buddy", and I decided to each dig our own holes very close to each other. Upon completion we tunneled into each foxhole so we could say we had a two-man foxhole although it was only a small opening. Private Roberts crawled over to my foxhole to borrow my shovel, as he was the one who carried the pick. Tommy and I had our foxholes finished before so many. I was glad I was a small guy.

It wasn't long before the Germans opened up on us with a lot of mortar fire. They knew where we were. We experienced three such attacks. The ground would shake as the rounds hit the hard frozen ground. I was wishing we all had something to cover our foxholes with. We were ordered to fix bayonets and to expect an all out charge on our positions. During one of the shelling a man called out for a medic. It was Private Roberts who had been hit with mortar fragments in his face, however they missed his eyes and it was not too serious. He was awarded the "Purple Heart".

At daylight I stood up in my foxhole and could reach out and touch three separate black spots in the snow where mortar rounds had hit. Thank you Lord Jesus!

It wasn't too long until our platoon leader, Lt. McConnell (KIA), ordered us to move out to our vehicles in Rohrweiler so as to return to Bischweiler. It was now January 9th. Our overnight tour was over. Pvt. Roberts forgot my shovel and left in in his foxhole. I pardoned him and signed a statement of charges for a replacement. I never could find out if the footbridge was used. My white muslin had many bloodstains after being at "the waterworks". Not from me!

## ADVANCE AND WITHDRAW

### PART II

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

January 9th, 1945-When we arrived back in Bischweiler we had some hot chow at our field kitchen. Once you got your food you had to disperse, no groups allowed, due to occasional artillery enemy fire. Then we went to our billet and all of us just flopped down onto the floor to sleep.

Private McIlvain often had violent nightmares and would rise up swinging his fists and yelling that he would kill all those "blankety-blank" Krauts. As I was the one light sleeper in the Squad, our squad leader, Sgt. "Doc" Savage asked me to always sleep by McIlvain. He asked me to take his rifle, after he had fallen asleep, and to keep it with mine while he slept. We always had our rifle next to us, day and night. I would try to wake him up at these times and to assure him we had killed all of the Krauts already. He was not much taller than me, but built like a chunk of steel. He had a grip like a vice. He could tear a door off of its hinges with one hand. I witnessed this first hand in New York City. We got one pass to N.Y.C. before we shipped out. Four of us were together and we were at Jack Dempsey's place when McIlvain did tear off a bathroom door and gave it a toss. The bouncer had us out on the sidewalk pronto!

Back to Bischweiler. We got to sleep awhile and then had to clean our weapons, wash our feet and put on new dry socks. We were to do this each day when possible. Trench foot and frostbite had been taking a lot of the guys out of the front line. I went to see the supply Sgt. for a new entrenching shovel. Anyway, the day passed and then the next morning, very early (January 10th), we were ordered outside to receive each two bandoliers of ammunition for our rifles. Each bandolier held 48 rounds of ammunition. Our web cartridge belts each held 80 rounds, plus you had eight rounds in your rifle. This was a lot of weight, with 180 rounds each, which meant we could expect a big fight.

Our company was to go into Herrlisheim and reinforce what was left of the 56th Infantry Battalion, and the tanks that had reached Herrlisheim earlier that day. The 56th casualties were very high. We loaded up in our vehicles and went a roundabout way along a canal. The last leg of the route we had to dismount and proceed on foot. We crossed over a steel footbridge in single file. The Germans had hit it many times with artillery and all that was left was a twisted steel beam and a twisted metal handrail. It was very difficult to cross this way with all the gear we carried. When we had left our vehicles our Squad Sgt., Savage, asked us, "who could use a bazooka?". Yep, I became the Squad's bazooka man, with two men as ammunition bearers to supply me.

This route was chosen, as the flat, snow-covered and foggy terrain was the quickest way to reach the protection of the town buildings. Our Squad lead, and I and my ammunition bearers were close to the lead man. I can still picture the little outbuilding we reached first. The first two platoons made it into town without any German fire. The ground fog was fast disappearing.

The 3rd Platoon was in reserve and was ordered to hold up at the Canal west of town until the 1st and 2nd Platoons were in safety. Then the 3rd crossed over the footbridge. When about 20 men were over, all hell broke loose with mortars and machine gun fire. Several men were hit; Sgt. Joe Karrs included. T/5 Goodman, a medic, was left at the crossing to take care of the wounded. The rest of the 3rd Platoon pushed on into town and safety. We later were told that Goodman was magnificent, with a 3-man rubber boat he entered the water, pushed the boat across, loaded the wounded onto it, and pushed it back. He did this several times and got all the wounded across to the west bank. Goodman did not know how to swim and he was wounded also. He not only received the "Purple Heart Medal", but the "Silver Star Medal" as well. We all liked him so much, along with Sgt. Gouldy, a medic who was with the 1st Platoon as we entered town; both were dedicated to watch out for us.

We were in town only for a short time when enemy artillery opened up on the small area our Platoon had taken over. We took cover in a house, at least some of my squad did. Others took whatever cover they could find. The French family lived in the basement. There was no room for us in the stairway; it was crammed full of the exhausted Infantry that had entered town the day before. This house took several hits and I remember I was in a room and shell fragments would ricochet from wall to wall. This went on at intervals throughout much of the day. The orders were to continue the attack so as to clear the town of Germans. We engineers had become infantrymen that day. The attack never got off. Each time it was rescheduled the enemy artillery and tank fire was too intense. Several command posts were hit and many killed or wounded including some high-ranking officers. The day was about gone when high-level radio orders came in to hold and protect the real estate already taken. Every time incoming rounds let up we were back outside. One of our tanks was hit and the tankers exited via the tank belly exit and ran into a barn. Three Germans ran out and climbed into the U.S. tank, it had not been damaged enough to put it out of commission. Another U.S. tank fired point blank into the rear of that tank and it blew up, with the unlucky Germans.

As darkness was approaching Sgt. Savage showed me my position to man for the night, along with Pvt. Johnson (later killed in action) and T/5 Harris (later wounded in Germany), who were my ammunition bearers. This spot appeared to be the corner of a house yard, no fence or any cover for concealment. I asked if we could dig a prone shelter. The answer was, no. We were to be the "trip wire" for any German tanks heading our way from the south direction. We were to not give away our position until they were close enough to do damage and then we were to fire for effect. I crawled around and picked up some debris for a little fronted cover, as we lay flat on the ground, which was covered with snow and ice.



Our corner was by a narrow dirt road, or street. A dead U.S. Infantry soldier lay in the middle of the road. It was getting dark rapidly. Pvt. Johnson crawled over to the dead guy and looked at his dog tags and he was surprised and upset, as the dead guy's name was Johnson too. As we lay on the ground, being very quiet, the cold started to penetrate. It was below freezing and my shoulders always felt it first. We doubted if we would be relieved before daylight. Johnson kept falling asleep, snoring so loudly, I was sure the enemy could hear him. I kept shaking him awake. I felt we were goners anyway if we were attacked. The only relief to the slow movement of time was when Sgt. Savage would crawl up and tell us that a patrol was going out or another coming in and to not fire at them. The Sgt. would tell us the news was bad and a lot of confusion was going on. Then came the good news that all U.S. forces of C.C.B. were to leave Herrlisheim and to set up defenses in more favorable locations west of the Zorn River. This withdrawal would take place at 8:00 pm (2000 hrs). The "bad news" was that the engineers in our platoon would be the last to leave. We were to protect the retreat. All wounded, including a German officer, were to be evacuated first, using light tanks; one tank was knocked out and no casualties resulted. All was carefully organized, with exhausted infantrymen striking out on their own. In order to keep noise at an absolute minimum, engines were not started until the last minute and the medium tanks were ready to leave. As pre-planned a friendly artillery barrage came down on schedule, and it was under this protection that we all left Herrlisheim. My squad, the last to go, fell in behind the last tank. The night was so dark and the air was so heavy with fog that the infantrymen had to hold on to one another's belts as they moved in a close column. We just stayed close to the rear of a tank. The fog and bitter cold intensified. It took less than one hour to reach our positions.

This was the first unsuccessful attempt by the 12th A.D. to capture Herrlisheim. Only a part of Combat Command B initially took part in this attack, as CCA and CCR were held back in reserve. It had been reported that there were approximately 800 enemy troops in Herrlisheim. That turned out to be a great blunder. It soon was learned that this was another part, or bulge, connected to the initial breakthrough by the Germans in the Ardennes. We were in the Alsace area. One major campaign star was awarded for this "Battle of the Bulge", named the "Ardennes Alsace Campaign", which we received for our part.

On December 16th, 1944 the Germans surprised the Allied Forces. Some intelligence information regarding a big buildup of the enemy was disregarded and all had to pay the price. General Patton's 3rd Army was just to the north of us. Within a short time the Germans had the city of Bastogne surrounded. The 101st Airborne Infantry Division, of 11,000 men, was rushed by truck to hold Bastogne. They had been billeted in France to rest and re-equip and train new replacements. Without advance planning they headed to the front by truck. They were short on some weapons and machine gun crews. The men had not received a winter issue of clothes and their boots were not lined or weatherproof. They had no long winter underwear or long wool socks and they were short on "k" rations. Bastogne was a vital crossroads for both German and Allied Forces. The weather was so bad that all Allied Planes were unable to help out or drop supplies. Bastogne desperately needed an Armored Division to help out. General Patton said he could get there first. When he headed farther north the 12th A.D. took over Patton's area. General Patton knew we could still lose the war. He was a great combat General.

I mention this little history lesson to lead up to, and back to, our battle at Herrlisheim. It was all a part of the "Battle of the Bulge", which consisted of several breakthroughs at various points. It was not just the big and first strike in the Ardennes. In one of our three 12th A.D. history books the 12th A.D.'s actions at Herrlisheim was recorded by 7th Army historians. It was the only battle involving the 12th A.D. (Hellcats) to be recorded by the 7th Army. To see the big picture of what we were getting into at Herrlisheim, I will copy from our history book as follows:

**"As the German Army was being pushed back from the Ardennes Bulge, their high Command was putting plans for a new bulge into action. The code name for the operation was 'Nordwind' (northwind) and was to be in the Bitche area with it's purpose of recapturing of Strasbourg, France and movement through the Saverne Gap behind the Allied lines. Himmler promised Adolph Hitler, Strasbourg on the anniversary of Hitler's twelfth year of his rise to power. The Germans had concluded that the withdrawal from the bridgeheads in the Sarre area that the forces opposing them, this front, south from the Ardennes had been seriously weakened by the Ardennes offensive. The German Army Group G had therefore been directed to exploit the situation. Mounting local attacks in readiness for a general offensive. 'Nordwind' was launched at 2300 hours on 31 December 1944. The Americans resisted every attempt by the Germans to break through and out of the salient at Bitche. On 5 January, 1945 the Oberrhein German Army Group consisted of the: 553 Volksgrenadier Infantry Division; SS Panzer Grenadier Div. 'Liebestandarte Adolph Hitler'; the 17th SS Panzer Grenadiers; 25th Panzer Grenadiers; 31st Panzer Div.; 21st Panzer Div. and the 10th SS Panzer Grenadier Div. There is evidence that nearly all of these units made the crossing of the Rhine River into the Gamsheim-Herrlisheim bridgehead during the nights of 5-6 January 1945. When the 12th A.D. was committed on the bridgehead, on 7 January, 1945 it was discovered that the enemy troops were not, as previously reported a force of a few hundred second rate troops. Instead of being a conglomerate of weak battle groups, the enemy was in reality a major effort organized on division scale, intending to break through the allied lines in the manner as the Ardennes Bulge."**

Back to Herrlisheim as I remember it. I never did have to go into this town again. We as engineers had mine fields to clear and support other units. Our company did build a bridge or two in the area, often under heavy artillery fire. As for my squad, we never worked on a bridge except one somewhere in Germany in April. Our squad was always with the tankers up front in case they ran into a minefield, etc. I preferred this to building bridges. We also guarded the left or right flank of our immediate units.

One night our squad was sent to a nearby village to guard an intersection and stop all vehicles to be identified before they could proceed. We occupied a little building close to the road. Only two men had to be outside at a time, one behind a machine gun and one to stop the vehicles at gunpoint. Enemy paratroopers in American uniforms and speaking fluent English had dropped behind our lines, thus the reason for the roadblock. Mostly jeeps with a driver and a high-ranking officer were what I encountered on my one-hour shifts. We would ask questions, such as what baseball team did Harry James play on? I was not familiar with sports so I more or less stuck to Hollywood, i.e. Roy Rogers and Gene Autry.

All the vehicle occupants were polite and careful to answer the questions. No doubt they worried about the guy with his finger on the M1 rifle trigger. One Major even thanked me for the questions and conduct. One-hour shifts were not bad, although it was a very cold night. The building was a little warmer, the Germans had this crossroad zeroed in and let loose with a series of artillery shells. When it happened I was in the building, it was not hit but shrapnel bounced off of the inside wall. No one was hit; we were flat on the floor.

There are many, many stories on this battle for Herrlisheim, even books and articles. The story of the 12th A.D., in this battle, was and may still be at the "War College" regarding the mistake made and where not to use armor. The Germans nicknamed us the "Suicide Division". They were never able to break through. If they would have known we were a combat-green division, having only one month of combat, they could have overran us. There is a book available titled, "The Other Battle of the Bulge, Operation Nordwind", by Charles Whiting, Scarborough House Publishers. I prize it very much.

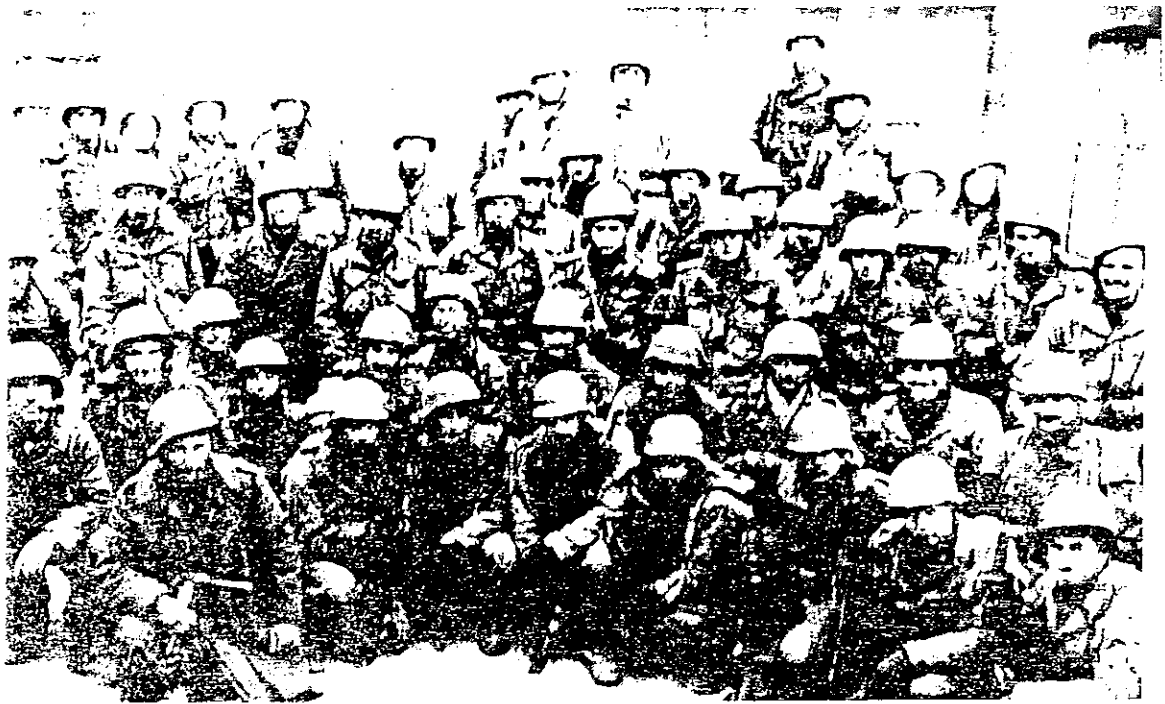
Note: The history of that second Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944/45 had never been recorded, in spite of the fact that it lasted a month longer than the original Battle of the Bulge and cost the Americans some 16,000 casualties. It cost perhaps twice that number of French soldiers serving under American command.

As the battle of Herrlisheim continued, our Division committed CCA and CCR to the attack. It's been reported we lost 2700 men by the time we were relieved by the 36th Infantry Division in late January.

One day my squad was in an open area near Herrlisheim and the sun came out for the first time in this battle. Almost immediately our dive-bombers came out of the lingering clouds and attacked Herrlisheim, it was a great show with buildings exploding where the Germans were. Then one night we got orders to fall back to our company area. We were leaving Herrlisheim for the 36th Infantry Division. This was no place for an armored outfit; flat ground, crisscrossed with rivers, creeks and canals and the German's tanks and artillery entrenched behind a railroad embankment, picking our tanks off like in a shooting gallery. It was quite dark as we walked out. As soon as we passed foxholes and dug-in bunkers with poles and dirt roofs over them, the 36th Inf. Div. greeted us. They were combat-seasoned and knew what they were doing; however, we learned later that they did not capture Herrlisheim.

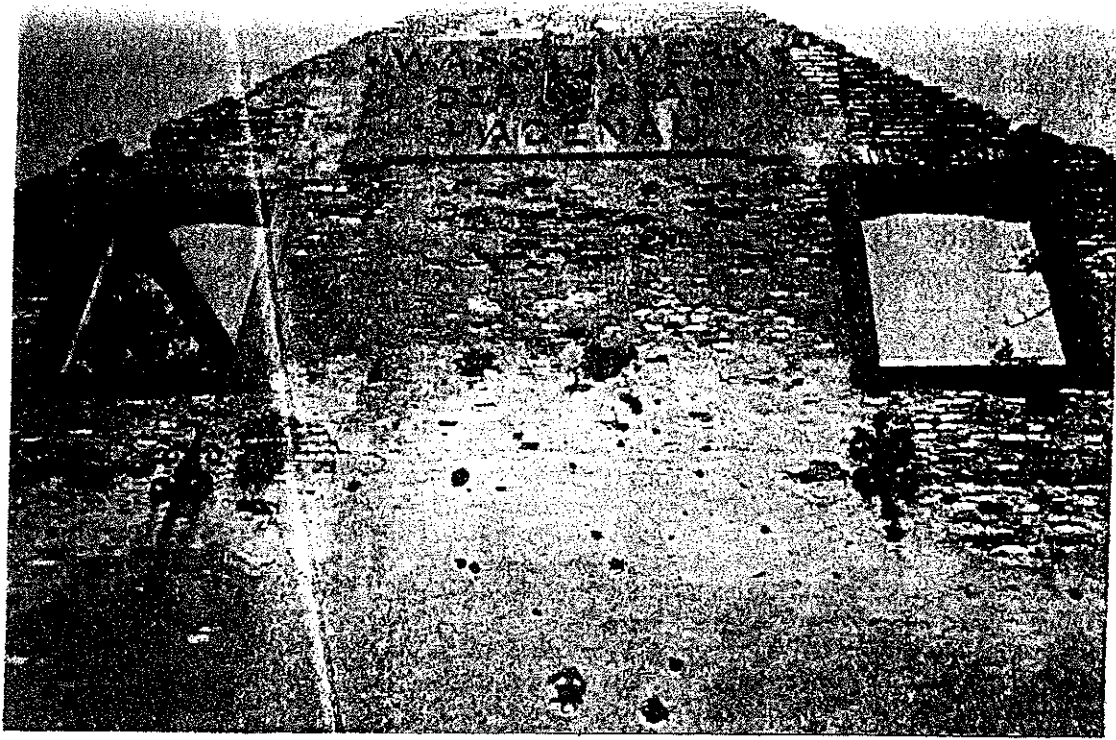
These are some of my experiences in this area, but not all of them. None of my squad was injured, that was to come later, except for Pvt. Robert's face wound.

One night at Bischweiler our platoon stood guard around a line of self-propelled artillery vehicles with 105 MM cannons on them. They were parked in the snow out in the open, facing Herrlisheim. The crews were exhausted and needed sleep. Each crew took turns going to some buildings in town to sleep. My post was at a corner of one of the building, as one or two would come by me to their billet, I would halt them and we would do the "password" routine. One time one of them slipped and fell on the ice next to me. He was carrying a Caliber 45 "grease gun" (slang for all metal) fully automatic, personal weapon. He had left the safety off and a burst of rounds went off when he landed on his back. The flash of the weapon was almost in my face. I know he felt bad but I cautioned him about not having the safety off, unless he was ready to use it. He had walked up in the pitch dark from his crew and appeared to be very frightened, he surely gave me a start; "friendly fire" was always a concern. We were happy to leave this area for another battle, to help to clear out the "Colmar Pocket".

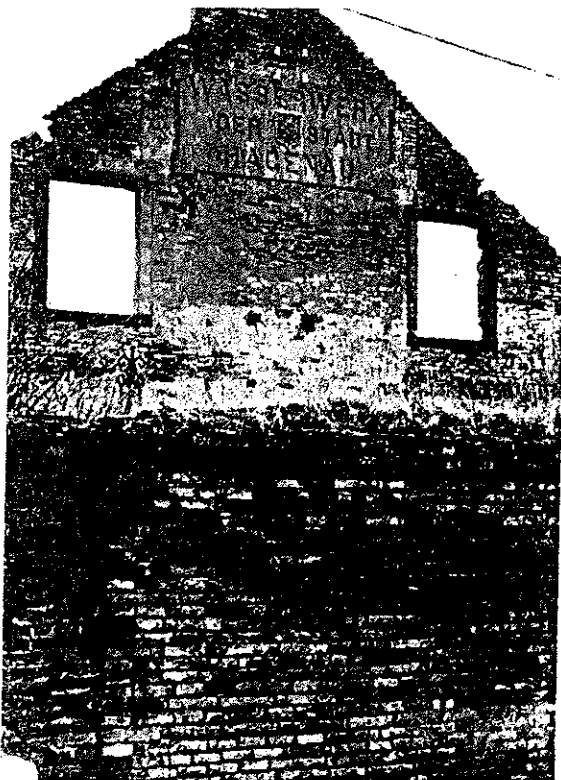


*2nd Platoon, C/56 on January 5, 1945. On January 19 there were only 10 remaining. Back row; Gangigario, wounded; Victor Rickitson, W; William Smith; William Otto, W; Bill Waddington; Al Mollan, W; Elvin Waldof, W; Joe Sokol, W; Charles Allendoerfer, W; Burt Kreuger, Killed. Third row: Werner Schielke, W; Philip Justice, W; Jack Vaughn; Galleger, W; Raymond Caterbury; John Tedrowe, W; Richard Ahlman, W; Carl Jenkins, W; Gola New, W; Kreiser, W; Marion Best, W; Boitnott Gentry, W; Stanley Kubiak, K; Gus Proffit; James Hollingsworth, K; Long, K; Hicks, W; Carol Herron, W; Clarke; Colunga; Elisha Rallings, W. Second row: Dewitt, W; Francis Simmonds; Taylor; Ray Silva, W; Danny Renolds; Jimmy Read; McDonald; Al Schaefer, K; Sgt. B Co. Pahor Lock, W; Joe Ametrane, W; Leon Sarkis, W; Billy Carrigan, W. Bottom row: Donald Conkling; Richard Hinojosa, W; Robert Pillings, W; Alex Polma, K; John Ostman, W; Daniel Knox; Preist, W; William Desmond, K; Leslie Siverling, K. Picture by Bill Waddington.*

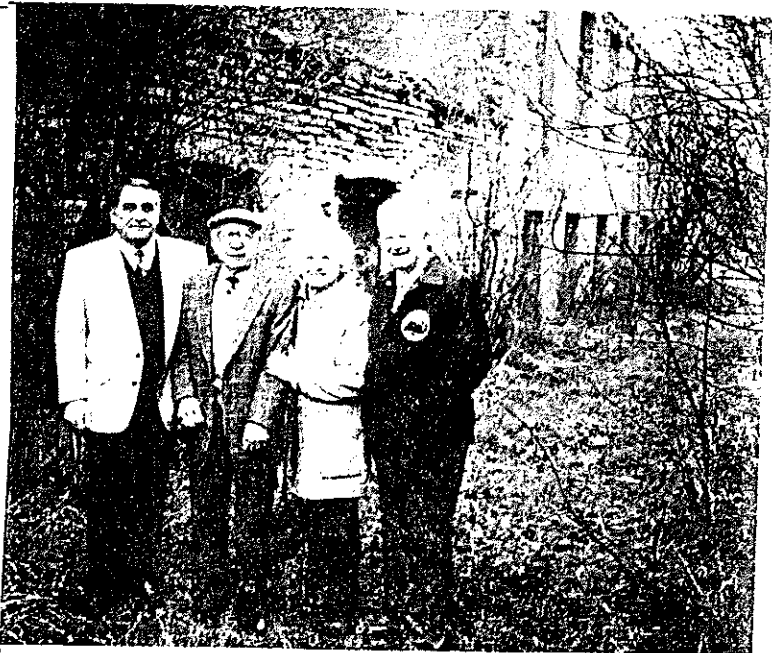
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*In case you were in the water works and wondered what was making all that noise out side this picture might explain. Picture by Gene Curry, 119th. 'The Waterworks'*



*Waterworks,  
Herrlisheim*



*1995 — Dean Miller, Jack Miller [494], Inez Warnes and Ken Warnes [714] revisit the Waterworks.*

# **The Battle of the Colmar Pocket-France**

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

In late January of 1945, the 12th A.D. was relieved on the front lines, at the Herrlisheim area, by the 36th Infantry Division. We then prepared to engage the German 19th Army in the "Colmar Pocket", which was the last big strong hold occupied by the Germans in France. It was located many miles further south from our location.

We soon were on our way to join the U.S. 3rd. Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, and the 75th Infantry Division, along with the Sixth U.S. Corps and French forces. The 12th A.D. was the only U.S. armored division assigned to this battle. All of the U.S.A. divisions were under the command of the French. This arrangement was said to be the first time in history where U.S. forces were under the command of a foreign country.

The German 19th Army had been reinforced during the "Battle of the Bulge", with plans to attack northward and to join up with 'anticipated' German forces near Strasbourg, France. However, Strasbourg did not fall into the hands of the German Army during the "Battle of the Bulge"; so now was the time to clean out the Colmar Pocket.

This task took approximately two weeks to complete. I should say that our 12th A.D. Armored Field Artillery Battalions: the 493rd, 494th, and 495th battalions fired at the enemy every day, beginning on December 5, 1944 up until the end of WWII. If they were not helping out the 12th A.D. in general, then they were in support of other divisions or units.

My omniscient best friend and Lord, Jesus, has seen fit to erase, from my mind, what took place in this two-week battle. However, I do remember that my friend in our platoon, Herman Wudel, Salinas, CA., was shot in the stomach and died shortly thereafter. I remember him telling me one day about going to church each Sunday with his wife, and about the special Sunday afternoons they had spent together. Herman spoke fluent German and had a great sense of humor.

I also remember being in Colmar when the civilians were out in full force welcoming the liberating forces. Some were standing on dead German soldiers, so as to enable them to see more of what was taking place.

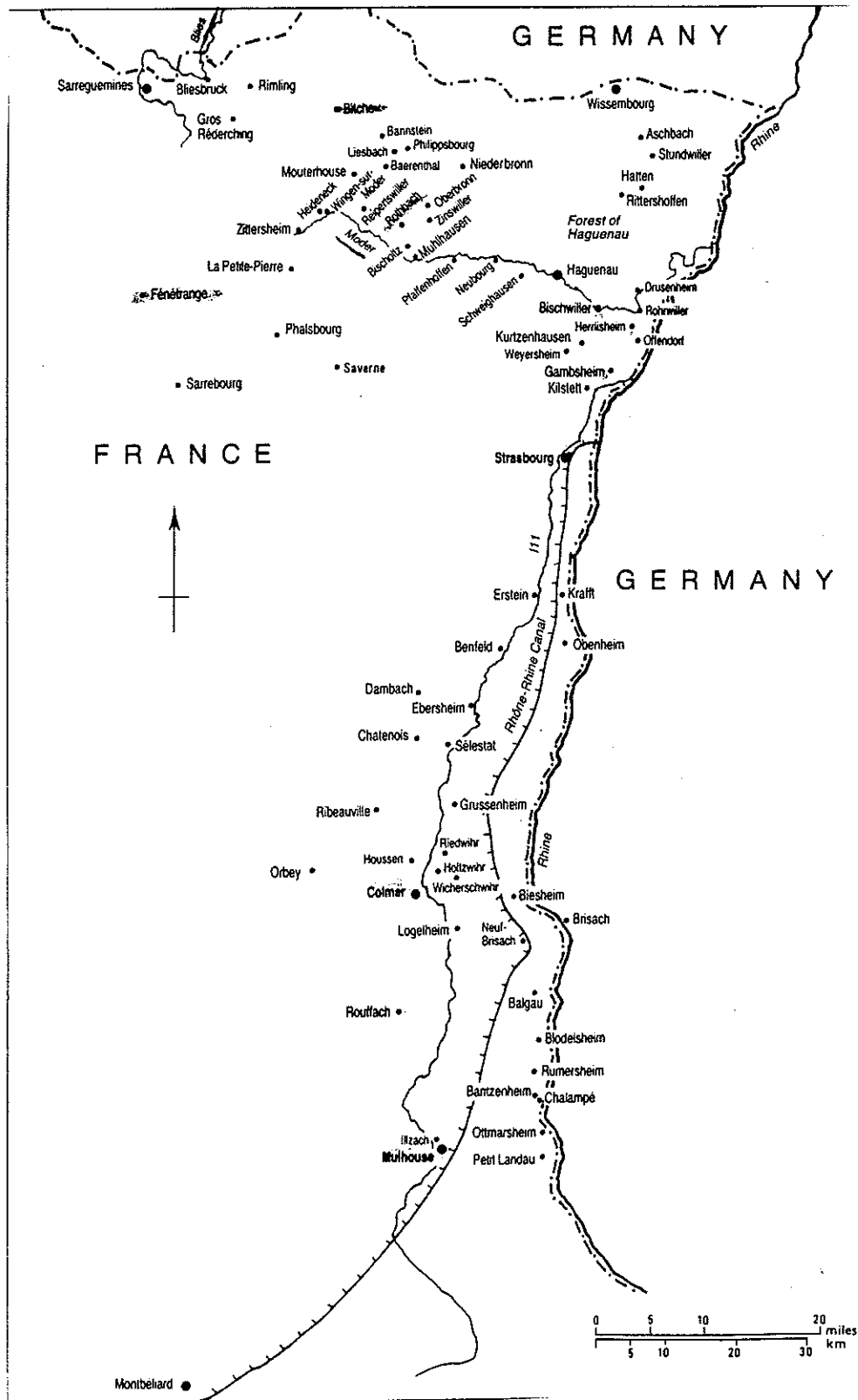
I remember the two nights our squad spent sheltered in an empty factory, sleeping on the concrete floor. The first night my buddy, Tommy Hughes, and I thought we would freeze to death. The second night we used some cardboard to sleep on. Our bedrolls were very meager, to say the least. In the evening of the second night, a group of French-Moroccan Infantry moved into one of the factory areas. They rode horses, so the horses came in as well. One of these soldiers had a large, live, sheep in the front of his saddle, which was to be their dinner. They all were a hard-looking group, rough and tough, in their mixed uniforms and long swords. They soon had a bonfire going, and a slaughtered sheep roasting above the fire. Then came the booze. They soon were singing and dancing while waiting to feast on the roasted mutton.

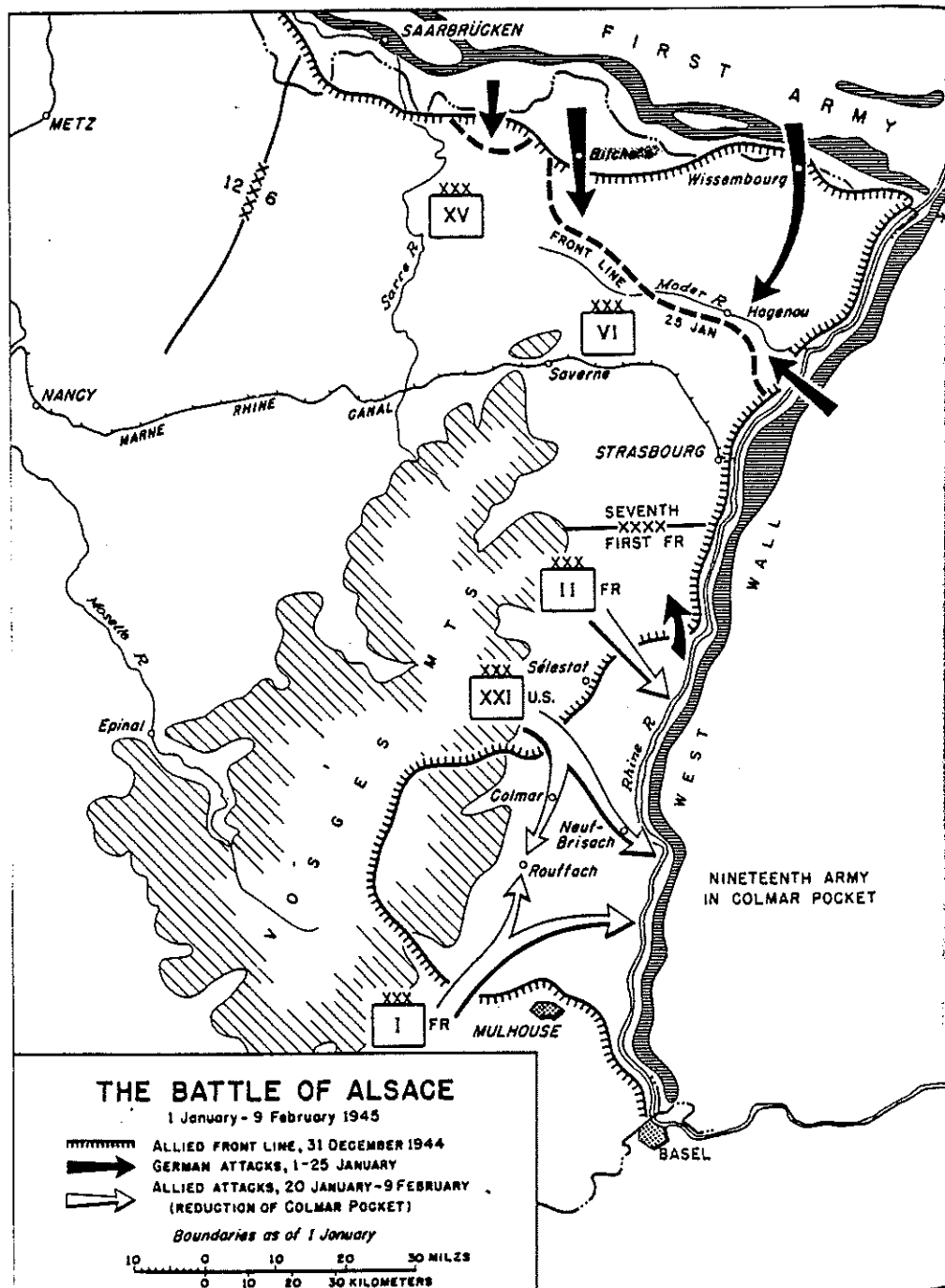
From here we attacked on south of Colmar, through many German roadblocks. This terrain was ideal for our tank battalions to be very effective. We still had snow and ice to contend with. In Charles Whiting's book, "The Other Battle of the Bulge- Operation Nordwind" it states that; "It seems that in the 'Battle of the Colmar Pocket' it was not only big, 'All-American' type who could stand the terrible winter conditions, and also fight desperately and win through in the end. More than once when one read through the citations for bravery in the Battle, one is struck that those who won medals, came from poor homes, almost as if their poverty or ethnic origins gave them that little edge over their WASP comrades."

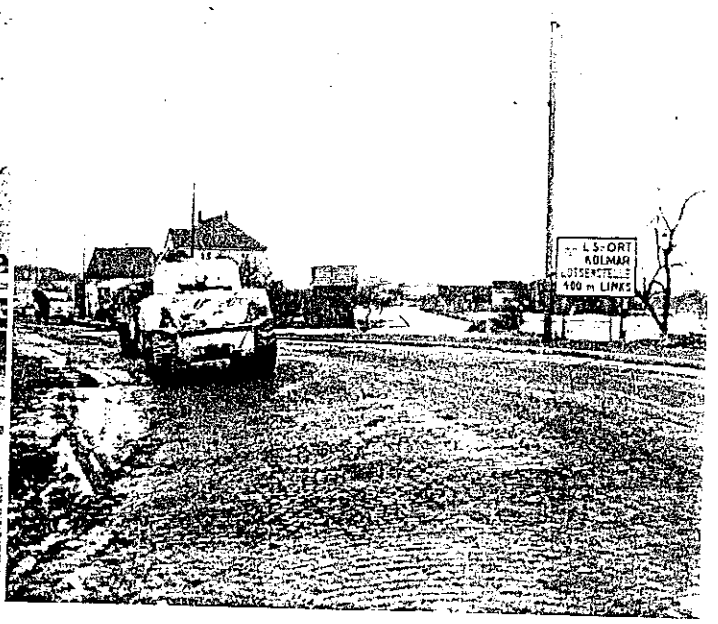
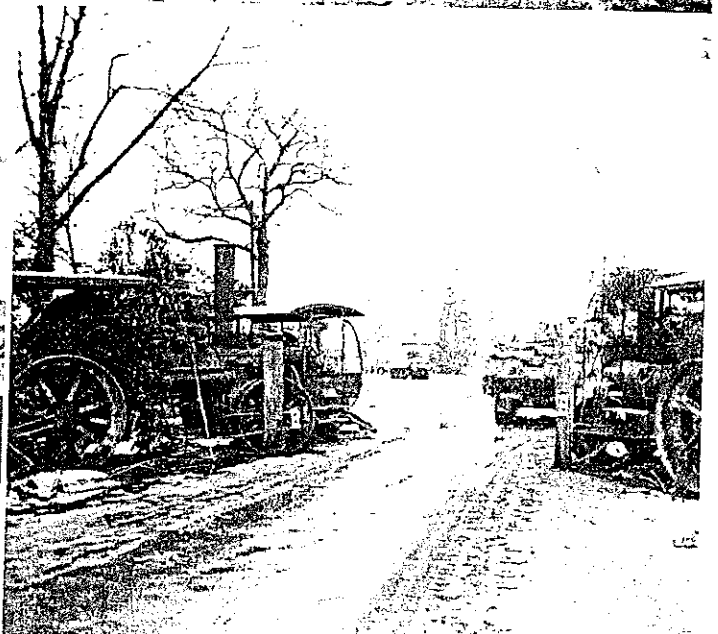
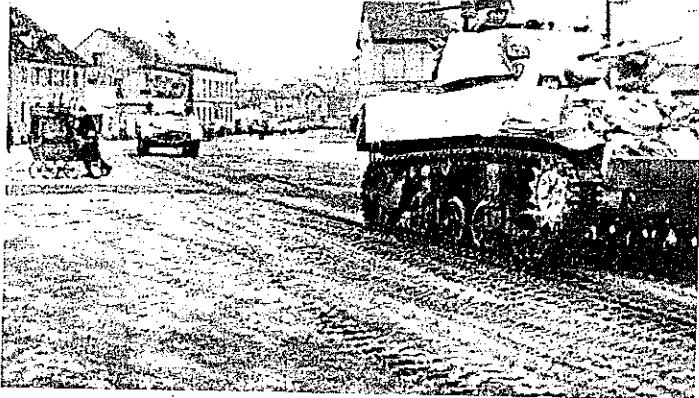
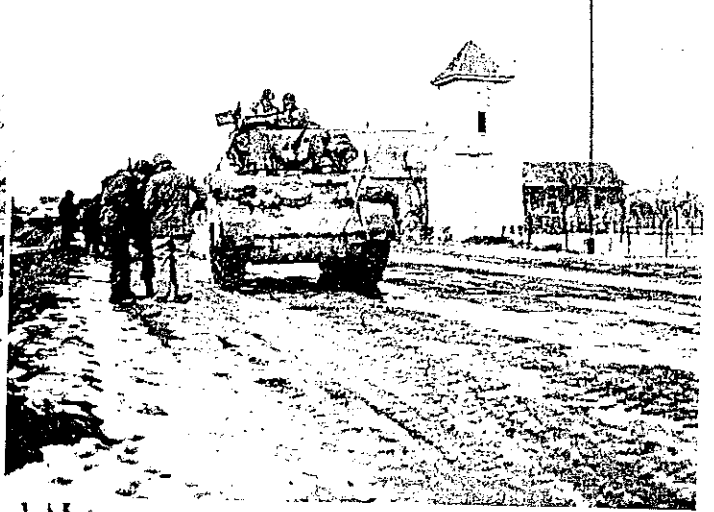
The French have shown their appreciation of the 12th A.D.'s participation in this great battle, by erecting a monument with a message to honor our sacrifices. It is located in "Colmar Square".

*Written January 10, 2004  
Colter Bay Campground  
Grand Teton Nat'l Park*









714th Tank Battalion attacks Germans south of Colmar (the Germans are 500 yards away in the forest at the edge of the city. The Germans scattered debris on the roads leading out from the city as tank road blocks.

## **The Lost Platoon**

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

One day our Platoon Leader, 1st Lt. McConnell, ordered all three squads to mount up in our half-tracks. Our mission was to proceed to an area where our help was requested. On this day we were enjoying milder weather, with no snow on the ground. I believe the month was March 1945, before we had crossed the Rhine River. The above lieutenant was killed by enemy machine gun fire on April 3, 1945, in our half-track.

As we proceeded on a winding dirt road, in a wooded area, at an above average speed, we came to a crossroad. We noticed several 10th Armored Division tanks stopped there. They had several German prisoners and were forcing one, big, tall soldier to chew out the crotch of a pair of U.S. Army coveralls. He was not allowed to use his hands to hold the coveralls. This enemy soldier was wearing these coveralls when captured.

On this particular day our lieutenant was riding in either the 2nd or 3rd squad's half-track, and was in the lead. After a brief conversation with one of the 10th A.D. tankers, we proceeded down one of the roads. As we rounded a curve in the road, we entered a small village at high speed. An elderly man and woman, to our right, were standing on their front porch, waving frantically at us. We thought they were welcoming us, instead they were trying to warn us. Then we saw three German Tiger Tanks parked along the narrow dirt street. The near tank fired at the lead half-track and this one round of tank cannon hit the left side with a glancing blow, hitting a five gallon can of gasoline and it exploded in a ball of flame. All three half-tracks came to a sudden halt. The two untouched half-tracks quickly backed up through a yard fence and took cover along side of the house. The squad in the lead half-track jumped out of the hit vehicle and went over a fence into a house. The driver ran in the opposite direction and took cover under a farm wagon. When this squad entered the house, they found several enemies sitting at a table eating lunch. One reached for a weapon and was shot.

One squad member was asleep in the half-track when it was hit. He woke up and found himself all alone. He saw several German soldiers out in the open, not far from the Tiger Tanks. He grabbed a .30 caliber light machine gun with ammo belt and jumped out and started firing at the enemy. They did not fire back and none of them appeared to be hit. Then this brave soldier finally realized he was spraying automatic fire at decoy silhouettes.

His squad got his attention and he joined them in the house they occupied. His name was Stan Schilling, a good friend of mine and a former member of my squad. After the long battle at Herrlisheim, he asked for a transfer to another squad. He had had a falling out with our squad sergeant. Due to his bravery of taking on three Tiger Tanks and dismounted enemy soldiers, he received a Bronze Star medal. What the enemy was doing or not doing, we will never know. I can picture them all, watching this lone U.S. soldier attacking this superior force with disbelief.

Stan and his wife Catherine visited us twice here at our home, before he passed away. We were also together at the 12th A.D. reunion in Denver in 1984. During one of these times together, Stan told me in detail what had taken place the day our lieutenant got lost. I had not known that Stan had received the Bronze Star medal for his action on this day. The driver of that injured half-track hid out until late afternoon when a lady came out to feed her chickens and do other chores. She finally spotted him and gave an alarm. He ran as fast as he could into the woods near the little village. He found his way back to friendly lines and rejoined his squad at a later date.

In the meantime, the lieutenant and other members of the squad escorted the German soldiers out the back door and headed back in the direction of the 10th A.D. personnel. Stan told me that none of the German prisoners survived, and that the squad got back to our Command Post late that day.

One needs to realize that all of this little adventure took place within a very short time, except for the abandoned half-track driver. As for what was taking place with our squad during this short period of time I can attest to, including the remaining squad. The two squad sergeants quickly made the decision to race back to where we had seen the 10th A.D. tanks and ask for help. At this time we believed that the lead squad had taken a direct hit from the Kraut tank and had been destroyed.

When we arrived back at the crossroads, the German soldier was still chewing away on the crotch of the G. I. coveralls. The 10th A.D. personnel could've cared less about our Tiger Tank problem and so we proceeded to return to our company command post. I have no idea what was reported to our company commander, Capt. Wilson. It usually appeared to me that we, the "peons", were kept in the dark as to what the big picture was. We were just to follow orders. I am happy to say our squad was good at this.

It was only a few days later, after the "lost platoon" returned from the village that the abandoned half-track was found. It was untouched by the enemy; only some scorching of paint caused by the gas can explosion. It was returned to our company. To this day I am unable to think of an answer as to why the Germans did not clean us out. Did we frighten them? I do not think so. My best thought on this is, it was a real miracle and blessing from my (and hopefully yours) omnipotent Father God. The Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Savior is my best friend.

Prepared March 16, 2004

## HELL AT OCHSENFURT GERMANY

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Engr. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

We approached the German town of Ochsenfurt from high ground. No enemy in sight from our view point on a bluff overlooking this town on the Main River. The bridge had been destroyed, either by the Germans or our aircraft.

Our platoon took over a tavern with bedrooms on the second floor for our billet. A German family or owners were allowed to eat and sleep in the large basement but were not allowed to leave the basement. I remember going down stairs. They had prepared a meal and it smelled very good. They offered me some but I declined. I was afraid of being poisoned.

Either that night or the next night our platoon was selected to ferry infantry across the Main River. I can remember this night, everyone was very quiet, and some Germans were dug in on the other side but not close to the riverbank. Everything went well. The other two platoons of B Company 119th Armd Eng. were assigned the job of constructing a double Bailey Bridge the next day.

When we returned to our company we found out that CCB had been under attack during the night, including our company less my platoon. A good number of German soldiers had been in hiding in the town waiting for the right moment to attack. They were successful in putting a lot of our vehicles out of commission and caught CCB off guard. Many Germans were killed and/or captured.

On April 3rd, 1945 the bridge was ready for our combat command to cross and continue our attack. Our platoon, in three half-tracks along with several tanks, immediately crossed and started across a plowed field, sloping up in elevation. Our tanks were in the lead approaching a small wooded area or island in the large field. The tankers were buttoned down and were firing into the woods. Many Germans were well dug in and were firing their automatic weapons.

We were ordered to fire into the woods from our half-track. We had a light, .30 caliber machine gun mounted on each side of our half-track so we could fire the one on the right towards the woods, plus firing our M1 rifles.

Our platoon leader, Lt. McConnell was riding in our half-track and was firing the .50 caliber machine gun at the enemy. He used up one box of ammo. Our squad sergeant, Doc Savage, who was in the machine gun ring mount with the Lt., leaned over to get a full ammo box that was in a rack over the windshield area. The half-track driver, T/5 Hobsen, had the metal windshield cover in the down position. The enemy had us zeroed in and we were standing or kneeling and were sitting ducks, exposed and entirely in the open. I believe the leaning over, to get the .50 caliber ammunition, saved Doc's life. Lt. McConnell, who was standing behind Doc was hit in the forehead and the slug passed on out the back of his head and left a big hole through the rear of his steel helmet. He was killed instantly. The spent slug fell to the floor of our half-track. At the same time we received this machine gun burst from the enemy; Private McIlvain was shot through the hand, T/5 Harris received a bad shoulder wound and Pvt. Buchannon caught a round through his neck whereupon he slowly slumped down into the seat. His blood hit me as it was spurting out. I don't think he even knew he was hit. If he was not dead, he quickly bled to death. A slug clipped the strap of the bandoleer of ammo I had on. We always sat in the same seats when we were in the half-track on each side of the rear door we had racks holding our bed rolls. There were bullet holes through the wooden racks. Buchannon's blood seeped into the bed roll box on his side. The dried blood in my bedroll kept reminding me of that day for a long time.

During this attack our C. O. Captain Wilson and his jeep driver were taking cover on the left side of one of the half-tracks. Our half-track came to a brief stop for some reason. Captain Wilson told our driver to return to Ochsenfurt where we drove into an alley to unload our dead and wounded. Blood was actually running out of the back doorway of our half-track.

We laid McConnell and Buchannon side by side on the cobblestone. I could see the sorrow and hurt in Wilson's eyes. A little old lady came by and tried to lean over to observe the dead at close range. I had a sudden strange urge to hit her with my rifle butt. I thank God I gained self-control. I thought to myself, "what right does she think she has to view our dead."

Corporal Foland became our squad leader and we proceeded to clean up our half-track and caught up with the rest of our platoon the next day. We soon received three replacements.

Our Company B's First Sergeant, De Felipo, received a battlefield Commission and became our new platoon leader. He was a good First Sergeant and became a good platoon leader.

For some reason, Lt. McConnell seemed to pick our squad for the infantry assignments. I remember Lt. De Felipo coming to us and saying that he knew about how Lt. McConnell had used us. This assignment was new to him and he said he would have to count on us also and so he wanted our cooperation. His approach was a good one and our cooperation was assured.

When the war was over we were in Austria, under French Army command. Our company was the last unit pulled back from the front. Our division was rushed back in Germany for occupation duty.

We arrived, at least our platoon, on May 9th, 1945 at Heuback, Germany. On this day Sgt. Savage rejoined us and took over from Corporal Foland as our squad leader. He had been released from a hospital fully recovered from his wound of April 3rd, 1945.

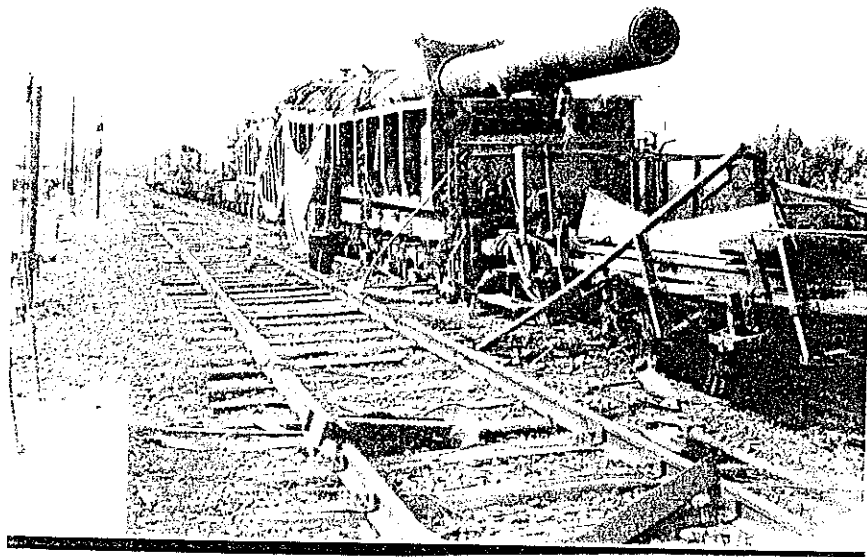
It would be great to locate T/S Harris and Pvt. McIlvain. They probably do not know about our Hellcat Association.

Written on June 26th, 1988  
1830 Hours  
Space 17  
Many Glaciers Campground  
Glacier National Park





*A captured German railway gun—one of the enemy's most formidable weapons.*



*119th AEB, Bridge at Ochsenfurt, Germany.*

# Hell at Ochsenfurt Germany

## Part II

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

In Part I of my story about a bloody day at Ochsenfurt, Germany, my closing sentences were, "It would be great to locate T/5 Harris and Pvt. McIlvain. They probably do not know about our Hellcat Association. My original story on this subject was written on June 26, 1988. This story appeared in our monthly "Hellcat News" publication. Our 12th A.D. Historian, Ken Bradstreet remembered my two closing sentences of this story. Ken is a very dedicated member of the 12th Armd. Div. Association. He served in "A" Battery of our 494th Field Artillery, 12th A.D. On December 18th, 1993, Ken telephoned me to tell me he had found Glenn McIlvain, my long lost squad buddy. Ken had attended a "Purple Heart Veteran" meeting in Kansas. Each recipient of this reward, had to stand up and give their name, combat outfit and where they were at the time when wounded. Ken visited with Glenn at the close of the meeting and told him about my story, and my desire to be in touch with him. Ken, who lives in Emporia, KS, got Glenn's address and phone number for me.

I wrote to Glenn immediately, but it was awhile before Glenn's wife, Marie, wrote to me. Glenn had brain cancer and spent much of his time in the V.A. Hospital in Wichita, KS. Glenn lived in Madison, Kansas. Marie's first letter stated that Glenn was back in the hospital taking more treatments. I failed by not keeping all notes and letters from Marie. I do have a letter I've saved as Glenn dictated to his wife, on March 13, 1995. He was feeling better and only had to take a pain pill, now and then.

In this letter they wanted to know if we planned to come to the reunion in Emporia, KS. assume this was Ken Bradstreet's yearly chapter meeting that was so well attended. In closing their letter they stated, "Glad to hear from you, please do come in May."

To this very day I regret that I did not make the effort to go see Glenn and Marie, and attend this reunion. I do hope Marie forgave me and Glenn and I can embrace each other, in Heaven. He was such a fine combat soldier.

When Stan Schilling and his wife, Catherine, visited us here at our home, on one of two occasions, Stan and I talked about that day of April 3rd, 1945, at Ochsenfurt, Germany. Stan had transferred to another squad at that time, so was not with my squad on that fateful day, when Glenn was wounded. I told Stan that to this day I believe that it was friendly fire that killed two and wounded three in my half-track. He was very interested in this comment. We were the only squad of three that were ordered to fire into the woods. This is understandable as we were in the lead they were behind us. The tank crews were all shielded with their hatches closed and only firing .30 cal. machine guns. They were ahead of us and were circling this patch of woods. The other two half-tracks did not come under fire.

Later that day, as our squad was washing out our half-track to get rid of the sticky blood, I was the only one to volunteer to scoop up our Lt.'s brains. To this day I can see the shining .30 cal. ammo round, in his brains. The Germans used very similar ammo for their light machine guns and rifles as we did.

We hear about "friendly fire" in every war, including the war we are in today. This reminds me of Matthew 24:6 (NKJV) which states, "and you will hear of Wars and rumors of wars, See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." My best friend, Lord Jesus, spoke these words.

*Written June 9, 2004  
Grand Teton Nat'l Park*

## NIGHT TIME ADVANCE ON HANDS AND KNEES

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

Early in April 1945, somewhere in Germany, my squad was making a night-time advance with a small task force of a few medium tanks. We were on a narrow, dirt road when the column was halted. Our squad, in our half-track, were ordered to dismount and probe for anti-tank mines and/or bombs in the road way, using our bayonets to probe with. The Germans had a lot of plastic tank mines at that time. We could not detect them with our hand held mine detectors unless they used a metallic pressure release booby-trap under it. We had had a lot of training on mines, booby traps, and high explosives. We each carried a few one-quarter lb. blocks of T.N.T. in our pockets, however our fuses were carried in a separate pocket for safety. A bullet would not set off T.N.T. We probed the road shoulder to shoulder in order not to miss any explosives that may be there. When we had cleaned a short distance someone would bring the tanks and our half-tracks forward; then we would repeat the process, over and over again.

I remember this experience very well. It was a cool night but the ground was soft and smelled like newly plowed earth. The night was pitch-dark and we expected machine-gun fire at any time. We only whispered to one another, but we knew the enemy would hear the tanks from a great distance. All went great with no explosives found in the dark hours.

The next morning we did find a buried 500 lb. bomb in the road way. We carefully uncovered it sufficiently to tie a long rope onto the nose ring. We pulled it out into a field and exploded it.

We were just outside of a village and the tanks were in the lead. Our squad, using our .50 caliber machine-gun mounted on the half-track, sprayed the red tile roofs. We watched the tiles slither into the street.

As we were probing for mines in the dark, the thought came to me, "could we be ahead of all elements; of the great Hellcat 12th AD." Who knows!

## FRANTIC EFFORT

John P. Parkison  
Co B., 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

One day in April, 1945, the 1st Platoon of "B" Co. 119th Engr. Bn. was dismounted from our half-tracks for infantry duty. We were with a small task force of four or five medium tanks. As we moved forward with the tanks we encountered small arms fire. We were in a heavy wooded area, and proceeded slowly with the tanks, machine-guns blazing away. Within a few minutes the German survivors surrendered. They had not dug fox-holes, the only cover except for trees was piled up pine tree needles. Many of the Germans were either very young or elderly men. Some had new uniforms and rifles. I noticed a brand new rifle laying by an elderly German soldier. As I knelt over him his eyes opened. His face was chalk white. I saw slivers of bone protruding through his boots. Machine-gun rounds had hit him in several places. I took a blanket from his nearby field pack, covered him and called for a medic. As I moved out to keep pace with the task force I grabbed up his new rifle. When I had time to examine it, I found it did not have a round in the chamber. The bore was completely filled with cosmoline. The rifle had never been fired.

Many Germans were frantic and desperate during the last days of the war, with little or no training.

I kept that new rifle and mailed it home after the war was over. My son, Tommy, is the proud owner of this rifle.

Written on July 12th, 1991

## THE MAJOR AND THE PRIVATE

John P. Parkison  
Co. B., 119th Armd. Engr. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

One day in April 1945, the task force I was in captured a town in Germany. We had stopped our forward movement, beside a railroad depot. A German railroad cannon was on the track nearby; these weapons were very large and could be fired miles away from the enemy targets. My squad put it out of commission using blocks of T.N.T., then we entered the depot. There was a large locked safe against the far wall. We decided we would blow the lock off. My buddy and I placed a charge of T.N.T. and some "Composition C" on the door. We used detonating cord to set the charge off. When we went back into the building, the safe had gone through the wall and the door was completely off of the safe. We had had no training in safe blowing. The safe was full of currency, some current and some obsolete. I still have some of this old currency. An officer came in; he was a major in the tank outfit we were with. He looked at the safe and said, "I just knew the 'blankity, blankity' engineers would beat me in this depot". I felt brave and safe and said, "That's what you get Sir for being in the rear echelon". This big, good-looking major looked at me, smiled and left. Of course we all knew the tankers were usually at the very front and never back with rear combat soldiers. And the major knew that we knew and always wanted us close by.

-Written February 13th, 2002

## REMEMBER WHEN - FRIENDLY FIRE

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.,  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

A few days before the end of the war with Germany we were moving along rapidly through German towns and countryside. We entered a town where the civilians had white flags flying from each building. Our task force had come to a halt in close column. There was a problem up at the front of the column delaying our advance. As we sat, or stood, in our half-track civilians filled the sidewalks or were in open doorways and windows. P.F.C. Johnson stood up in our half-track. He had a small derringer in one hand and a long barreled Luger with the wooden holster attached, to use as a rifle stock, in his other hand. He was showing these items to someone in the vehicle in front of us. I stood up at this time for a better view of the area.

A shot rang out and Johnson slumped to the floor. He was shot through the head. I think he died instantly. We all thought a sniper had killed him. The civilians scrambled to get into their homes and/or out of sight. Our squad started firing at the windows and doorways. (I hope no civilians were killed). When the firing stopped a heart-broken tanker came to our half-track and told us he had accidentally bumped the trigger on a .30 caliber machine-gun with his knee or some part of his body. Only one round was fired, as I remember it was not too easy to fire just one round, at a time. He was gunner in his medium tank. He was so sorry and sincere about his accident it was all he could do to keep from crying.

P.F.C. Johnson was the last one to be killed in our squad. He was the one who crawled out onto the road to identify a dead infantry man in the Herrlisheim, France story.

As already mentioned I had stood up just before Johnson was hit. I felt the round brush my face so close, it was like static electricity from someone who touches you after walking across a carpet. My assigned half-track seat was on the left next to the rear door. Johnson's position was nearer the front of the half-track. The tank from where the round was fired was right behind our vehicle.

I have another account of "friendly fire" but will mention it another day.

Written on March 20th, 1991

## **A Surprise Combat Meal**

John P. Parkison

B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.

12th Armored Division

1st Squad, 1st Platoon

It was April 1945, our Combat Command, had made great progress deeper into Germany, on this particular day. This "Task Force" had called a halt for the day.

Our squad was assigned a house to spend the night in. As usual, we covered the windows after searching the house for booby traps, occupants, etc.

My great buddy Tommy Hughes and I searched the upstairs. The brick flue in one of the rooms had a steel, small door in it. We opened it and found, what appeared to be a smoked ham, hanging in it. We took it down-stairs to show the squad what we had found. Others had found various other food items that were canned and sealed.

One squad member, that had joined us recently as a replacement, volunteered to be the chief cook, and would prepare a meal for us.

When the meal was ready and everyone had been eating for a while, our cook, started to stomp and paw the floor. I guess we silently thought this new guy was already off of his rocker. When he did not get the desired effects from us, he started to whinny like a horse. As a young horseman from Montana, I shouted that we were eating horsemeat. We had a lot of comments and laughter. Our cook had been a butcher before he joined the army; he knew it was horsemeat. I was the only one who stopped eating the meat. Just did not have the heart to eat a beloved horse.

Later on, I did eat a horse steak, and it tasted good, I just hoped no one would say "whoa" while I was swallowing.

10 June 2004

Grand Teton National Park



## **“German Sniper and Friendly Artillery Fire”**

John P. Parkison  
B Co., 119th Armd. Engr. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad., 1st Platoon

It was April 1945, and we were making good progress spearheading the 7th Army across Germany and heading for Austria. We had captured a good-sized German town, late in the day, with orders to spend the night there. The usual night defense positions were selected. My buddy, Tommy Hughes, and I were to set up a .30 Cal. Light Machine Gun position at the edge of a vacant lot. We picked up bricks and other concrete and rock rubble lying around and used them for some cover and concealment.

I was picking up another load of these building items, when a spot on the ground by my feet seemed to explode; I thought some nut threw something at us. Tommy yelled to take cover. I ran to the machine gun nest he was building. We decided it must have been a sniper from some distance away, and if the sniper had us zeroed in, he could fire at us during the night. It was decided I would try to expose his location. I would run, zigzag, across the empty lot as fast as I was able. Tommy would try to cover me and watch for the sniper.

It worked. We heard many shots from our group, who was behind us on the street. They must have been successful, as they shouted success.

The next morning I was shaving in the kitchen of the house we had slept in. An Army Air Corps Lieutenant was also shaving near me. He was spending a few days with our Company to learn how he could better help us, in his strafing and bombing runs in close combat support. All of a sudden heavy incoming artillery fire started to land around our area. Our house was hit as well as other buildings. Some of the shells whistled on down the street and the sound was so concentrated we thought we would be blown up. This Lieutenant yelled out it was our own artillery firing on us. There must have been a communication flaw and they had not yet been told that we had captured this town, as we had made such great progress the day before. This friendly fire happened occasionally. Anyway, the firing was stopped by someone on the radio. None of my little group was hurt. Seldom, if any of our days were uneventful!

## **“Up and Over”**

John P. Parkison  
Co. B, 119th Armd. Engr. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

The year was 1945, and the 12th Armored Division was spearheading General Patch's 7th Army across Germany. Our enemy was retreating; they would select the time and place to put up a strong point of resistance. This practice gave them the advantage of cover and concealment. These instances would slow us down, until we eliminated the resistance. Some of these battles were very concentrated and the enemy, often times, fought fanatically. My squad (as Engineers) removed or destroyed many roadblocks to enable our tanks and vehicles to proceed. As a spearhead, Combat Command, we were to punch our way through the enemy resistance, and let the combat forces, following us, do the clean up.

As we proceeded in this manner, the Germans would close in behind us. So many times we were actually behind enemy lines. At nightfall, we would set up tight nighttime defense, unless we continued on during the darkness. One date, April 12 1945, is easy to remember, because it was the birthday of my future wife, Mary. Also on this day our advance was halted to give time for any necessary maintenance and refueling our vehicles. We had been directed to take over a house located on the perimeter of the area for nighttime defense. Our squad sergeant ordered us to clean our weapons. I had field stripped my M1 rifle and laid the parts on the hood of a jeep. Along came another fast moving jeep and came to a sliding stop in a large mud hole; mud and water covered my rifle parts. The driver was so excited he blurted out that our President Roosevelt had died, and then sped away to tell others.

It was also in April that our task Force was proceeding through fields and narrow dirt roads. One day our column was in such terrain, heading into a narrow pass between hills on a narrow road. Our squad, in our halftrack, was near the head of the column, behind some tanks and a platoon of infantry in three halftracks. The column came to a sudden stop and an officer hurried back to tell us we were needed back towards the rear, as some tanks crossing an open plowed field had encountered a German minefield. He ordered us to get there as fast as we could. This narrow dirt road prevented us, or anyone else, from turning our vehicle around. We dismounted and headed out on the double to locate the tanks in trouble.

I was the smallest, or runt, of our squad, but the fastest. I saw a tank out in the plowed field and headed for it. I glanced back once, and noticed my squad was following in single file following my path or footprints. At that time it never came to my mind I might step on a mine, I just wanted to get there. The nearest one, behind me, was my best buddy in the squad, but he wasn't too close to me. Just as I reached the tank and came to a halt, the tank started to move, the ground was soft and damp, I can still see a track spinning on the near side. I guess they got impatient waiting for us. A terrible explosion lifted the tank up some; to this day I'm not sure if it was an anti-tank mine or a small bomb they had set off. All I remember is, I was in the air. My buddy said I did a complete summersault, and landed on my feet. When the explosion happened he said to himself, "that's the end of Parky".

I was weak and shaken up and I backed off a ways and sat on the soft ground. I could not hear and my head and ears hurt. I was conscious but certainly out of reality. I do not remember how I got back to our haltrack, or what took place to clear the minefield. I did not report this experience to our medic, as I had no sign of bleeding or open wounds. To me this was a real miracle. My head and ears were slowly feeling better. Besides, so many of our ambulances were ambushed on their way back to our Field Aid Stations, as the Germans would reoccupy the terrain as we passed through; this was always kept in mind by a wounded soldier. In retrospect my squad members must have been willing to follow my path to the tanks. I served as a trip wire or trailbreaker for them.

I believe it was late May or early June 1945, that I developed a very severe headache. Our company medic sent me by ambulance to our Division Hospital in Aalen, Germany; this hospital was not a great distance from our abode. At this time I do not remember what I told the army doctor. My guess is, I told him about the "up and over" experience and when a swinging .50 caliber machine gun barrel hit me on the side of my head. My steel helmet took up most of the blow.

On February 9, 2000, I filled out the necessary forms to request a copy of my service records and medical files, plus a request for a duplicate issue of my service medals. I never got any confirmation on these requests. So two years later, on Feb. 4, 2002, I visited our local County Veteran's office to seek help for the records I had requested. I was fortunate to talk to the man in charge. His dad was in the Navy during WWII, and at Pearl Harbor on 12-7-41. He personally got on his computer and started filling out the necessary forms, while asking me many questions. He also wanted me to request a V. A. Medical Card. I told him I had Kaiser Permanente coverage, but he insisted I apply for the card. He soon realized my hearing was bad, with all my requests to repeat what he was saying. I asked him if the V. A. helped out on hearing aids. He said he would fill out papers and send them on, requesting disability consideration. So he asked many questions in regards to combat I had been exposed to.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, Oakland Regional Office sent me forms to fill out, in April of this year. I soon got a hearing evaluation appointment on May 14. On June 27 I received a letter stating that they were approving a service connected disability of 10%, and currently they are giving me a complete physical. They have treated me very well. Our present V. A. system is alive and well, with a very large backlog.

On Sept. 21, 2002 I received a letter from the National Personnel Records Center, stating that a fire had destroyed the major portion of records of Army Military Personnel for the period of 1912 through 1959. Some record's sources, which often contain information which can be used to reconstruct service record data lost in the fire; however, complete records cannot be reconstructed. My request, for the medals, has been honored and the Department of the Army is currently processing requests received in February 2002.

As of September 26, my digital hearing aids are on order. It will take approximately three months before they are ready. They will be free and replacement batteries are free as well. What a great Christmas present for the two Christmas days spent in Europe.

I'm sure the five-plus months of front-line duty, with all the artillery, mortar, rocket launchers, tank cannon, explosives, enemy plane strafing, and small arms fire was harmful to my ears. Then the experience of the "up and over" explosion did not help me any. Kaiser Permanente back in the 1960's tested my ears each year and I did not pass the test at any time. The good news is I came home in 1946, with two ears!

## **Assault by a .50 Caliber Machine Gun**

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

Date: Late April 1945

Location: Germany

Terrain: Wooded

Activity: Combat

Unit: CCB 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division

My Unit: 119<sup>th</sup> Armd. Combat Engr. Bn. "B" Co., 1<sup>st</sup> Squad, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon

Assignment: Supporting Tanks and Infantry

Our squad's halftrack was having some engine problem. Our squad leader said he could only spare one man to be a guard to protect the driver and halftrack. He asked for a volunteer, I volunteered. We were told where to find a maintenance truck that was equipped to handle the engine problem. We were ordered to hurry and get back as soon as possible.

We took off in a wooded area. I rode in the back of the halftrack where I could observe clearly and be ready to fire my M1 Rifle. There was a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on the turret ring.

We were speeding along through the trees, when a low hanging limb caught the .50 cal. M.G., causing it to rotate rapidly, and the barrel hit me on the head, knocking me across the halftrack. It was a hard blow, my steel helmet, no doubt saved my life. I remember pain on the left side of my head that left me weak and shaken.

I never, to the best of my knowledge, reported this, the driver was aware of what happened; at this time I did not mention it to a medic.

We were not allowed to keep a diary during our combat months, for fear they could fall into the enemies' hands. I honored this order. So dates and many locations I do not remember.

The first week of May 1945 found us in Austria in close combat with the Germans. When it was apparent the German Army was beaten, our 12<sup>th</sup> Armd. Div. was ordered to return to Germany and occupy an area in the American Zone.

It wasn't too long before I developed a severe headache. I was sent by ambulance to a small hospital in Aalen, Germany, not far from where my unit was stationed. This hospital was set up to serve the 12<sup>th</sup> A.D. personnel. I believe I was there for several days and told them about my hearing injury due to an exploding anti-tank mine that blew me up in the air in a complete summersault and also the blow to the head by the .50 cal. M.G. barrel. All this is on file with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs in the Oakland Regional Office, 1301 Clay Street, Oakland, CA. I have presently a service-connected compensation on my hearing loss, as of 13 Feb. 2002.

Since June 1994, I have had periods of head pains and numbness on the left side of my face and head. The numbness usually occurs during the nighttime. The head pain is always there, sometimes severe, with periods of relief. I feel better if I'm up and

moving around. My V.A. doctor told me, I might have nerve damage. The past three years have been more acute.

When I requested my medical records from the National Personnel Records Center, I received a letter from them stating that a fire had destroyed the major portion of records of the Army Military Personnel, for the period of 1912 through 1959.

I was a squad member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squad, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, "B" Co., 119<sup>th</sup> Armored Combat Engr. Bn. 12<sup>th</sup> A.D. 7<sup>th</sup> Army. Our squad rode in a halftrack and supported the "Task Force" with the tanks and armored infantry. I was rifleman and bazooka-man. Our squad was infantry 95% of the time. I never was a driver of a military vehicle until after the E.T.O. war was over, on 8 May 1945. When I was discharged from the Army on 8 Feb. 1946, the processor said he had put down my specialty occupation as a light-truck driver because a rifleman and bazooka-man highly trained in explosives would not likely be a good recommendation for a civilian job.

John P. Parkison  
4 Oct. 2004

## **Combat-Loneliness**

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

Most likely you know exactly how it feels to be lonely. We have all been in that situation at one time or another. It may be a matter of feeling rejected by someone, or it could be the sense of loss brought on by a substantial geographical distance between you and loved ones. Loneliness can strike us in many forms.

By the way, I am a "born again" believer and you may get a great deal of scripture in some of my stories. If, by chance, you do not read and study the Bible, you may be reading the Bible without realizing it.

Loneliness is actually an internal problem and is a serious problem. I experienced this problem many times, in my combat days, in Europe. It did not matter if I was surrounded with my buddies, or all alone, in a bitter cold night, standing guard duty in enemy territory. My worst loneliness periods were in the nighttime, it would be pitch black, and I was alert to any little sound or movement. This feeling would hit me like a blast of frigid cold air and everything seemed terribly empty. I could actually feel a terrible weight on my shoulders. I often remember this loneliness. I can picture a fence post, a tree, or a corner of a building that I may have been standing by.

I know now I did not have knowledge of, nor a close relationship with my Lord, Jesus Christ. I did not know He was there, standing guard duty at my side. My very best friend was always there, longing for my fellowship with Him. However, I now know I have a very close relationship with Him (Jesus Christ). Who else could instill in me to jump out of bed each morning, between 3AM and 4AM to have close fellowship with Him and His word?

Jesus made a promise and always keeps His promises. His words are: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5) NKJV. With Him, we will never be alone.

John Parkison  
January 24, 2004

## The Capture of Sixty Seven German Soldiers

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

One late afternoon in April 1945, our platoon, in half-tracks, was accompanying three Sherman Tanks down a dirt road. The terrain was flat, with fields plowed and ready for planting. We had just passed by a few small buildings at the crossroads when a corporal in one of the half-tracks shouted "mines!". All vehicles came to a sudden stop. My squad's half-track had already bypassed the spot where the corporal had spotted a minefield. One or two tanks were ahead of us. Our squad quickly unloaded and noticed a lot of anti-tank mines crudely planted and covered with dirt. They were all protruding above ground level.

Private Roberts had left his M1 Rifle in the half-track and was the first man to pick up two mines and head for what appeared to be a low place to deposit the mines into. Tommy Hughes and I were a few steps behind him. We each carried one mine and our rifles. Roberts was in for a big surprise. His low spot was a foxhole, with two German soldiers in it. One had his rifle pointed at Roberts. All Roberts could think of was to raise his mines to throw at them. Tommy and I laid down our mines and pressed off the safety on our M1's with our trigger finger. The Germans raised their hands and surrendered, they had only one rifle between them.

Everyone was alerted by this time and ready for action. Tommy and I quickly spotted other foxholes out in the plowed ground, by the mounds of dirt. We proceeded to the closest one and out came two more Germans. After repeating our stroll to other foxholes with the same outcome, two of the tanks headed out into the field and flushed out a lot of scared German soldiers. As no shots were fired, others got into the action. Our platoon members back at the half-tracks cleared the minefield and put the mines in one or two of the empty foxholes; they would be blown up as we left the area.

Tommy and I never did look back to see if we were the only ones going forward. We were alert and found almost all the foxholes contained only one rifle and no other equipment. Then we heard the tanks moving and noticed one tank heading into the field to our left. That made us feel good.

We recently had found some loot in a German warehouse, including a box of Italian cigars, the black, bitter, twisted ones. I had just lit one up to try it out when the "mine" alarm happened. As we headed back with prisoners, I only had a stub of the cigar left in my mouth. I never tried to smoke one again.

Our prisoner tally was: sixty-seven grateful Germans. Grateful that the long war, for them, was over. We searched each one. One of them that I searched could speak English and told me that he had recently been in Norway for a long time. He had a neat knife and scabbard on his belt. As it was a weapon, I found a new belt for it to hang on. The scabbard was really fancy with colored engravings. Later on I sold it to someone who just had to have it.



When we asked why they had no officer in charge, they told us that when they had seen us coming with tanks, the officer hid out. We started a search and found him in a small culvert and took him prisoner. He told us that his orders were to dig in and stay out of sight, until after dark, and then to ambush any enemy coming through this area.

I do not remember what we did with the prisoners, or what our mission was. Our squad and sometimes the entire platoon supported tanks without any Infantry with us.

Private Roberts was the buddy who borrowed my shovel entrenching tool to finish his foxhole, back in January 1945, when he was wounded during the Herrlesheim battle. He was a replacement to our squad and was the oldest one in our squad. He had a great sense of humor. Everyone liked him.

Prepared March 19, 2004

## **Liberated Sauerkraut and Dill Pickles**

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

After our Combat Command crossed the Rhine River, and proceeded to advance deeper into Germany, we often stopped for the night. After capturing a small town, we would occupy various houses and buildings and set up our night defense positions.

One such place I remember well. Our field kitchen was set up, and a hot meal was prepared for our company. A Staff Sgt. commanded the kitchen crew. This very able Sgt. proceeded to become intoxicated, on some German Schnapps, and with his .45 cal. pistol, he walked into a pigpen and shot several pigs. His intention was to provide the company with an improved diet. He was relieved of his Sgt. stripes and became a Buck Private on the spot. He was assigned to our squad. This new assignment for him was a blessing for us, because he became our squad cook, and he was a really great cook! We often prepared our late evening meals in a German home, which we had taken over for the night. We would find canned fruit, meat in a smoker, whatever could be found; along with what items we may have had from our combat rations. Our field kitchen was not always where we were. We had to be real careful of any liberated food items though, because they often had been doctored with poison. We also used wood in place of coal bricks, formed out of crushed coal, as they were often doctored up with explosives.

In this same town there was a large processing plant for dill pickles and sauerkraut. A few barrels of each were loaded into an empty supply truck to take along with us. I can only relate to the taste of these two items by my own experience, and those of some of my squad members; "they would gag a maggot".

Due to complaints from our company personnel, relating to badly prepared meals by the kitchen crew, we lost our squad cook. He was given back his stripes and reinstated as our mess Sgt.. The old saying is, "The Army travels on its stomach".

*Written June 10, 2004  
Colter Bay Campground  
Grand Teton Nat'l Park.*

## **Innocent Victims of Combat**

John P. Parkison  
B. Co, 119th Armd. Eng. Bn.  
12th Armored Division  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon

We were in Germany and had advanced through a small town. Our platoon was sent ahead, to clear a minefield and repair a bridge, so that our tanks could cross. When we arrived we were told the enemy had been spotted, in a grove of pine trees, opposite from the bridge. As usual, my squad was ordered to take up positions and protect the other two squads, while they repaired the bridge. There were railroad tracks running parallel to the dirt road we had just traveled on. We ran to the railroad tracks and took up positions on the near side, not far from the trees. To our left was a large, two-story house. No other building was in our view. We saw no movement where the Germans were supposed to be located.

Tommy Hughes was about ten feet to my left. We were all in the prone position, rifles ready. Within a few minutes, Tommy and I spotted a crouched figure heading for the back of the house. This person had on dark clothes and what appeared to be a cap, taking a path through some bushes and scattered trees. Tommy fired his rifle and the person went down. We then heard screaming, and two young girls came out of the house, running to the fallen person, their mother. Our squad did not leave our positions. Someone else investigated and soon a medic placed this woman on a stretcher and she was transported to an aid station to the rear, on a jeep. We got word she had been hit in a hip and had died of shock. This woman had been going out to a root cellar to secure food she had there; this information come from the two girls. It would have been for me to fire at the supposed enemy, if I had been on the left. Tommy was heartbroken over this tragedy.

In another occasion, we were in a large city. The tanks had been firing almost point blank, at foxholes and barricades, in the wide grassy median strip between two streets. When things had quieted down, our column came to a halt. Our platoon stopped in front of a large apartment building. Civilians started appearing in open windows in upper floors. At one window we saw what appeared to be a young German soldier, with a German wool cap on, the likes of which they wore, when they were not wearing a helmet. Someone fired his rifle and hit this person in the head. All of us were watching windows, doors and rooftops for snipers. The shot was not fired by anyone in our platoon. It turned out a young boy had been shot through the head. He had been wearing a German soldier's wool cap. Many civilian casualties are bound to happen in combat zones.

*Written July 8, 2004*

Scenes  
Near  
12th  
CP  
in  
Germany  
May  
1945



It was during the last few days of April and the first few days of May that the Hellcats came to realize that the German machine was broken and the end of fighting was near.

The division's mission was to block the mountain passes leading into Italy and the Brenner Pass, and to clear the Inn River Valley. Tasks forces were making good time, meeting only light resistance from small groups of fanatical SS troops.

On May 2, Lt. Col. Cameron's 17th AIB set what is believed to be a ground force record for movement through enemy territory - 60 miles in seven hours. The 17th was operating under CCR, whose mission was to proceed from Starnberg on the Wurm to the Inn River and to clear the river valley to the south into Austria.

Supported by a platoon of tanks from C-23, the 17th jumped off at 0600, followed by the rest of the Combat Command. At 1500 the fast-traveling doughboys whose half-tracks moved two abreast down the wide and smooth Salzburg super-highway, halted their column beyond Pfraundorf, 60 miles from their starting point. Then they realized they were alone in the spearhead position. All men were cautioned: "Don't fire at a soul; it may be the Russians."

The 23rd Tank Bn and other elements of CCR had been halted many miles back, when SS engineers blew a bridge on the autobahn after the 17th had passed over it. Later the 23rd caught up with its companion task force, by-passed it, and with B-17 crossed the Austrian border at 1318 on May 3. Meanwhile CCB was

waiting for the 119th Engineers to construct a bridge over the Loisach River at East Sindelsdorf. CCR units were preparing to attack south towards Innsbruck.

It was on May 3 that the Division captured its largest number of prisoners, processing 12,060 through the division cages.

On the following day, units of CCA continued to advance slowly to the south, encountering stiff resistance, including defended road blocks and small arms, machine gun and artillery fire. Having reached Sparchen at 2100. May 4, the command was relieved in position by the 36th Inf. Div., coming up from a month long rest.

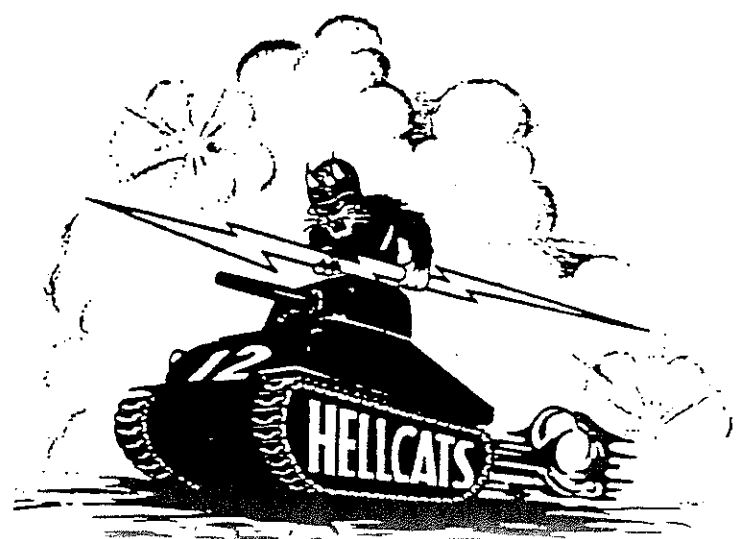
CCR continued to advance to the east along the autobahn, meeting strong passive resistance as far as Bad Reichenhall.

The word that every Hellcat eagerly awaited arrived at noon on May 4. Nothing could have been easier on the ears. The Division was ordered withdrawn from the front lines and was made Seventh Army reserve.

Orders received from Seventh Army indicated that the 12th Armored would assume control of the Seventh Army Security Command in the vicinity of Heidenheim, Germany. The movement took place May 4-6 with the Division CP opening in that small, quaint city at 1600 hours on May 5.

At 0250, May 6, the Hellcats received the welcome news that the German Army Group on their front had surrendered, and that all troops were to halt in place. At last the fighting was over.

On the official VE Day, May 8, the units of the 12th Armored were in their assigned areas and



## A LONG KEPT SECRET

One day in 1999 I was replacing the fascia board on our shop building. My dear wife had gone to our church to a ladies meeting. A Christian lady friend of ours was out exercising on her bike and saw me on a ladder working on the shop. She rode in to see what I was doing and to chat a little, and to thank me for serving in the army, during World War II. She told me that she really appreciated all the sacrifices that all the servicemen endured to keep this country free. She asked me if I had, or still have, any bad combat dreams. I told her, yes, and that I would tell her about one dream. She would be the first person to hear it. It was getting hot, standing in the sunshine, so I took two chairs from the building and put them in the shade to sit on. The year was as mentioned 1999. I believe it was around May 8th, V-E Day or May 18th, Armed Forces Day.

I told her that for 52 years I had been having a particular combat nightmare. I dreaded this dream; it visited me often, until the fall of 1997. I always woke up before I wanted to. I would fight this awakening. I believed the answer to my anxiety would be answered if the dream continued. I would wake up with a big jerk, exhausted, soaking wet. The dream was always the same, our squad, in our halftrack, coming down a lane after leaving a German home. This place reminded me of a typical ranch home out west in the U.S.A. The yard, outbuildings and corrals all looked as a cattle ranch would. I'm sure some of the details of this dream have faded away since 1997.

We were in Germany, and it was April 1945. We had the enemy on the run; thousands of German troops were surrendering. Often we experienced fierce battles with the German SS troops; they would choose the location that was to their advantage. The regular German army troops, called the Wehrmacht, often chose not to fight anymore and wanted to surrender. However, the Waffen SS elite German troops forced them to fight and to not surrender. The SS shot many soldiers in the German Wehrmacht for wanting to surrender. The common feeling we all had was that the war would soon be over. As we came down the lane, I had a feeling of great power and I felt that I could deal with whatever we would face. The thought came to me that it just might be ok for the war to continue for awhile longer. We had the best army in the world on the run. To this day, I believe these terrible sinful feelings of power, etc. came from Satan, the prince of this world. I do not know for sure why I had this dream, but I do know why I had it for 52 years.

The end to this dream, as stated, was in 1997. I felt that as it was now 1999, and that sufficient time had passed without this dream, I could safely tell someone of the outcome. When I was experiencing this dream for the last time, I received a Blessed Miracle from God. I was really fighting the usual waking up without the answer I wanted. I called out to God for His help. A still small voice distinctly answered in the depths of my being began to speak with tenderness, power, love, and comfort. This still small voice answered, "I will grant your wish if you insist, however, let me take this burden from you, please give it to me". This soothing voice mended a disturbed heart

and the twisting fear began to ebb from my mind. I woke up sitting on the edge of the bed, drenching wet but at peace. As of today, February 3rd 2002, not only this nightmare but also all the many combat dreams have not returned. Praise God!

I still dream about the army, but no combat. My dear wife soon found out after we were married that I slept with my eyes open. After a few years I slept with them closed. I've only told this dream to our friend, to Mary, and at a Men's breakfast at my church, when I had to share my testimony, about my life experiences, etc. It took 45 minutes and was well received.

I now know that long ago, I should have called out to my Lord Jesus Christ for His help, and turn all this anxiety over to Him. This reminds me of Psalm 57:2 (NIV)

**"I cry out to God Most High, To God, who fulfills his purpose for me."**

In closing; my prayer for each of the readers of this little story, is to pay attention to Jesus and His Word. For He loves you unconditionally and invites you to open your heart's door and invite Him in. In St. John 3:3 (KJV) is this.

**"Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a man be born again (from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God. "**

Salvation is a free gift, you cannot earn salvation by work or good deeds. If you have not invited Lord Jesus into your heart, please do not delay. Once you experience physical death without His plan of salvation, it is too late. Jesus in St. John 3:7 (KJV) said:

**"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."**

John P. Parkison  
February 3rd, 2002

ready to move against the enemy again.

## ARMOR BLAZES A PATH TO THE RHINE RIVER

*"The 'Mystery Division' of General George Patton's Third Army took the spotlight today by reaching the Upper Rhine River,*

*bringing the important chemical city of Ludwigshafen, Germany and penetrating to within seven miles of the ancient cathedral city of Speyer, the chief community of the Bavarian Palatinate. It was a good day's work...*

New York Herald Tribune, March 1945.

The "Mystery Division" was the 12th Armored Division. Veiled in secrecy following transfer from the Seventh Army to the Third Army, the Hellcats were, in Patton's news release to the press, "another unnamed armored division."

The order attaching the 12th Armored Division to XX Corps, Third Army, was received 17 March 1945. The following morning the division jumped off in the vicinity

Speyer and Germersheim.

Originally, the division was assigned the mission of passing through the 94th Inf. Div. and advancing towards the Rhine to secure crossings near Worms, Germany. At noon, 19 March, the axis of advance was shifted southeast; the drive now pointed toward Ludwigshafen, Germany. Orders from XX Corps were: "Keep going. When you hit the Rhine, turn south and look for a bridge which is still intact in Ludwigshafen." If there were no bridges, the division was to proceed south as far as Germersheim, Germany.

Enroute to their objectives that first day, Hellcats captured an estimated 2,500 prisoners, three ammunition dumps, a regimental supply train, 400 horses, 700 trucks and wagons in addition to an enemy hospital, equipment and German patients. The bulk of prisoners and material was taken near Birkenfeld and Baumholder.

20 March 1945 was another field day for the "Mystery Division." Shoving ahead from Birkenfeld to Ramsen, the 12th scooped up

the Rhine River at 2330, 20 March. First to approach the river was a platoon from B Co., 56th AIB, led by Lt. Charles Peischl.

The following day CCA entered Ludwigshafen and, with an element of the 94th Inf. Div. which had been mopping up in the Hellcats wake, cleared the city. The climax of the drive came on 24 March when CCB took Speyer, and CCR, commanded by Col. Richard A. Gordon, entered Germersheim. Simultaneously, the 92nd Cav., which had led the Hellcat thrust much of the way, contacted the 14th Armored Div. driving up from Seventh Army territory to the south.

Efforts to secure a bridge over the Rhine River were unsuccessful — all of the spans between Ludwigshafen and Germersheim had been blown — but all other phases of the operation were outstanding achievements. The enemy was cleared from the Saar Palatinate, losing more than 75 percent of their infantry elements in the 23 divisions which comprised the First and Seventh German Armies. A total of 7,211 enemy prisoners went into the cages.

When Troop D, 92nd Cav. Recon, raced into one German town, all streets were blocked by enemy vehicles. Ordered not to fire unless fired upon, Lt. Roane C. Figg, entered cafes and restaurants and ordered the beer drinking drivers to move their vehicles. Assuming that their force had been captured, the surprised Germans obeyed. Troop D rolled through town, leaving a bewildered enemy behind.

On another occasion, this same troop bypassed a retreating enemy column, which had been holding up its advance. The Germans waved gaily until they recognized the swift unit as American. The Nazis crashed their vehicles into ditches in an effort to get out of the way.

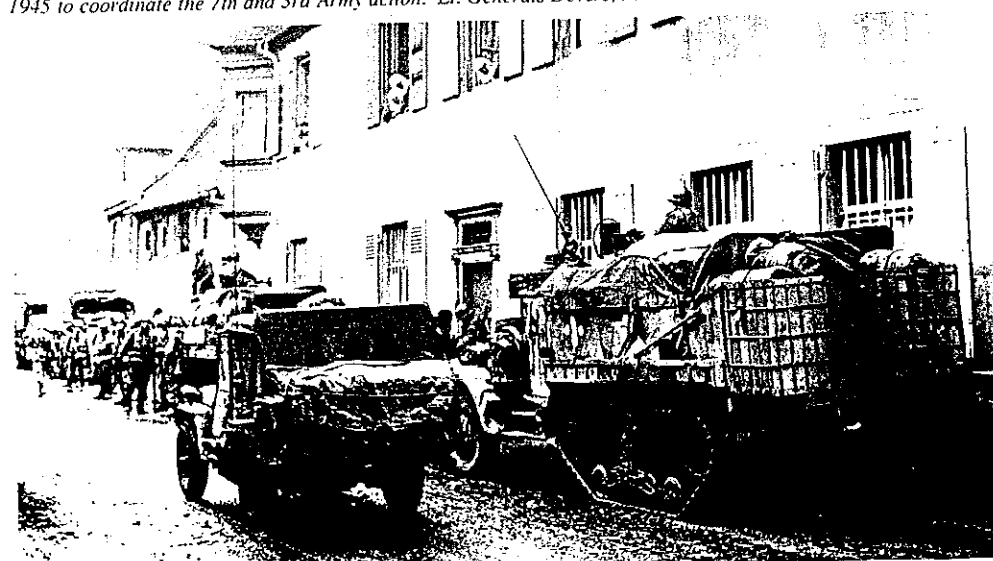
Maintaining a blistering pace, the 12th caught the Krauts flat-footed all the way across the Palatinate.

The Hellcats crossed the Rhine early on 28 March 1945. Four days previously, 24 March 1945, the division had reverted back to Seventh Army and now was to spearhead Gen. Alexander Patch's forces across southern Germany into the heart of the Nazi's vaunted National Redoubt. After reorganization near Diedesheim, Germany, the 12th crossed Germany's principal river on two bridges erected at Worms, Germany. Operating under XV Corps and later under XXI Corps, the Hellcat Division pointed its guns towards Wurzburg, Germany and began another swift drive through the Odenwald region that swept aside all resistance.

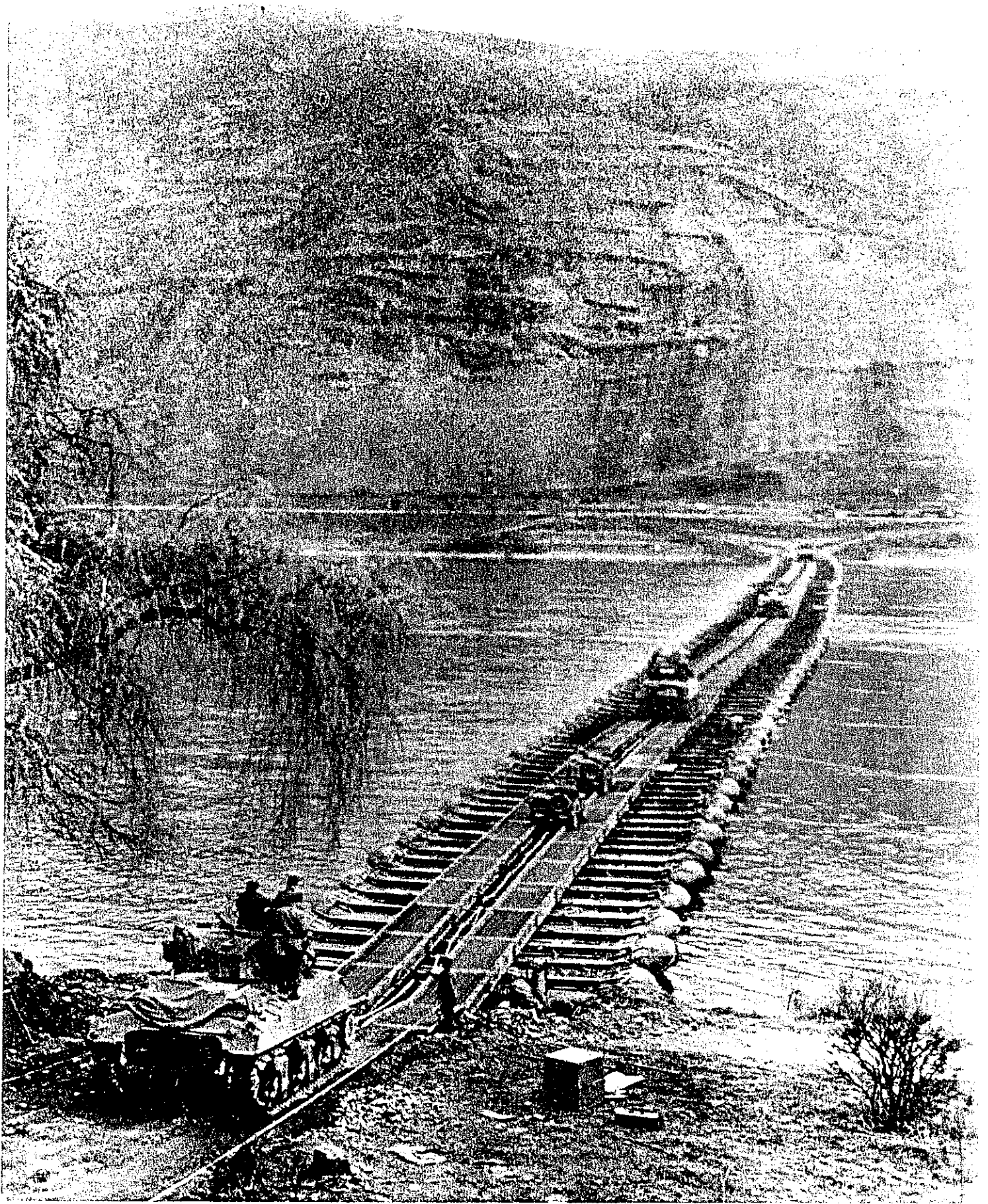
Amorbach, Hettstadt, Beerfelden, Tauberhofsheim, and Oschenfurt were buttoned up. CCA, with the 222nd Regt., 42nd Inf. Regt., attached, moved into Marienburg, across the Main River from the much bombed Wurzburg.



During the 12th Armored Division spearhead through the Saarland the generals flew into Leineville on 20 March 1945 to coordinate the 7th and 3rd Army action. Lt. Generals Devers, Patton, Patch and Bradley.



Nuns in a building at Rouffach, France, watch Yank troops of the 119th Engineers, 12th Armd. Div., rest while awaiting orders after helping to seal the Colmar Pocket.



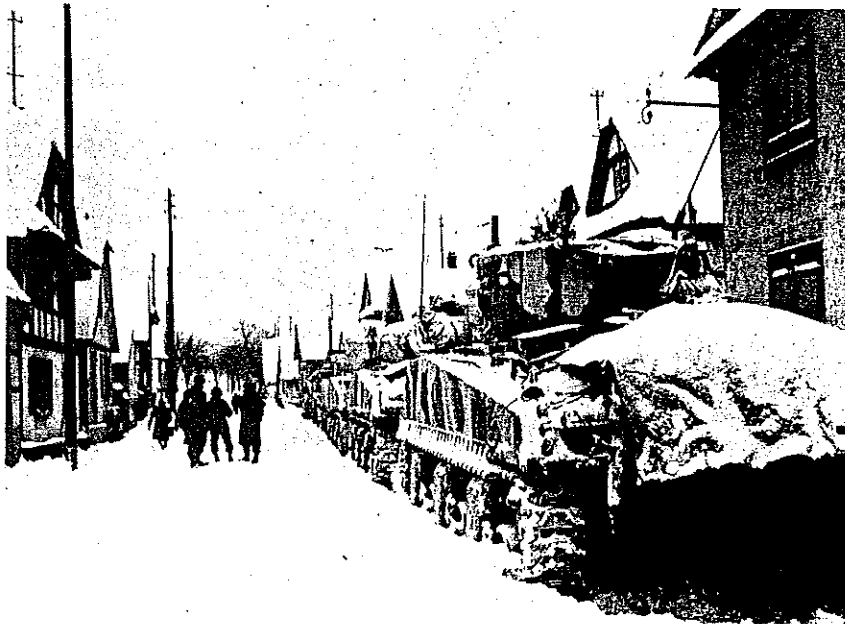
*We cross the Rhine*



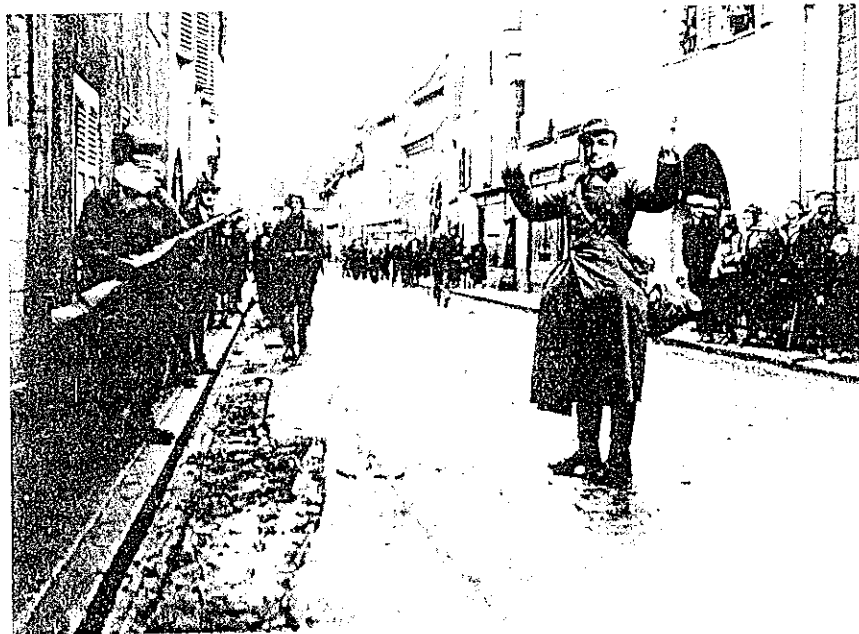
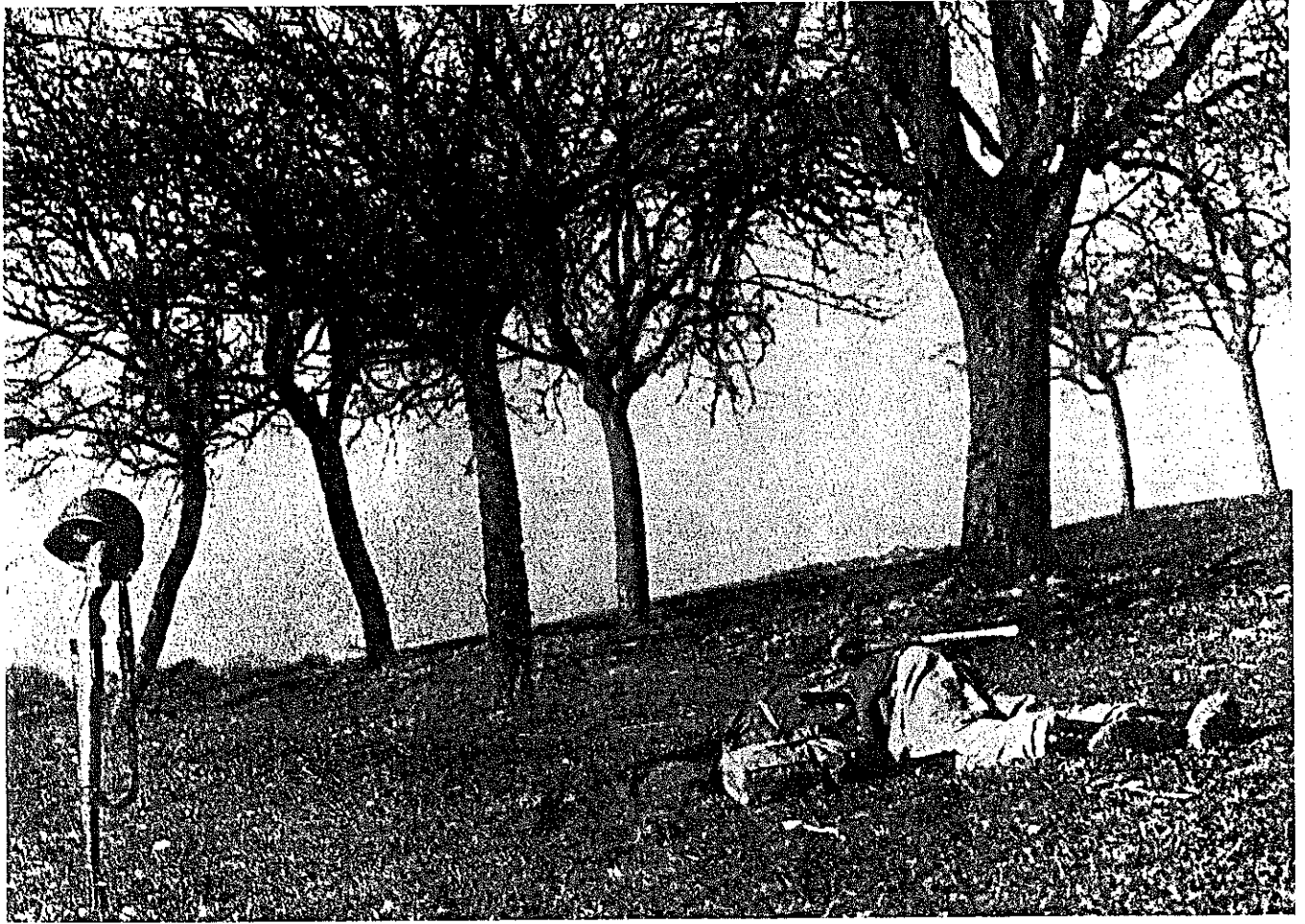


*Col. Seiller with bodies at Hurlag Death Camp.*

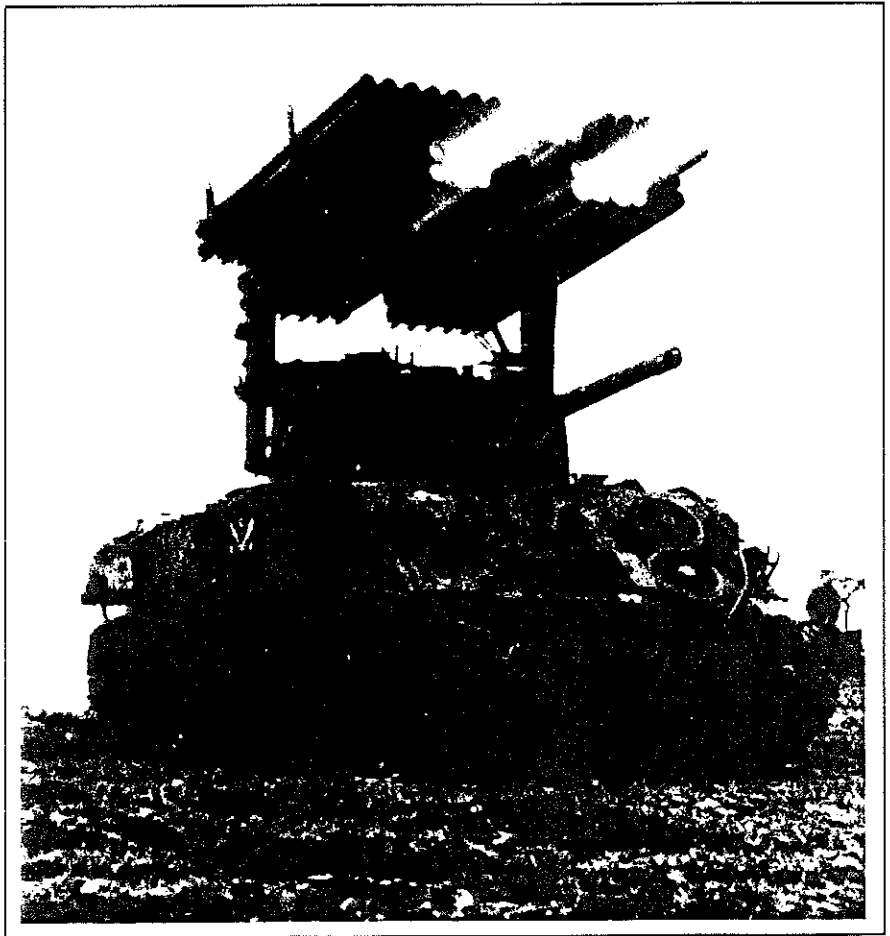
*M-4 tanks mounted with 75mm and 76mm, camouflaged with white paint and whitewash, line up in Oberschauffolsheim, ready for a new attack.*



*Patton crosses the Rhine*



*One of the 12th Armored Division's first captives—in  
Houffbach, France.*

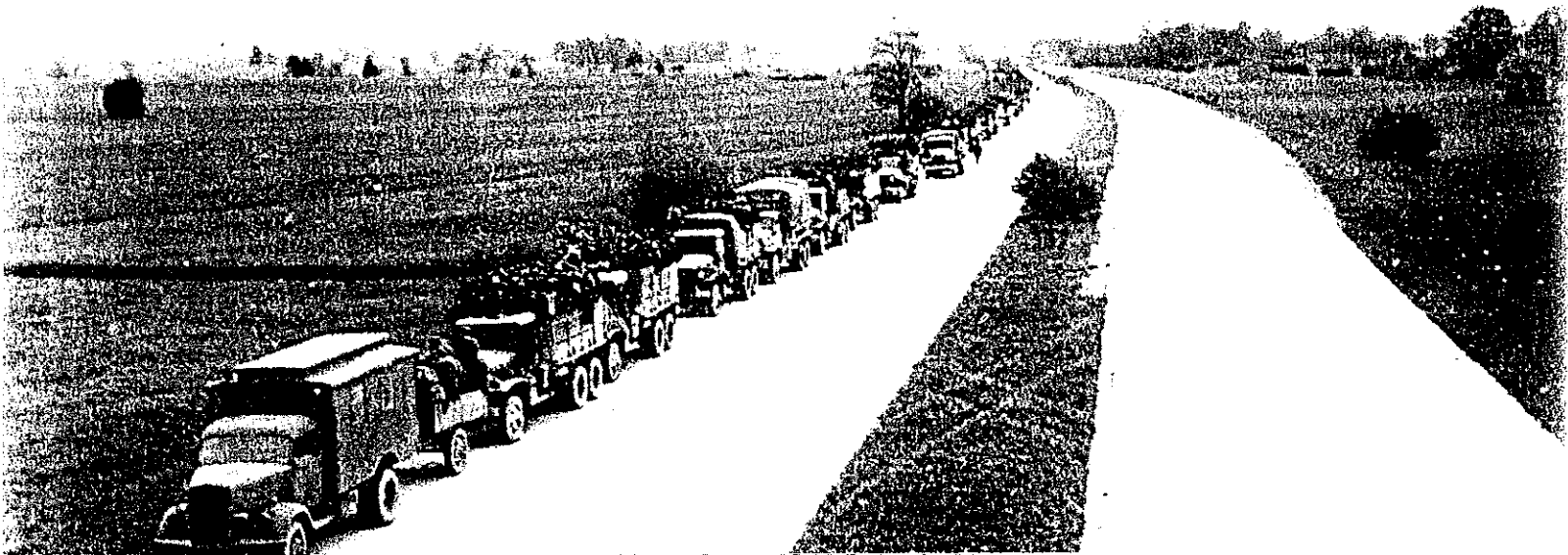


*134th Ordnance Battalion firing 4.5 inch rockets from launcher mounted on M43A3 tank, France, December 1944. (Courtesy of F. George Hatt, Jr)*



*Plowing through snow at Osthojfen, France, December, 1944*

*Crowded in all available passing trucks, 15,000 German prisoners were taken by the 12th in the Inn River Valley near Kufstein, Rosenheim area, Austria.*

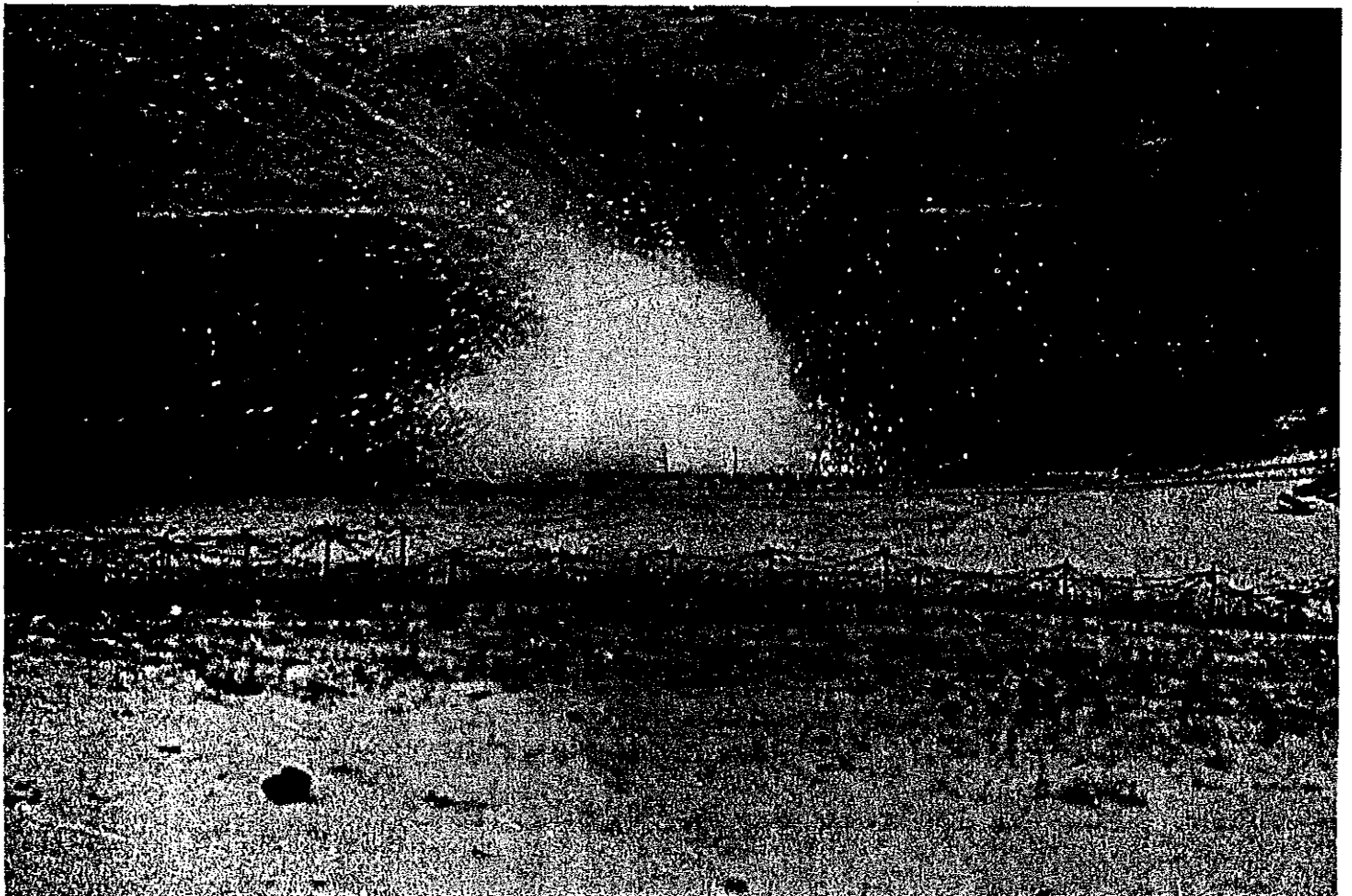


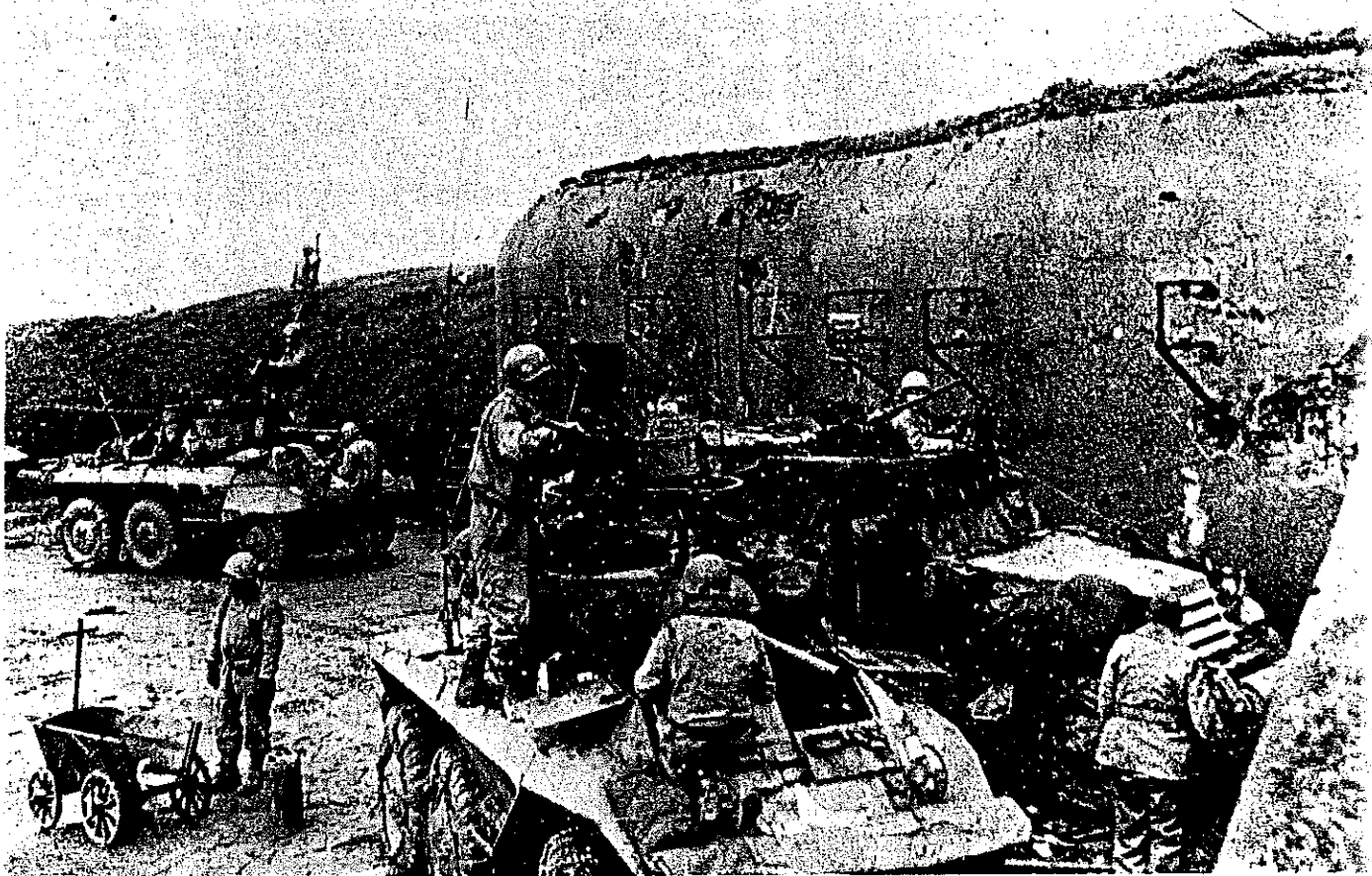
*92nd Cavalry Squadron guard at a road junction near CP keep warm in the May snow storm near Murnau, Germany.*



*Knocked out German tank in the Maginot Line*

*12th Armored Division makes direct assault on the Maginot Line*

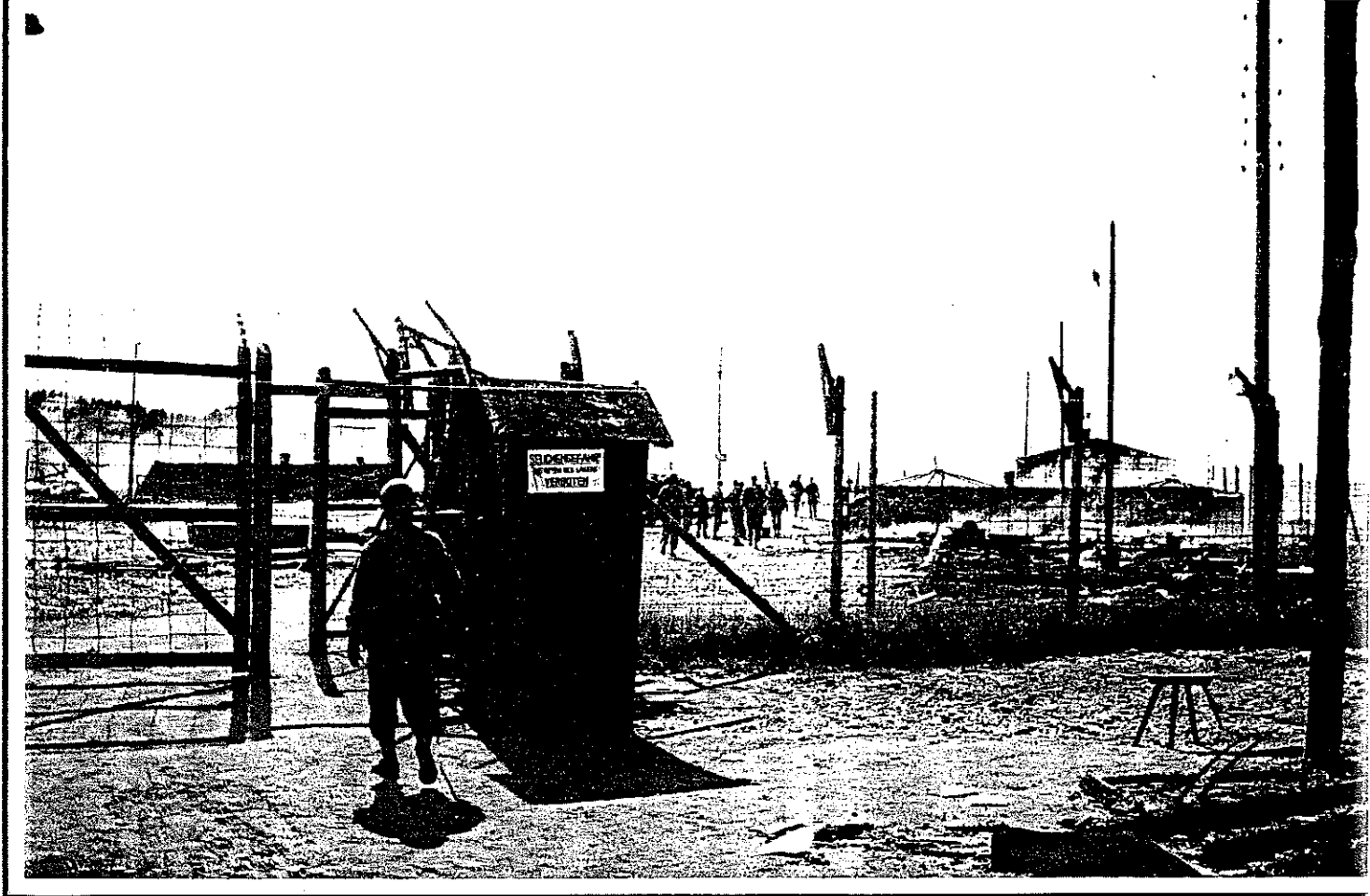




*Gathering for attack on Maginot Line, December, 1944*



*Enemy "time" fire was often deadly*



*Entrance to the death camp near Landsberg, Germany*



*"Acres of bodies"-Landsberg, Germany*



*Allied Air might by-passed this German Cathedral*





*A victim of well aimed Hellcat tank fire*

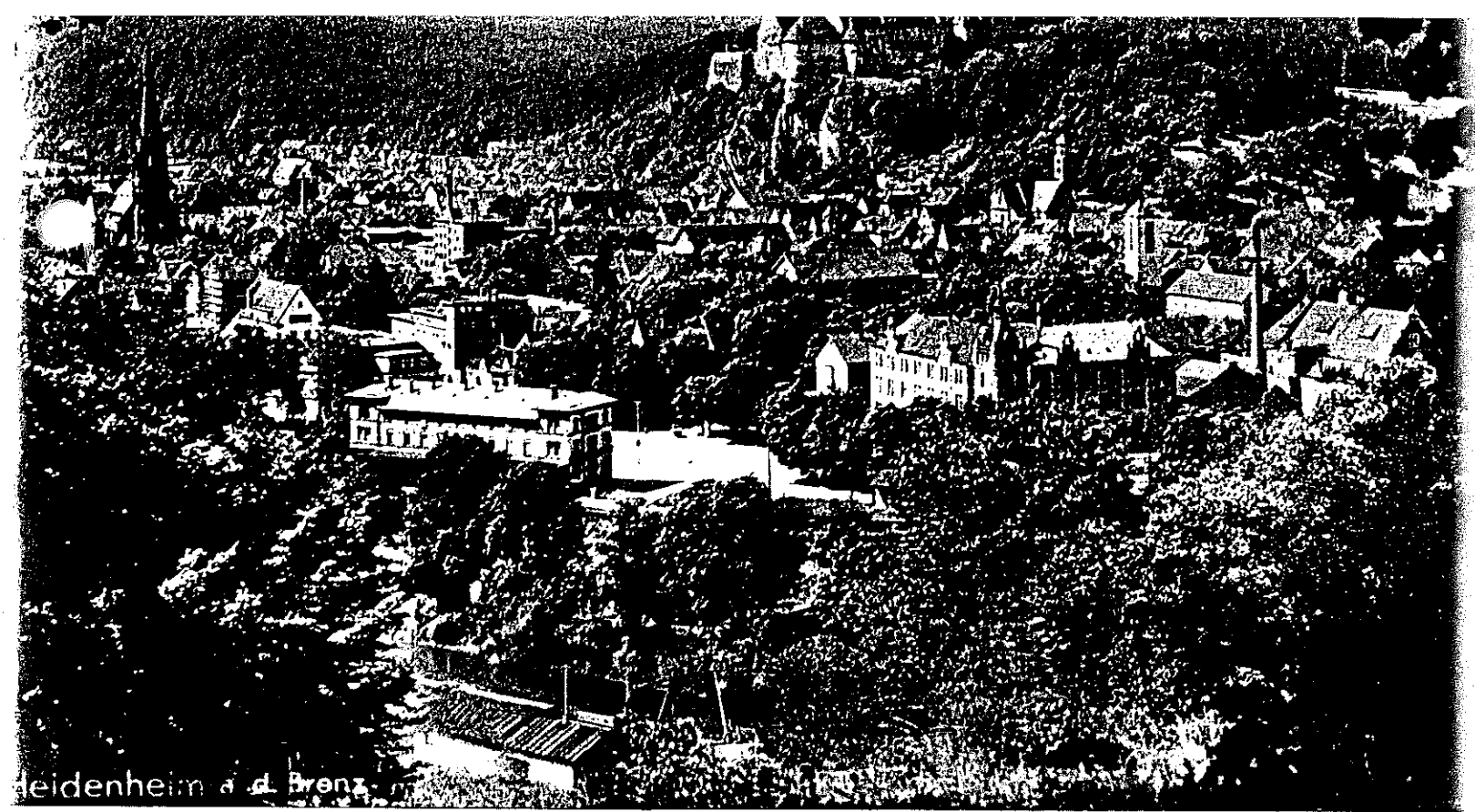


*Investigating a "Kaput" Heinie tank*

*Staging Area—Marseilles, France*



*That notorious 88*



*Heidenheim—the occupational CP for the 12th Armored Division*



*Lunerville—in peacetimes*

Holocaust Death Camps World War II  
John P. Parkison  
12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, B Co., 119<sup>th</sup>  
Armored Engineer Battalion

I write this by request of the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Memorial Museum in Abilene, Texas, who asked me for my experience in the Landsberg camps, where Jews and political prisoners were slave laborers. They were worked each day and starved to death. They lived in little frame shacks with no heat or warm clothes.

I can remember only three camps that my squad helped capture. One camp I remember very well, as if it happened only yesterday. We were told there were approximately 300 such camps in the Landsberg area.

This one camp may have been the first one we were involved with. My squad, in our half-track, stopped by a high barbed wire fence. We were not allowed to dismount, only officers were allowed inside the compound.

There was a large number of dead prisoners, some naked, others partially clothed. The Germans had fled as our group approached. They set some of the shacks on fire after locking prisoners in, and they marched the ones who could walk and fled up a narrow road. This dirt road kept climbing up and the snow got deeper. When a prisoner could not keep up, they were shot then or killed with a bayonet.

After our group got too close to the Germans, they fled. When we caught up to the prisoners, some were resting in the snow or walking around. My squad had an empty TNT box mounted on the half-track roll bar; we used this box to toss unopened combat rations, etc. The prisoners immediately were helping themselves to the rations, plus some winter onions we had liberated further back in Germany. The prisoners were skin and bones, and they were so grateful to be liberated. One prisoner approached our half-track, which we were not allowed to dismount. He spoke perfect English. He had lived in the United States for a while and had taught classes at a university. He had returned to Germany and was not allowed to return to the United States after Hitler had come to power.

I have several pictures of some of the death camps that are already in my WWII memoirs. Presently the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Memorial Museum is developing an Internet learning program to educate school children about WWII and the part that the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division played in winning it.

*Prepared 2010-2011*